

The People's Environment Narrative (PEN)

50 years with UNEP and Civil Society

Towards

Stockholm +50

and beyond

Edited by Jan-Gustav Strandenaes and Isis Alvarez

The People's Environment Narrative (PEN)
- 50 years with UNEP and Civil Society
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Acknowledgements:

This publication has been made possible thanks to the valuable work and assistance from people at Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future, the Norwegian Forum for Development and Environment and from the Civil Society Unit at The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The Swedish Government, Ministry of Environment, provided financial support

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María Andrea Miranda Serna

Suggested citation: Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future (2022), The People's Environment Narrative. Utrecht, the Netherlands.

Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future
Company no. 05243470 / Registered in England and Wales and Utrecht, the Netherlands
Registered Office: 2 The Links, Herne Bay, Kent, CT6 7GQ, UK
www.stakeholderforum.org
info@stakeholderforum.org

twitter @stakeholders
linkedin @stakeholderforum

Finalised December 2022
Published September 2023
(Bogotá, Paris, Oslo)

The People's Environment Narrative (PEN)

50 years with UNEP and Civil Society

A document reflecting on the outcomes of work by civil society, the global NGO community and other stakeholders including governments and representatives of the UN system to commemorate 50 years of work for the environment by the **UN Environment Programme, UNEP** and with a focus on the **Stockholm+50** conference

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Preface

In 2021, Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future, the NGO in which I work, was tasked with documenting fifty years of efforts and accomplishments in order to safeguard the environment, achieve environmental justice and provide a basis for approaching environmental threats in the future. Public institutions, like the United Nations, are obliged to record what takes place. But documenting the endless and tireless efforts by civil society to improve their living conditions, fight for justice & equality, and safeguard the environment is no mean feat.

Our idea for achieving this grew organically and resulted in the People's Environment Narrative (the PEN) – a compendium covering more than nine hundred pages. Much has been written about the UN and its many family members, such as the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the Specialised Agencies, subsidiary units and other UN bodies. But none of these focussed on the role of civil society or indeed expressed civil society's points of view. The PEN aims to fill that gap. In seven sections, the PEN covers what UNEP and civil society have accomplished from 1972, when UNEP was founded, until 2022, when UNEP commemorated its 50th anniversary. The PEN also attempts to peer into the future with regards to environmental protection and environmental rights.

The PEN is also unique in another respect, in that it addresses five 'Legacy Themes', each of which has been an integral element of UNEP's work for fifty years and will be critically important in the future. Acknowledged experts wrote five original papers for the PEN, sometimes involving other specialists. These papers, or Legacy Chapters are part of the nine hundred pages.

The PEN also contains summary outcomes of thematic webinars on relevant themes, in which hundreds participated from every continent. Similarly, the PEN includes summaries from key preparatory conferences leading to UNEP's commemorative Stockholm conference in June 2022. Thousands contributed to the outcomes of these conferences.

The PEN comprises forty three main articles, some of which contain sub-articles, bringing the total number close to a hundred and fifty. One hundred and thirteen writers have contributed directly from nearly fifty countries and all continents, with gender parity among the writers. Section eight presents these writers.

The PEN is published in two versions – a **Standard Version**, and a fully searchable **Extended Version**. For downloading purposes, Section Four containing the five Legacy Papers is organised in two different ways. In the **Standard Version** covering some 600 pages, you will find an executive summary of each of the five Legacy Papers. The full length Legacy Papers comprising some 300 pages can be accessed by pressing the **pdf** symbol found at the start of the executive summary for each of the papers. In the fully searchable **Extended Version**, with more than 900 pages, we have included the Legacy Papers



UNEP's headquarters. Nairobi, Kenya © UNEP

following their executive summaries. However, the content of the two versions is identical. Both versions are uploaded on several websites and freely accessible/downloadable.

The PEN has encyclopaedical ambitions and we hope it will be instructive about the past, present and future. It is not our intention that an interested person should read the entire PEN in one go. The content overview, therefore, provides a link to each of the articles. Click on the link and you, the reader, will be brought directly to your chosen article. We think of the PEN as a source of information, knowledge, experience and inspiration. We hope you will as well.

Even beyond the 50th anniversaries of the Stockholm Conference and UNEP, 2022 was a remarkable and significant year due to a number of momentous decisions – the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly recognised the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; the principle of 'Loss and Damages' in the context of

climate change was agreed at COP 27; and COP 15, on Biodiversity, decided on a landmark agreement to guide global action on nature and biodiversity through to 2030. 2022 was also significant because Russia invaded Ukraine. All wars cause havoc to the environment – to freedom, justice and democracy and to innocent people; this war is no exception.

Despite such a backdrop, the PEN carries optimistic yet critical messages through all its articles in their efforts to show a better way forward. Wangari Maathai from Kenya who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 for her tireless efforts to safeguard the environment and build peace, said: "When we plant trees, we plant the seeds of peace and seeds of hope." Such is the spirit of the PEN, and we hope it will serve as a source of information and an incubator of inspiration for creating a healthier nature and a better world for all.

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, Senior Editor and initiator of the PEN, Norway, June 2023

Section One:

An introductory background



Stockholm+50 Flags at Venue © UNEP Duncan Moore

Introduction to the People's Environment Narrative, the PEN

50 years with UNEP and Civil Society

by Jan-Gustav Strandenaes & Isis Alvarez, Stakeholder Forum

You are about to read a unique document.

What you have here is neither a report nor is it a book. We have chosen to call it a people's narrative, and it is a compendium of information and knowledge about the Stockholm+50 Conference including the process leading up to it. Its content is about documenting 50 years of global work to safeguard the environment. We have called it the People's Environment Narrative, PEN for short. The reason behind creating and producing the PEN was the opportunity presented by the commemoration of the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) 50th anniversary. UNEP was established by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, which took place in Stockholm in June 1972. 50 years later, two commemorative conferences were organised to mark this anniversary. The first of those conferences, UNEP@50 - a two-day high-level meeting on March the 2nd and 3rd 2022 - took place in Nairobi, Kenya at UNEP's headquarters. The second, in Stockholm, Sweden on

the 2nd and 3rd of June in 2022, was simply called Stockholm+50. Its formal name was "Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity."

Official meetings are documented well; their outcomes are duly archived for posterity. This is not always the case with the efforts made by civil society¹. In fact, to have their voices heard at these official, intergovernmental, multilateral conferences is not mandatory. An official outcome document is also but a summary of what the participating official government representatives agreed to. The long hours of deliberations and negotiations, the background papers, the input from break-out groups are rarely included. And as the outcome document is a synthesised product of what took place at the official conference, the inputs from civil society are often negligible in these documents. The multitude of voices from non-governmental actors are rarely taken notice of and preserved for posterity. *"Having consulted with*

¹ **Please note:** the PEN is an anthology, with contributions from many authors. They all have their own way of writing, reporting and using words and concepts. Civil society is a frequently used concept. So is 'stakeholders', Major Groups, non-state actors, non-governmental organisations and NGOs. [Further in this section](#), we offer a thorough explanation of these concepts, concepts which are sometimes synonyms, sometimes not, depending on context. We have in this preface chose to use civil society and non-governmental organisations and NGOs, not as synonyms but as direct references to what these concepts imply: that civil society is different from private sector and from government. NGOs include all types of organisations that do not belong to the authorities, be they elected or appointed.

civil society ..." is a standard reference to the input from nonstate actors and is more often than not what posterity learns about their contributions in their official documents. The outcome document from the Rio+20 conference, ostensibly embracing civil society in an inclusive manner, states already in paragraph 1: "...with the full participation of civil society²" but makes no reference to its direct contribution at this important juncture in time. There are obvious and formal reasons for this, as these conferences are intergovernmental, and their outcome documents shall reflect what governments agreed to. Still, civil society has over the years, asked time and again for ways to show its contributions to these governmental conferences. When there is no trace of meaningful contribution anywhere by civil society, its participation can easily be dismissed by those who harbour an engrained opposition to participatory democracy.

With the 50th anniversary of UNEP, we decided to do something about this. Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future (SF) in collaboration with the Norwegian Forum for Environment and Development (ForUM for Utvikling og Miljø), joined forces to develop a project which resulted in the Peoples Environment Narrative (PEN). The purpose of the PEN was to document at least some of the key issues, thoughts, and concerns about the environment that civil society and the global NGO community voiced during the Stockholm+50 conference. But we also wanted to include more to try to give an impression of what took place.

The 1972 conference in Stockholm was the very first global conference to allow civil society and the global NGO community to engage daily with the official conference and report back to it. This set a new standard for civil society participation and changed the *modus oper-*

andi of all subsequent UN conferences. Even though the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) were recognised as the third official actor when the UN was founded in 1945 through Article 71 of the UN Charter, the 1972 Stockholm conference was the first time ever where the NGOs and like-minded stakeholders had a significant impact.

As with all global meetings there is a preparatory process. Such processes have more than one purpose: one is to prepare the agenda, to fertilise it with input. Another purpose is to alert stakeholders to its significance and stir up interest in what is going to take place. But even in preparatory processes, it is often difficult to find traces of civil society. There are several examples where civil society has had an important impact on the final agenda through the preparatory process. There are also examples of civil society engagement - often strongly phrased - which did not enter the final document. The evolution of the chemical conventions is one such example where the participation of civil society made a difference. The evolution of the recently agreed resolution on combating plastic pollution is another such example, where again civil society made a strong contribution to the outcome result and helped keep the issue alive for decades. References to both of these events can be found in the content of the PEN.

Ecocide was a theme already referred to during the 1972 Stockholm conference. Ecocide is an example of a theme that civil society is deeply committed to. While it was strongly debated at Stockholm+50, it did not make it strongly into the final outcome document. Civil society often brings uncomfortable truths to the official table. But the official response to these truths is often lagging. The gruesome fate of the environmental defenders - environmental-

² A/Res/66/288, para 1



Environment Conference meets at Stockholm (5-16 June 1972) **Mrs. Indira Gandhi**, Prime Minister of India, addressing the Conference © UNEP

ists murdered for their environmental stand - is an example of this. After years of consistently alerting the world to the horrific fate of these noble defenders, UNEP has agreed to include them in its programmes.³

Civil society is often bringing different perspectives to the table. One reason is because civil society organisations are closer to local realities and make efforts to voice concerns from local communities. With such experiences, civil society often recommend actions that may seem outlandish and unrealistic at the same time. The truth may however be that the official approach in actions being taken to save the environment does not necessarily reflect

the urgency felt by the people at large. The ongoing debate about the urgency behind global warming, energetically expressed by youth everywhere, is an example of this.

We wanted to include in the PEN as many of the elements of the preparatory processes as was feasible in the lead-up to the Stockholm+50 conference. We have tried to show, for posterity, that civil society and the NGO community were indeed engaged from the day - during the fourth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 4) in 2019 - when the official announcement was made to commemorate the 50th anniversary of UNEP. We also added yet another element which we named the 'Legacy Themes.'

³ <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/environmental-rights-and-governance/what-we-do/advancing-environmental-rights/uneps#:~:text=UNEP's%20Defenders%20Policy%20promotes%20greater,many%20parts%20of%20the%20world.>



Fridays for Future Stockholm © UNEP / Duncan Moore

We talked to many people, in UNEP, in governments, in civil society, at universities and wanted to find out if there were certain issues that had always been with UNEP, almost a set of overarching themes, since its founding in 1972. Five such themes emerged from these discussions, five themes which we subsequently named the Legacy Themes. Having identified these themes, we invited global experts to write about these themes and do so their own way. We invited them without any prescriptive obligations. Their contributions became so unique that we have included them in the PEN in a special way.

The writing and style of the report

Just a few words about the writing and style of the many articles in the PEN. Reports often have applied a standard presentation and employed so-called English language experts to

rewrite everything using a standard formula of writing. We have not done so. There are more than 150 different articles in this report written by more than 100 different authors. Some of these authors have English as their mother tongue, others use English as a second language or as a working language. Each author has a unique style, and we have tried to leave every article with the author's own style of writing. Our editing has therefore been mindful and modest. We have only suggested editing and with the permission of the author done so, when we felt the language was a bit complicated. We have made strong efforts to weed out typos and grammatical mistakes. However, we are quite sure that there are a few elements of this category in this document. Allow us to apologise in advance for this.

To stay true to our original vision of the PEN, we have organised it into eight sections:



15 September 1971 - UN Headquarters, New York. **Mr. Maurice F. Strong**, Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (right), shows United Nations Secretary-General **U Thant** a design for the official Conference poster. To the left is **Mr. Keith Johnson** (Jamaica), Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference. © UN / Teddy Chen

SECTION 1

Introducing a commemorative document will always pose challenges.

We invited two people who were key persons at the 1972 Stockholm conference to send a greeting. Wayne Kines, a Canadian, who sent a small greeting was the first Director of Communication at UNEP. He was a childhood friend of Maurice Strong, but their careers had taken different ways until they met again to prepare and run the Stockholm 1972 conference. Wayne Kines from the UN worked closely with Lady Barbara Ward who represented civil society in 1972, and together they came up with the process that allowed the daily report-backs and presentations of civil society matters to the official plenary.

Sadly, Wayne Kines passed away in August 2022, at the age of 85.

Hiro Shibuya, from Japan, was a youth representative working as one of Maurice Strong's closest advisers during the Stockholm conference. Hiro, as he is called, was a key person in the preparatory process leading up to this conference. He worked with Strong for several years, also as a senior adviser during the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 – the Earth Summit - which gave us Agenda 21.

We also wanted to give space to UNEP. Ms. Ligia Noronha who has been appointed United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and head of the New York office of UNEP in April 2021. She also navigated UNEP's role throughout

the Stockholm+50 preparatory process until June 2022.

Finally, we provide a careful introduction for clarifying central concepts used frequently in this publication; the concepts explained are 'civil society,' 'stakeholders,' NGOs, and Major Groups, all in need of a contextual explanation.

SECTION TWO

This section also presents the strength of civil society, the Major Groups and a host of other non-state actors. We invited 18 people to write their experiences working on themes and issues that have been important to UNEP during fifty years. We gave this anthological part of Section 2, three sub-sections: an introduction, then it follows with examples from productive collaboration and finally a few thoughts about future challenges. We wanted to show that the partnership between civil society and UNEP has mutually strengthened these two entities without compromising their positions or their integrity: on one side a representative of the intergovernmental system on the other side the world of civil society. Often perceived as counterproductive when the two are mixed together in partnerships, these examples prove the opposite. Authoritarian rulers and their civil servants will always make the most serious efforts to subjugate the will of the people including their initiatives and energies. Despots always impoverish a society. Too many governments also nurture a negative view of civil society and consider civil society as troublesome or disruptive. These examples tell everybody that collaboration more often than not will yield positive results, it will also contribute to global and national ownership and support of policies, it contributes to leaving no one behind and builds wellbeing for all.

In a document where the intention is to give an overview of 50 years of work, a historical overview is needed. Being asked to appraise an issue, we often think that presenting a critical

view is the best and most convincing way to do so. And surely, all events, inputs, organisations and institutions have a critical aspect to their existence. This time, however, we also wanted to focus on the positive accomplishments that have become the results of UNEP's 50 years' existence. Jan-Gustav's presentation on UNEP's history tries to do precisely that.

SECTION THREE

This section has a focus on the process organised by civil society and the global NGO community leading up to the June Stockholm conference. The three elements here are the outcomes from key webinars organised by civil society. More than a thousand persons participated in the nine webinars that were organised. We asked participants in each of the webinars to suggest recommendations on environmental work that would eventually be presented to UNEP during the Stockholm+50 process and conference. This section synthesises the recommendations from those webinars.

SECTION FOUR

This section contains five legacy papers, or rather an executive summary of the five legacy papers. At the beginning of each of these papers, there is a hyperlink to the completed paper. As our legacy writers immersed themselves in their topic, their creative efforts grew and as these papers are quite long, we decided to include them this way.

SECTION FIVE

The United Nations Environment Programme with its staff was one of the official organisers of the two commemorative events. The Executive Director for UNEP, Ms. Inger Anderson, was appointed Secretary-General of the conference by the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres. In addition, the Swedish and Kenyan governments were the hosts of the Stockholm+50 conference. More than 4,000 people attended



Inger Andersen, Under-Secretary-General of the UN and Executive Director of the UNEP at UNEA 5.2 on reactions of Plastic Resolution © UNEP / Duncan Moore

the two-day event. Sixty-plus ministers attended, and 50 side events were organised, including the leadership dialogues, action hubs, and the plenary sessions.

The UN also engaged in pre-meetings. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) were tasked to organise these. According to the UN, some 230 national conversations were held in about 50 countries with nearly 50,000 participants.

We do not pretend to cover in full what the UN did officially in connection with the Stockholm+50 process, but we have chosen a few key events to be presented in this section. In addition, we present the main outcomes of the UNDP national reports; we also present a summarised comparative analysis of the outcomes from the 5 regional stakeholder conferences organised by UNEP (these regions were: Europe and North America, Africa, West Asia,

Asia Pacific and Latin America); and we have included the summary points of the three official leadership dialogues that took place during the two days in Stockholm in 2022. We have also included an event by UNEP around Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP), a summary of the One Planet Network Forum. We include this as UNEP was given a particular responsibility for this issue by the Rio+20 conference in 2012.

And finally, we have included the Stockholm+50 Declaration. It might be interesting to compare this with the declaration from the first declaration made 50 years ago in Stockholm back in 1972.

We have provided all these elements with hyperlinks so the interested reader can check the official outcomes as well.

SECTION SIX

Civil society and the global NGO community took the commemoration of UNEP seriously. They saw this as an opportunity to rejuvenate and strengthen the global commitment for work on the environment. Paulo Magalhães, founder and director of the Common Home of Humanity, initiated the Stockholm+49 process which involved hundreds of NGOs and individuals. Stockholm+49 was organised as a virtual two-day event to heighten interest for Stockholm+50 and to develop a charter to challenge the decision-makers who would be present in Stockholm. We have brought a summary of the content of this event here.

As climate issues have become inextricably linked to environmental issues, and a wide array of different actors mobilize around it, we invited members from the Demand Climate Justice movement to contribute to the PEN with a focus on their activities around the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Olof Palme, the late Swedish Prime Minister and host to the 1972 conference brought up the issue of Ecocide in his keynote to the delegates in June 1972. Official interest in the issue has never been great. Civil society has however kept the issue alive, and the Stop Ecocide International network hosted a two-day event at the conference. We have included this issue since it almost disappeared from the official reports.

Faith-based organisations were also represented in Stockholm. The worldwide Baha'i community organised a two-day workshop on the key issues of the Stockholm+50 conference. We have allowed the Baha'i community to share the major outcomes from this seminar. One of their keynote speakers, Arthur Dahl, was also an active participant in the 1972 Stockholm conference and shared his experiences as a champion for a better world with a clean environment.

As indicated earlier, the youth movement played an important role in the Stockholm+50 process and conference; they established their own website, prepared a policy paper specifically for Stockholm+50 and brought youth, knowledge, statements, and advocacy to Stockholm. This is also reflected here in the PEN.

Indigenous Peoples were another group given a special position during the Stockholm+50 process. With their unique understanding of nature and the environment, and as guardians of the world's natural resources with their unique knowledge, no report on such issues would be complete without their contribution. We, therefore, include their official declaration emerging from Stockholm+50.

SECTION SEVEN

This section offers reactions, overviews and a personal analysis of the Stockholm+50 Conference and process by Leida Rijnhout and Jan-Gustav Strandenaes. They both followed the Stockholm+50 process from its inception and were present during the conference itself. Leida Rijnhout has a long history of working with civil society and environmental governance. Her article refers to the history behind the Pact for Nature idea. This was originally a French initiative which originated from civil society and was incorporated in an official French proposal presented by President Macron at the UN General Assembly in 2017. It received support, and the UN GA proceeded to formalise the work and eventually adopted resolution 73/333 incorporating the idea. Leida worked on the famous resolution UNGA A/Res/73/333 which involves efforts to safeguard environmental governance, and which became a central element in the declaration agreed to in March 2022 at the official UNEP@50 commemorative high-level meeting.

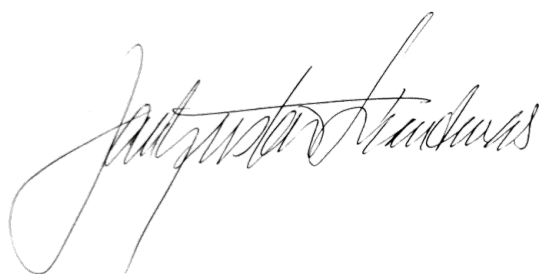
The second article in this section is a reflective and well-documented personal impression

and analysis of what took place with the second 50-year commemoration of UNEP's work for the environment. What took place during the process leading up to Stockholm+50 in June 2022, what decisions were made, how were they followed up, which expectations did they encourage and how was all this viewed and perceived by participants? Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, who was a young participant in Stockholm in 1972, working then as an intern with Wayne Kines, Hiro Shibuya, and Maurice Strong, and has worked on the environment and the UN ever since, offers in this 'epilogue' his personal views on this Stockholm process and meeting, 50 years after the first one.

SECTION EIGHT

This section offers short biographies of all of the people involved in making this unique product. And we also acknowledge the fact that this would not have been possible without the financial support from the Government of Sweden or the incredible support from Alexander Juras, Chief of the UNEP Civil Society Unit in Nairobi, his colleague Aurora Cheung and his colleague Laetitia Zobel who were the Stockholm+50 persons in his staff.

On behalf of the 'Towards Stockholm+50 and Beyond' project.



Jan-Gustav Strandenaes

Convener and project Manager of the Towards Stockholm+50 project and Senior PEN Editor



Isis Alvarez, Towards Stockholm+50 project Chief Programme Officer and PEN Editor © IISD



Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, Convener and project Manager of the Towards Stockholm+50 project and Senior PEN Editor © ForUM Norway



Isis Alvarez

Towards Stockholm+50 Chief Programme Officer and PEN Editor

As written in the Preface, there are two versions of the PEN – a **Standard Version**, and a fully searchable **Extended Version**. For purposes of downloading the document, Section Four is organised in two different ways. However, the content of the two versions is identical.



Wayne Kines in the planning process for the 1972 year conference © XXXXX

A greeting to the reader

by **Wayne Kines**, Special adviser to Maurice Strong in 1972

Wayne Kines became the first Director of Communication at UNEP. He also worked as a close adviser to Maurice Strong, the head of the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden. Wayne played a unique role, both in the run up to Stockholm and through it. Together with Barbara Ward, another adviser to the conference, they came up with the arrangement that allowed civil society and the global NGO community present in Stockholm to report back to the official plenary on a daily basis. Thanks to these people, UNEP has a civic voice today. We asked Wayne Kines to send a greeting to the Peoples Environment Narrative. This is what he wrote:

“When my friend Maurice Strong and I worked with governments and civil society in Stockholm 50 years ago, we had hoped that this Conference would spark the world into concern for the environment. Amidst the clamour of outraged voices, we were also faced with a seemingly worldwide apathy. We solved these problems by encouraging innovative approaches to participation and inviting voices from the developing world. Our outcomes turned out as well as we had hoped, perhaps better, for all the participants at the Stockholm 72 ‘Human Environment’ Conference set precedents that continue to evolve into our time — breakthroughs for humanity that I was blessed to be a part of! Hence, I greet all who read this Report and follow the now worldwide environmental movement with a fervent hope for the future yet to be.”

Wayne Kines
Ottawa, June 2022

Wayne Kines passed away on August 14th, 2022, at the age of 87.



5 June 1972 - United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, Sweden.
A general view of the opening meeting of the Conference © UN / Yutaka Nagata

Spanning 50 years of multilaterally engaged work for youth, the environment and sustainable development

by **Hironobu Shibuya**, Special adviser to Maurice Strong in 1972

A youth leader – 50 years ago

I was a restless young man, growing up in Japan, looking for constructive change. Little did I know when I arrived in the US in the late 1960s as an exchange student, that my restlessness should lead me to the first global conference on environmental issues, the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in the summer of 1972.

I wanted a break with the past and contribute to making a better future for my generation, and I was searching for opportunities. My interest in youth participation in collaborative programmes was instilled in my mind through my adopted American family. As a foreign exchange student, I came to live in a small mid-western village in the US. My 'American father' was a solid dairy farmer and attended to his resources with a conscious mind. But he was also a leader of the American co-operative movement. He was known nationally as a public speaker for his unique rhythmic talk entitled, "Cows, Kids & Co-ops" in which he advocated for youth participation in the agriculture cooperative movement. I felt I had a calling, now I was looking for an outlet. And with my international background, I was soon looking to the UN.

I became a graduate student in international affairs in the US, and now I was looking for ways to be involved internationally. A position as an intern in the International Student Movement for the United Nations, ISMUN, was announced. I managed to find money, and joined its secretariat situated in Geneva at the Palais des Nations.

Soon after joining the secretariat of ISMUN in Geneva in 1970, I became involved in a number of activities intended for youth and student participation. Some of these included organizing the World Youth Assembly in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations; other activities led to discussions on how to involve youth who wanted change. This led subsequently to establishing the UN Volunteer Programme (UNV). My involvement did not stop there, and soon I was heavily involved in the production of a UN documentary film ultimately titled "Hiro and Hiroshima Generation." The movie depicted the youth and student activities in an economically emerging Japan.

I stumbled into the preparations for the environment conference

Wayne Kines worked at the time with a now defunct UN entity called UN Centre for Economic and Social Information, UNCESI. One of the major work ideas of CESI was to increase the engagement between the UN and civil society. Wayne was at the time based in New York but was soon to move to Geneva. With the preparations for the 1972 Stockholm Conference set in motion, Wayne was, through his network at the UN, soon included in the preparatory work for the conference. Wayne knew Maurice Strong well, knew his administrative qualities and knew that he had a budding interest in environmental affairs. The introduction was made with the UN, and Maurice Strang was appointed by the then UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim to be the head person for the Stockholm 1972 conference.

I met Wayne Kines through my youth-related work after he had moved to Geneva. He would also become my lifelong mentor. Nearly two years into my involvement in international youth and student activities, I was introduced to Maurice Strong by Wayne Kines. Wayne and Maurice Strong would also collaborate on the creation of various innovative frameworks for bringing people in the world to work together towards solving one of the most pressing global issues – environmental challenges and development.

Youth engagement – a radical idea in 1972

Soon after I had met Wayne Kines, he persuaded a reluctant UN management to recruit me, a young student activist, to take charge of 'youth/student coalitions for development'. This was at the time an innovative program conceived by Wayne, whose objective was to involve youth/student leaders in developed countries to contact equal youth leaders in developing countries. It was hoped that such collaboration would result in promoting among their peers

the need for greater international collaborations to attain global solutions to environment and development. At Wayne's urging, Maurice Strong drafted me to serve as an NGO liaison officer at the Stockholm Conference. I was to specialize in dealing with youth and student activists gathered there. Against the backdrop of the Cold War tension, youth/student activists were engaged in actions on various issues such as the war in Vietnam, the liberation of Black people in South Africa and other human rights related issues.

But the issues of environment were not of prime concern among those activists in the early seventies. Nonetheless, when the 1972 environment conference was to begin, there were a few thousand young people gathered and who camped out in what was euphemistically called the 'pig farm' on the outskirts of Stockholm. They intended to march on the streets of Stockholm and present their grievances, albeit not necessarily related to the issues of environment. Their grievances were to be presented to the leaders from around the world gathered at the conference. Maurice Strong, again on the advice of Wayne Kines who had already broken 'established' UN procedures and allowed the participation of non-UN credited NGOs and other civil society groups in the conference, asked those of us involved in dealing with NGO participation in the conference, to find a way to harness the energy of young people that might positively contribute to the successful outcome of the conference.

The 1972 Stockholm conference staffed with radical people

Through the initiative of Strong and Kines, the 1972 conference was furnished with a few special advisors to the conference secretariat. Walter Hickle was such a person. Hickle had worked to establish Alaskan statehood in the 1950s, was a two-time governor of Alaska, and was appointed Secretary of the Interior by the



Barbara Ward in the audience © IIED

Nixon administration. As secretary of the interior Hickley had enacted several laws and regulations to protect the environment. In May 1970, students at Kent State University in Ohio held a peaceful rally opposing the Viet Nam War. State police moved in on the rally, shots were fired, four students were killed and nine wounded. Hickley took a strong stand for the youth and criticised the Nixon administration for turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to protestations and demands by the youth. He was fired as the Interior Secretary by President Nixon for advising him to listen to the voices and aspirations of young people protesting his policies on the Vietnam War. Hickley's belief in youth and environmental protection had made him a good candidate for the advisory role he came to play for the 1972 Stockholm conference.

Another special advisor was Barbara Ward Jackson – or to be correct, Barbara Ward, Baroness Jackson of Lodsworth. Barbara was a development economist and had worked to spearhead a new and humane development strategy to fight poverty. In the 1960s she had turned her attention to environmental issues

and in 1966 published a book together with French environmentalist Rene Dobos named “Spaceship Earth”. She is often credited with being a pioneer of the concept ‘sustainable development’ as she was connecting development, social issues and environment in her work. Maurice Strong commissioned her to write a report for the Stockholm 1972 Conference titled “Only One Earth: The Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet”. The report made a visible impact on the delegates at the conference. It was also Barbara Ward's initiative and insistence that led to civil society being allowed to address the plenary on a regular, daily basis. A first for civil society, but a move that would change all subsequent UN conferences and give the role of civil society a more influential and more defined role.

I was fortunate to work with both these persons and together we conceived a way to harness the youthful energy being present in Stockholm into something constructive. For instance, we assisted those young people who were launching a protest to march with a specific demand to the conference: to act against

the hunting of whales considered as an endangered species. This in fact resulted in the adoption by the conference of a call for a 10-year moratorium on the commercial hunting of whales.

After Stockholm 1972 – still a youth

In the aftermath of the Stockholm Conference, Maurice Strong and Wayne Kines moved on to manage the new UN organization – the UN Environment Program (UNEP) - which was established by the conference. Its main objective was to implement the programmes adopted by the Stockholm Conference. UNEP was headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, again in a move that defied the conventional expectation of the international community to establish the new UN agency in a 'hub' of international diplomacy in the developed world.

In as much as it was an exciting challenge for me, I chose not to join them. Inspired by the youth I met in Stockholm and seeing the effect of their work, I felt I needed to continue my work managing youth/student coalition projects instead. I had also been smitten by the work of multilateral organisations and looked for opportunities to live and work in a developing country. I felt I needed to learn on the ground the challenges that young people faced in the developing regions of the world. I looked to gain more practical experience of development before taking on another assignment at an international level. What ensued were assignments representing the UN in the newly independent nations of the South Pacific. Having conclude that work, it was followed by heading up the New York liaison office of the newly created United Nations University, the global collaborative research institution providing a 'network of knowledge' on sustainable development issues. Throughout these assignments, I was always guided by the 'spirit of Stockholm' for multilateralism, while remained focused on the plight and aspirations of young people.

Once a 'multilateralist', always a 'multilateralist'

My career took me to 10 years of work in the private sector, outside the United Nations. First, I managed a new foundation promoting US-Japan bilateral relations and a joint-venture of world leading communications agencies. I also served on the boards of multilateral NGOs, including Helen Keller International, Save the Children and World Learning. I acted as an advisor to OISCA International- the first international sustainable development NGO to emerge in Japan with the objective of promoting youth participation. Then, almost out of the blue, Maurice Strong once again contacted me and invited me to serve as a special advisor to the 1992 Earth Summit held, in Rio de Janeiro, 20 years following the Stockholm Conference. This time, the assignment entrusted to me was to help him interface with the Japanese political and business leaders to ensure that Japan's strong participation in the Summit was commensurate with the growing economic power of Japan. To this end, we organized a meeting of former heads of state in Tokyo modelled after a Japanese formula informally called an 'Old Boys' Summit. The name would not be used today, for obvious gender sensitive reasons which we all finally respect. Interestingly, the official name was the Inter Action Council. Using its formula, the meeting addressed the global issues that were to be discussed at the Rio 1992 Conference with an overarching purpose on financing the work on the environment and sustainable development.

Our meeting was carefully strategized by a group of individuals involved in the work of the "Eco-Fund," led by Jim McNeil, the secretary of the Brundtland Commission. One key purpose was to develop partnerships with and raise funds from the private sector. The Tokyo meeting was instrumental in advancing the need for financing for sustainable development programmes at the 1992 Summit. One of the results was, among other initiatives, the

creation of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), with a strong financial contribution from Japan. The GEF has come to play an important role in financing development projects for the World Bank, for UNDP and for UNEP.

From radical youth engagement in 1972 to radical youth integration now

I have continued to stay involved in promoting multilateralism and youth participation activities, and later I have taken on management positions with international organizations providing services for youth and children. I worked as the special advisor to UNICEF and later as CEO of Save the Children Japan during the time of the Fukushima tsunami disaster. I also continue to work closely with OISCA International to this day. Whatever I have done over the past 50 years since the Stockholm conference, the 'spirit of Stockholm' has always guided me – bringing people together to work toward building a more environmentally sustainable world and continued advocating for a greater participation of young people in that endeavour.

The youth engagement of today in environmental issues gives me hope for tomorrow. The fact that youth were given such a prominent position in the 2022 conference is a strong reminder of what took place fifty years ago, also in Stockholm. The Whaling Commission which was given importance in Stockholm through the march for the moratorium on killing the whales, is among the first international conventions speaking about an intergenerational responsibility. I now see this concept used time and again – spreading the commitment, work and responsibility over several generations is important. However, there is still a tendency by adults to patronise youth, keeping them at arm's length and not integrate them properly in decision-making processes. Maybe it is because the youth are not afraid to bring uncomfortable truths into the debate, into any debate. Youth engagement was a radical idea in 1972 at

the first Stockholm conference, Youth integration now seems an equally radical idea.

I was fortunate to work at the UN under Secretary-General Kofi Anan. Let me greet posterity who is fighting for the environment with a quote from one of his many speeches. As the world was coming close to the millennium in 2000, he was asked to address the UN Youth Summit in Lisbon, Portugal in 1998. He greeted the youth by saying:

“No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts off from its youth severs its lifeline.”

Hironobu Shibuya
Montreal, Canada, September 2022



Ligia Noronha at Green Week. Brussels, BE 2014 © UN / Patrick Mascart

Green

UNEP's 50th anniversary – a consideration

by Ms. **Ligia Noronha**, Assistant Secretary General and head of UNEP, New York

I am delighted that the People's Environment Narrative (PEN) is documenting 50 years of global work to safeguard the environment by civil society, an opportunity presented by the twin commemorations of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the 50 years since the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. I am honoured to have been invited to PEN for a short reflection on the Stockholm+50 meeting.

50 years since Stockholm 1972 and the birth of UNEP is indeed a time for reflection. To me, 1972 was an important landmark in my own life. I grew up with it, and with images of Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, making a case for the developing world in the context of growing environmental problems. The message was the importance of responsibility towards each other and to the planet. The 1972 Declaration was momentous, truly a product of committed stakeholders and governments on environmental issues despite all the geopolitics of the day. However, despite very strong civil society movements, the work of UNEP, national environmental legislations, and many multilateral environmental agreements, much of the 1972 declaration is still work in progress. Many of the environmental threats identified in 1972 persist.

It is evident that just more laws and rules and agreements are not sufficient to ensure a healthy planet for all. Since 1972, science has been pointing to the patterns of consumption and production and economic sectors

with high impact such as food, energy, mining, buildings and construction and transport as key drivers of the current environmental crises, be it climate change, biodiversity loss, or chemicals and pollution. It points to the need of valuing the environment in our decision-making, going beyond GDP as measures of progress and the importance of living within planetary boundaries.

But the world is unequal, so what does this mean for the part of the world where the population is struggling today with under-consumption and inadequate access to food, energy, housing, mobility and where many of the young and the unborn will live in the future? How do we imbue ideas of sufficiency, of environmental responsibility and care, of informed and responsible consumption to live the spirit of "Only One Earth"?

The Stockholm+50 meeting was mandated by two UNGA resolutions (75/280; and 75/326) with Kenya and Sweden as co-hosts, and reflected the intergovernmental negotiation process. The agreed theme of the meeting was "A healthy planet for all - our responsibility, our opportunity". The resolutions mandated that the international meeting will result in a summary of discussions as its outcome document and this would be prepared by the two Presidents of the international meeting with the support of the Secretary-General of the international meeting.

Three principles of engagement were adopted: intergenerational responsibility, intercon-

nectivity, and implementation opportunity. Stockholm+50 was seen as the opportunity not only to reflect on why the world had not delivered on all of the commitments of 1972 but also of the environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda. It was also an opportunity for the global community to have a joint reflection on the key principle laid out in 1972, that of our intergenerational responsibility for the collective wellbeing of all. Both through the preparatory process and at the international meeting, the focus was on inclusivity. The preparatory process was built around an open architecture of engagement with diverse stakeholders and reinforced a bottom-up approach (see Figure 1 below).

Stockholm+50 was designed to harness science, voice, viewpoints and commitments in its preparatory process and at the meeting itself, beyond the usual groups and geographies, in order to elicit ideas and reflect a broader agenda of change. The leadership dialogues were also carefully put together to bring in diversity and plurality - of voice and

region, of gender and age, of expertise and knowledge. No one group or constituency has the answers to the complexity we face today. The outcomes of the meeting include Recommendations from the Co-Presidents' Summary; recommendations from the Leadership Dialogues; Initiatives & Declarations from stakeholders delivering on the 3 principles of engagement. The messages and recommendations are in the official report from Stockholm+50. [A/CONF.238/9 \(undocs.org\)](#) summarised in the [Stockholm+50 Recommendations and Actions for Renewal and Trust](#). To ensure the contributions of stakeholders in the preparatory process and at the meeting, which were so important to the spirit of Stockholm+50, were part of the public official record from the conference, it was decided to have them as an information document as a "Summary of Stakeholder Contributions" [A/CONF.238/INF/3 \(undocs.org\)](#).

The Summary of Discussions has strong messages on the urgency of actions, around the need of economic and financial transformations to address the planetary crises, (the fac-

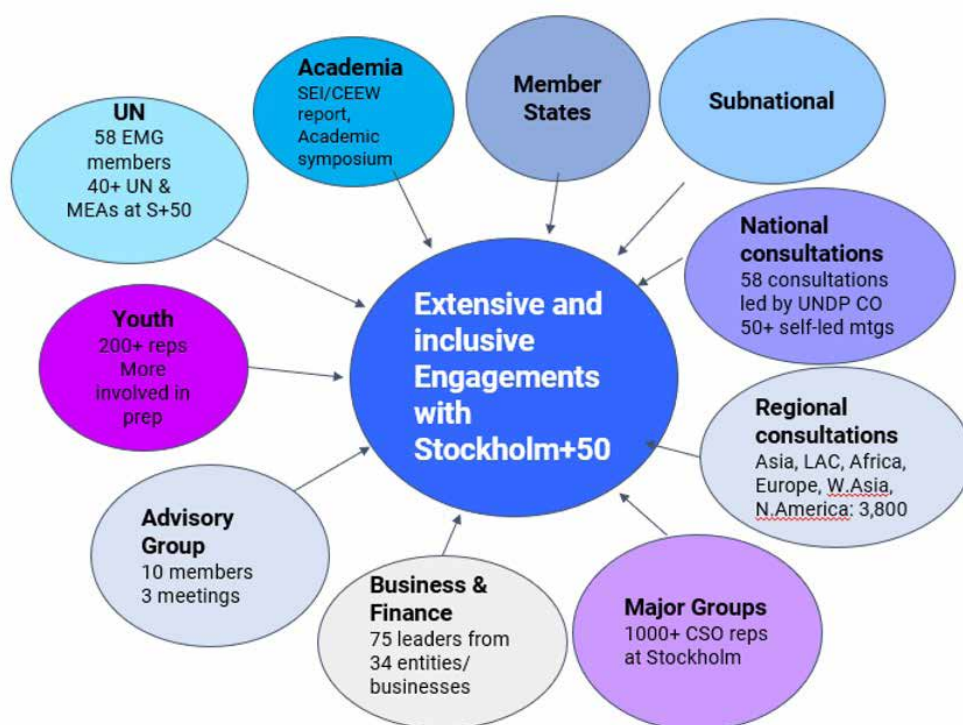


Figure 1: Engagement at Stockholm+50

tors that were recognized post 1972 as being the reason for many of the environmental threats, their persistence and even worsening); make the case for the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment to be adopted more universally (fulfilling principle 1 of the 1972 Declaration), centre stage intergenerational equity and responsibility (again from 1972), and speak to the need for trust and more effective multilateralism. The outcomes of the meeting call for changes that are transformational and systemic. These changes are both individual and collective; mandatory and voluntary; ethical and economic; responsibility for today and beyond today. Ecocide was a theme discussed at the Stockholm+50 plenary, during the preparatory process and is in the official record of the meeting as is the discussion on rights of nature. A draft outcome document prepared and agreed to before and during the meeting based on the evolving discussions would have been perhaps more comprehensive and representative of the discussions. The last minute pulling together of the Summary is always a gamble and can inadvertently miss out on important issues.

The official report of the meeting and the report of the stakeholder contributions contain messages which reflect the voice of scientists, governments, youth, civil society, businesses, interfaith groups, indigenous groups, women, - this is the legacy of Stockholm+50. They are not the messages of one group or one constituency but multiple voices calling for a more secure and safe and equitable future. The ideas and the messages, are influencing, and will influence other global and national and business processes such as the High-level Advisory Board on effective multilateralism, the thinking around Our Common Agenda, the inclusive and networked approaches towards a global plastics agreement, work with business groups and the youth, etc.

Multiple actions towards a more equitable and safer future are playing out:

- Planning for implementation of the Stockholm+50 Initiatives such as the Green Jobs for Youth Pact, the Data-driven Environmental Solutions Hub for enhancing technology capacities, the circulatory protocol, the accountability and transparency tool have started.
- A focus on transforming the high impact industry value chains and solutions (including SCP/circularity) for a healthy planet
- Exploring how the implementation of the recently adopted UNGA resolution on a human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment can support required economic transformations
- Working with the finance sector, both private and multilateral development institutions, to secure their alignment with environmental and sustainable development commitments
- Investing through partnerships in the ethical axes of environmental governance - through interfaith groups, religious leaders
- Including youth in decision-making for intergenerational responses
- Investing in digital tools to support scaling, accountability and transparency

Stockholm+50 certainly did not have all the answers or meet all the expectations of all stakeholders, but it provided space for investing in the growth of an inclusive and networked multilateralism needed for our complex world. In an already unequal world, dealing with many geopolitical tensions in 2022, the meeting provided a chance to centre stage intra- and intergenerational equity and responsibility in national and global thinking and responses; explore ways to make peace with nature, and seed a global movement with youth for a more caring, trusting, inclusive world.



Jan-Gustav Strandenaes addressing the public in the presentation of the People's Environment Narrative (PEN) at Stockholm+50 © ForUM Norway

Civil society and stakeholders: key concepts in this document – not to be misunderstood

by **Jan Gustav Strandenaes**, Senior Adviser, Stakeholder Forum

Please note the following about central concepts used frequently in the PEN (and elsewhere)

We have frequently used the term ‘civil society’ in this document. This concept is also frequently used in UN documents. The term has its distinctive merits, and it is important to use it correctly, to respect it and to understand it. The concept is old and refers to precisely civil society. The existence and functionality of civil society are and have always been, and always will be a significant element of any democracy. The concept aims to distinguish those who belong to this part of society from the market forces, often referred to as business or the private sector. Civil society also has to be distinguished from the official authorities, local or national. Thus, the government and all those who represent the government or the elected authorities, such as those elected to municipalities or to the nation’s parliament, or their civil servants are not of civil society. Large international organisations, such as the World Bank and OECD distinguish between representatives from civil society, representatives for the market and representatives from the government.

Another frequently used term is ‘stakeholder’. The concept simply means a person or someone who has a stake or interest in some-

thing. A stakeholder can be civil society, or it can be business, or it can be a representative of government. A stakeholder is therefore context dependent. It is frequently assumed that stakeholders – in singular or plural form – is synonymous with civil society. These concepts are not synonymous. We often see that official government documents and UN documents make this mistake. Whether such mistakes are deliberate or not, can be subject to discussions. To make the distinction and set a stakeholder apart from the authorities, national or local, many use the term non-state-stakeholder or non-state actor. However, a non-state stakeholder is also not necessarily of civil society.

A third concept used in this document is Non-Governmental Organisations, or simply NGOs. This is an important term because it has a formal and legal status. The concept NGO is formally recognised in the UN Charter, in Article 71 of the Charter, and is thus given a legal status internationally. The NGO community at the UN includes all units and organisations which are not of the government – hence the term non-governmental. Neither the concept ‘civil society’ or ‘stakeholder’ have legal status. Only a properly organised NGO can be accredited to the UN. The definition of a proper NGO within the UN context may be found in a document agreed to by the UN Economic

and Social Council, ECOSOC. The document is called ECOSOC/1996/31.

The NGO community is global and large and contains a multitude of organisations from all walks of life. To help widen and deepen the understanding of the UN related NGO community, the concept Major Groups was developed and agreed to. There are Nine Major Groups according to the original agreement made in 1992 at the UN Conference on Environment and Development, UNCED. The Major Groups fill a chapter in Agenda 21. The nine are: Women; Children and Youth; Farmers; NGOs; Indigenous Peoples; Trade Unions; Local Authorities; Science and Technology; Business and Industry. To be recognised as a bona fide major group within the context of the UN, any Major Group has to be recognised as a proper NGO (ref: ECOSOC 1996/31).

The Major Group concept is used in various parts of the UN to give details to the NGO community. UNEP's governing body decided in 1996 to adopt and use the concept to designate its accredited NGOs. UNEP is today the only UN unit which still uses the Major Group concept as it was originally intended. The Major Group coordinating body at UNEP is called the Major Groups Facilitating Committee, the MGFC, and its members, two from each of the nine MGs, are elected by its own constituency. The United Nations Division of Economic and Social Affairs, UNDESA, which also coordinates the High-level Political Forum, the HLPF and the Sustainable Development Goals, the SDGs, also uses the major group concept. The resolution which mandates the HLPF, A/Res/67/290, has multiple references to the Major Groups. The NGO community at the HLPF, which comprises all Major Groups, has decided to expand on the number of Major Groups to include represent-

atives from the disabled community, the aging community and others. There are, however, no formal decisions to expand on the original number of the nine Major Groups as was decided in 1992 at UNCED.

The Major Groups concept has also inspired other parts of the UN to differentiate among the various NGO constituencies. The UNFCCC (the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) for instance, uses different designations for the NGO community in the climate negotiations. Each of the UN Specialized Agencies, such as the World Health Organisation, WHO, the Food and Agricultural Organisation, FAO, etc., are designated as autonomous bodies within the UN family¹ and they have their own system for the NGO community. The FAO and the World Food Programme have, for instance, adopted a subset of NGO designations inspired by the Major Groups, but different from them. What these agencies have done is to identify organisations which have a constituency relevant to the subject matter of the specialised agency. As such, you will find within the FAO/WFP context, organisations working on fishing, small farming, etc. The WHO has a focus on health workers, UNESCO on universities and schools, for instance.

What is important to remember is that each of the designations are context dependent, but they all have to be within the defined confines of Article 71 of the Charter. A business enterprise cannot be an accredited member of the UN as for-profit organisations are barred from being accredited members. They have tried a number of times. But a business can become a member of the ICC – the International Chamber of Commerce², which is a properly defined non-governmental organisation. As a member of ICC, a business-person can thus be

1 Each of the 15 Specialized Agencies has their own general assembly, secretariat etc <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-system>

2 <https://iccwbo.org/>



Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum High Level Segment on 22 June 2014 © UNEP

accredited to the UN³. A municipality cannot become an accredited member of the UN⁴, but a municipality can become a member of, for instance, UCLG⁵ - the United Cities and Local Governments, a bona fide NGO. Thus, it can get access to the UN as an accredited member of UCLG.

**What is important to remember is the following:
all civil society organisations are NGOs, but not all NGOs are of civil society.**

3 Several times, CEOs from large private companies have been accredited to the UN. But then they are a member of a country's delegation and given formal credentials by the government. And as the UN is owned by member states, this is a government's prerogative. Similarly, members of civil society have also been accredited to the UN by being a member of a country's official delegation.

4 There is one UN organisation which allows cities and municipalities to become accredited organisation to its system: the UN Habitat

5 <https://www.uclg.org/>

**Section Two:
A contextual
and fact-based
background to the
commemoration
of 50 years of work
for the environment**



Ingrid Rostad at Stockholm+50 © ForUM Norway

The Long and Winding Procedural Road for Stakeholders to Reach Stockholm+50

by **Ingrid Rostad**, Senior Adviser at the Norwegian Forum for Environment and Development, ForUM¹

We began with big expectations

2022 was the 50th anniversary of UNEP. This event was commemorated in March at the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) 5.2, in the two-day high-level meeting called UNEP@50, and later at the international meeting named Stockholm+50 in June the same year. Together the two events provided Member States and Major Groups and stakeholders with an opportunity to reflect on progress and disappointments in the years that have passed. But also, an opportunity to look ahead, share new ideas and envision a future where the environment is finally given the leading role.

Facing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, after two years of Covid and increasing tensions in the world, optimism did not have the best working conditions. As Major Groups and stakeholders, we still took this chance to celebrate successes and discuss how to change what needed improvements in moving forward.

The UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, represented a shift in participation for Major Groups and stakeholders: it gave us a seat at the table, a place in the meeting room and a speaking slot in the agenda. To many of us, Stockholm+50 in 2022 served as a reminder of this important victory and gave us an opportunity to remind Member States that we still have a place in international meetings after two years of Covid restrictions and limited access.

¹ <https://www.forumfor.no/en/om-forum>

The importance of the principle of self-organisation

As Major Groups and stakeholders, we are a diverse group, with a myriad of interests and perspectives. What we do have in common, however, is the realisation that we are stronger together with a common understanding and that there is an intrinsic value in all our perspectives being reflected. We have substantial experience in working together, while respecting our differences; choosing when to speak as one and when to use our separate voices based on an assessment of the situation. In light of this, the principle of self-organising is essential to the Major Groups. The principle of self-organising is a significant recognition that we, Major Groups and stakeholders, are responsible for our own strategic decisions and a vital safeguard for our independence. As long as we are self-organised, our representatives are accountable to our own constituencies. When someone else makes decisions on who speaks on behalf of the Major Groups and stakeholders, there is no validity to the stakeholder presentation as the selection of speakers and statements are not based on decisions made by the Major Groups themselves. There is neither accountability, representativity nor legitimacy in such processes.

Facing the complexity of the Triple Planetary Crisis demands that we also allow space for complexity in responses and analyses. The Major Group system is uniquely equipped to cater to such complexity, providing the different Major Groups with channels for their perspectives, while ensuring that new members of the different Major Groups can be integrated in the processes and contribute. However, as space for participation is shrinking and an increasing number of people are experiencing this, and with competition for the availa-

ble space hardening, the Major Group system is also under increasing pressure which became evident in the preparations for Stockholm +50.

Attempts at inclusivity without consultation

The decision was made² that the Stockholm +50 international meeting would include the Major Groups of UNEP, as well as accommodate participation from ECOSOC accredited organisations including providing the option for special accreditation for this event.

The idea behind this decision, expressed in the modalities resolution, was probably to be as inclusive as possible. But it also meant that non-state stakeholders from different UN processes would be huddled together as if they were all the same. The UN secretariat and Member States recognise that the 193 Member States at the UN all have different histories and that they represent different cultures and have different political backgrounds and priorities. This is also respected. But when it comes to civil society and non-state stakeholders, it is as if they all represent one homogeneous group and should also act as such. If one takes a closer look at the accreditation and participatory mechanisms that the UN family has developed in working with non-state stakeholders and civil society, one quickly notices that these mechanisms are, indeed, different precisely because they cater to different political realities and issues.

Coordination between the different stakeholder mechanisms that exist within the UN family, turned out to be a complex and difficult issue in the Stockholm+50 process. In addition, as the organisations outside established mechanisms felt no loyalty to the established and accepted processes, they became a threat to the principle of self-organisation. These problems

² <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/250/71/PDF/N2125071.pdf?OpenElement>



The Forum staff at Stockholm+50 © FoRUM Norway

could probably have been avoided if members of the Major Groups and stakeholders had been properly consulted at an early stage.

The diversity of participation mechanisms – are they understood?

The procedural mechanisms for accreditation and participation are not harmonised across the UN family. The identification of the different stakeholder groups also differ as they are thematically context dependent. The UN Charter recognises the Non-Governmental Organisations, the NGOs, as one of the three legally recognised actors at the UN. Article 71 has authorised the Economic and Social Council,

ECOSOC, to further develop norms and procedural rules for NGOs at the UN. This, however, only pertains to those elements of the UN that function under the auspices of the General Assembly (GA). Whereas Article 71 of the UN Charter with ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31 establishes a norm for the UN system, it is not binding for the Specialised Agencies of the UN. Not all the UN bodies under the auspices of the GA use the Major Groups system, which means that the NGOs working with these bodies would not be familiar with the UNEP mechanisms.

UNEP decided in 1996 to adopt the Nine Major Group's System as outlined in Agenda 21³ and has used this system successfully since then.

³ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>

Its participatory processes have been revised and updated reflecting the evolution and activities of stakeholders that work with global environmental issues including its governance. The Major Groups at UNEP are organised through a Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, the GMGSF as well as through an elected body, the Major Groups Facilitation Committee, the MGFC, that collaborates with UNEP on accreditation, capacity building and coordinating statements and inputs into the decision-making processes.

The MGFC contacted the Stockholm+50 Secretariat early on in the preparatory process for the Stockholm+50 Conference, but to no avail. In fact, the initial approaches to the official secretariat were met with silence. This came as a surprise to us, as the Major Groups system had always been welcomed and used effectively by the UN system and served all non-state stakeholders well. The MGFC had facilitated input from Major Groups at every Governing Council at UNEP since 1996, and every UNEA since its beginning in 2014. The Major Groups also coordinated the massive input of non-state stakeholders at the Rio+20 Conference in 2012.

Despite the efforts to offer help to the Stockholm+50 secretariat with the influx of non-state stakeholders in the Stockholm+50 process, the UNEP-Major Groups were unfortunately not invited to participate. Whereas it is the prerogative of Member States to develop and negotiate UN resolutions, it is also customary that States responsible for processes will consult – at least informally - with civil society when that part of society is involved or referenced in a resolution. The modalities resolution for the Stockholm+50 conference was developed without any consultation with the MGFC.

All this complicated the stakeholder participation in the Stockholm+50 preparations and made it into an unwieldy and counterproductive process. With the groups of non-state

stakeholders identified in the modalities resolution, with varying degrees of overlap, the task of coordinating participation became a challenge. Especially, as the unknown entity of “specially accredited” organisations had little or no connection to or affiliation with each other or the other accredited groups, this reality required new ideas for inclusion.

Fragmentation or diversity

Because mechanisms for participation vary across the UN system, stakeholders came to the Stockholm preparatory process and the conference itself with different expectations. Stakeholder participation and involvement became chaotic and not productive. It also added to the general frustrations that the conference secretariat evidently favoured a few of the nine Major Groups. Favours the few, and not respecting all, creates suspicion and fragmentation and is a disservice to the entire civil society.

Normally an elected body from the Major Groups would have coordinated statements and inputs during the conference. However, no such body was established, hence the conference secretariat selected all those who would represent the voice of civil society and stakeholders during the debates and in plenary.

There will always be a need for new voices, and initiatives to that effect would always be supported. But such initiatives must always be based on a process which has maximum accountability and representativity. And one way of guaranteeing this is to allow Major Groups and stakeholders to self-organise. One of the major problems in preparing for Stockholm+50, was the lack of knowledge of UNEP's Major Groups and stakeholder engagement processes. One of the biggest challenges for the Major Groups was the seeming unwillingness or disinterest from the official secretariat to sit down with us and allow us to explain these processes. The combination of these two resulted in a lack of functioning mechanisms to al-

low for a broad integration of all stakeholders, the way we were used to at UNEAs. Not having established mechanisms for cross-cutting coordination for all non-state stakeholders further exacerbated the feeling of fragmentation within the Major Groups who attended the Stockholm+50 conference.

Having to defend the principle of self-organisation in 2022 was particularly frustrating when we tried to prepare to celebrate Stockholm 1972, the milestone event that had given us the basis for self-organisation.

The Legacy of 1972 inspires and gives hope

Still, we also gathered strength and motivation from the history of 1972. The spirit of cooperation and a shared motivation to prove that we could have a joint impact - and despite difficulties - we managed to self-organise and present our contributions to the meeting. We managed to do so across different groups with varying interests. In the end, this became a driving force to find creative and pragmatic solutions to the challenges we faced.

Several initiatives taken by the Stockholm+50 Secretariat were perceived as divisive and resulted in frustrating the unity of the Major Groups. While we all applauded the energy and commitment of the Children and Youth Major group and appreciated their cooperation, the decisions by the conference secretariat to grant large sums of money exclusively to this group, and not to any of the others, felt unfair. Despite this, the Major Groups managed to contribute thematically to the process. We did so in substantive ways with inputs to the regional meet-

ings organised by UNEP as well as through our own issue-based webinars reaching out to our global audiences. We also applauded the initiatives from UNDP to organise the May national consultation on the national status of the environment where civil society engaged actively. Still, we also know that had we been integrated from the beginning in these and similar endeavours, we could have brought our constituencies into this process in a more constructive way. As this was not done, we are again left with a recurring afterthought – the intergovernmental system needs civil society to legitimise its actions, but not too many of us and not too actively.

The road to Stockholm+50 was a very long and winding one. But it was also a learning experience for many of us, a reminder that many official bureaucracies still think that collaboration with civil society is more of a symbolic issue than something to be taken seriously. Opposition will always force us to reach out to new groups and create new spaces for co-operation. As we began preparing for the Stockholm+50 meetings nearly two years in advance of the conference, we reached out to new people from across the globe who joined the conversations during the preparation as well as during and after the international meeting. While the Stockholm conference of 1972 went down in history as a milestone for participation, the Stockholm+50 was an important wake-up call that civil society still must fight to keep its seat at the table. Let us answer this wake-up call and keep a varied and knowledgeable representation of NGOs and civil society at the table and keep pushing for more ambitions to safeguard the environment.

UNCHE
1972



STOCKHOLM+50
2022

**“Human rights are not things that are
put on the table for people to enjoy.
These are things you fight for
and then you protect.**

**When we plant trees, we plant
the seeds of peace and hope.”**

Wangari Maathai

UNEP's challenging journey to environmental success

A short introduction to fifty years of work to safeguard the environment

by **Jan-Gustav Strandenaes**, Senior Adviser, Stakeholder Forum

Author's note

Two historical events to commemorate fifty years of global efforts to safeguard the environment took place in 2022. Fifty years after the seminal United Nations Conference on the Human Environment opened in June of 1972 in Stockholm, Sweden, and firmly positioned the environment on the global agenda, 'UNEP@ 50' took place at UNEP's Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, in March 2022 and 'Stockholm+50' took place in Stockholm in June 2022. UNEP is the preeminent intergovernmental organisation to work on and for the global environment. Through its fifty years' existence it has accomplished more than most people are aware of.

There is a plethora of reports analysing various elements of UNEP's work on all aspects of what the environment offers as challenges. Of late UNEP has published what they call their flagship reports, which are reports on different aspects of the environment, researched and written by the foremost experts of the world. UNEP has also regularly produced their Global Environment Outlook, the GEO reports, analysing what will affect the environment and suggesting solutions. UNEP's repository grows daily.

There is however no existing short history covering all of UNEP's accomplishments. A few excellent books have been written, and more will be written in the years to come. The following

is a short historical overview of UNEP's accomplishments through these fifty years of work. Rather than following a strict chronological order of events, the content focusses on key issues which UNEP has dealt with quite successfully. The content is descriptive in format, and not analytical. The presentation weaves through the fifty years of environmental work performed by UNEP. Mindful of the fact that politics, conference outcomes, and agendas at the UN to a large extent reflect the politics of the world which surrounds the UN, this presentation does not go into the politics of the world. It is focused on what takes place primarily at UNEP and to some extent to UN related issues to give some context. At times the author has also allowed himself a few subjective observations, though the facts speak for themselves.

This historical overview is not an official UN document, neither is the document a result of a UNEP assignment as such. Mistakes or misrepresentation of facts, should they occur, are the sole responsibility of the author.

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes
Knapstad, Norway, September 2022



UNEA Getting started. Attendance at the preliminary sessions of the first ever United Nations Environment Assembly. June 2014, Nairobi, Kenya © UNEP

UNEP's challenging journey to environmental success

By **Jan-Gustav Strandenaes**, Senior Adviser, Stakeholder Forum

Success at UNEA 5

The spell of suspense was finally broken.

It had taken eight years. People in the large assembly hall were jubilant. People were clapping, some hugging each other. For a few minutes, important Ministers, solemn Ambassadors, ordinary delegates and members of civil society allowed themselves to feel like happy people, some even dancing a little in the plenary hall at UNEP's headquarters in Gigiri, Nairobi. The UN Environment Assembly, UNEP's highest authority, through a unanimous agreement, had adopted the resolution titled "End Plastic Pollution – towards a legally binding instrument." The beginning of the end to plastic pollution was in sight. What had been born as a suggestion at the first UN Environment Assembly in 2014 reflecting a growing environmental concern and fear for all life in all oceans, had finally been turned into a legally binding document to curb all plastics pollution. Or – an almost a legally binding document. Turning the adopted resolution into a final legally binding document would require a new process, but that process had now begun. Nations had agreed to develop such a document. Pushed by civil society, and convinced by researchers and scientific evidence, the Norwegian government had brought the plastics issue to the agenda of the newly established UN Environment Assembly, UNEA 1, in 2014. Scientists had for years unequivocally stated that the planet's oceans would die and all life in it be subjected to slow suffocation if the plastic pollution would continue unabated.

"May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt this resolution?" These were the undramatic words spoken by the President of UNEA 5.2, the Norwegian Minister of Environment and Climate, Mr. Espen Bart Eide. Eide asked the question according to protocol; a protocol which has a tendency to flatten all occasions making them teeter on the border of boredom. Looking over the plenary to see any reactions, Eide had continued after a couple of seconds saying "I see no objections. It is so decided." With a smile he had brought the gavel down announcing among the growing applause and happy cheers: "We are making history today, and you should all be proud." The plastics resolution had been adopted.

The work, the process, the decision and those engaged and participating in making the plastics resolution come true, all reflect in a good way the unique and successful position of UN's Environment Programme. UNEP's organisational and political structure allows for an operative multi-stakeholder process, and several of its pivotal decisions to protect nature and its environment have been taken as a result of a multistakeholder process.

A fifty-year journey to success – but who would know?

UNEA, The United Nations Environment Assembly, convened every two years, is composed of all nations in the world. 193 nations

constitute its constituency. Global work for the environment had finally resulted in a major victory for the environment with the decision at UNEA 5 in 2022 on halting plastic pollution. The global efforts to safeguard the environment had come a long way since 1972, when the UN Environment Programme had been founded. When that took place back in 1972 through a unanimous agreement on a June day at the Stockholm conference on the Human Environment, a critical milestone had been reached. Amid growing concerns for the environment during the 1960s, the UN had been urged to take action. Proposed by Mexico and negotiated and agreed to by the UN General Assembly in 1968 and 1969, two subsequent resolutions mandated¹ the UN to organise a global conference focussing on the global environment. The government of Sweden was approached and asked to host the conference. The Swedish government accepted and spent the following years preparing for the 1972 conference. The 1972 conference became “a first” in many instances; it was the first time scientific research had been brought into a political conference to provide basis for policy decisions. It was the first time national environmental assessments were presented at a global conference. It was the first time civil society was allowed into an intergovernmental conference on a regular, daily basis. The 1972 Stockholm conference set a significant precedent that over time changed the course of actions for the environment involving all nations of the world. This led to many decisions providing successful actions to protect the environment.

A recent success is the agreement to develop a legally binding resolution to stop all plastic pollution. Another success is the ongoing work on global warming. And despite several constraints, such as a low budget - there were

many more success stories between 1972 and 2022. What does the world in general, and environmental movements in particular know of UNEP's accomplishments? This fifty-year journey with its many successes – many unknown to most people - warrants a well-documented story to be told.

UN's slow struggle to environmental results

A focus on the environment by the UN does not begin with UNEP. The UN focus on environmental issues predates UNEP with several years, if not decades. The most ambitious focus the UN had on the environment more than fifty years ago, was the Man and Biosphere programme, developed during the 1960s and 70s and administrated by UNESCO in Paris. In fact, one of the essential objectives for the 1972 Stockholm conference was to develop a declaration on the human environment, a “document of basic principles.” The idea behind this idea originated with a proposal by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) that the conference draft a “Universal Declaration on the Protection and Preservation of the Human Environment”.²

Another long-standing focus on environmentally related issues concerned the oceans. The UN International Maritime Organisation, IMO, based in London was actually founded in 1948, but only began its operative work in 1959. Its work combines legal, normative and environmental matters related to oceans.

The World Meteorological Organisation, WMO, was founded in 1950, and has within its mandate a focus on atmospheric science, climatology, geophysics and hydrology, all environmentally oriented elements. The Food and Agriculture Organisation, FAO,

¹ In 1968-69, by resolutions 2398 (XXIII) and 2581 (XXIV) – see: <https://legal.un.org/avl/ha/dunche/dunche.html>

² <https://legal.un.org/avl/ha/dunche/dunche.html>

founded in 1945, took an early interest in how the environment and nature affected food production.

There were in fact several bodies within the UN that had worked on issues we today associate with environmental problems and challenges. But there was no coordination of these efforts, there was no organisation with a mandate to look at the interconnectedness of these issues, there was no organisational element to identify environmental issues, research these elements with a rigorous focus on scientific methodology and scrutiny for facts and from that point of view, develop policies. There was a need for such a coordination, and this coordination found an expression in the establishment of UNEP. By its mere foundation, a success had been granted, a manifestation expressed in the outcome documents as well. The Stockholm Declaration from 1972 encapsulates a broad spectrum of ideas, value statements and concerns that relate to the environment, and as many astute observers have pointed out, several of the 109 recommendations from the 1972 conference were directed mostly to UN bodies with an effort to coordinate environmental issues. Considering environmental issues as serious and something which are warranted closer study, are in many instances taken for granted today – fifty years ago all this was a revolutionary novelty.

Another success which expressed more political recognition than environmental concerns and engagement, was the decision to situate the UNEP headquarters in Nairobi in Kenya. Notwithstanding the original UN structure from 1945 with the five economic commissions, of which three were in the global south (Africa, Asia and Latin America), UNEP became as such the first important UN family headquarter positioned in the global south.



Headquarters of UNEP in Nairobi, Kenya © UNEP

The more success, the less recognition

The more successful UNEP has been in identifying and tackling environmental problems, the less praise and recognition seem to have come to UNEP. The climate issue is point in case. With the World Meteorological Organisation, WMO, UNEP's team and secretariat identified climate issues during the early part of the 1970s, and the two organisations established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, in 1988 to involve the best scientists in the world to deal with this issue. Few associate today climate issues with UNEP as the preeminent organisation to deal with climate issues, even though UNEP did the pioneering and introductory work on climate.

This rather strange paradox has been pointed out by several authors during the fifty-year long existence of UNEP and several authors have tried to identify reasons for this contradiction. Part of the explanation may be found in how UNEP was established and included in the organisational structure of the UN family. UNEP was originally designed to function with a lean

organisational structure, as a programme, under the auspices of the UN General Assembly. A programme should ideally have no overarching executive authority to implement projects. UNEP still has this position in the UN family, despite the elevation of its general assembly from the old Governing Council with a rotating membership of 58 nations based on the geographical representation within the UN system, to the present UN Environment Assembly, UNEA, with universal membership. UNEP itself is still a programme under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, the UNGA. Any decision taken by the UNEA will still have to be adopted by the UNGA to become a formally adopted decision. A lean structure, subject to the overarching authority of the General Assembly, UNEP was not allowed to grow into a large organisational bureaucracy. When emerging environmental issues were identified, and dealt with by UNEP, the issues were 'given away' to other parts of the UN to have a life of their own there. Their future successes were no longer attributed to UNEP. And yet UNEP has been heralded as the pre-eminent organisation within the UN family to handle environmental issues and problems. Looking into the fifty-year history of UNEP, it has been very successful in this endeavour.

The budget constraint – hampering success

Another issue that has seemed to constrain UNEP's growth and outreach into different environmental areas, is found in the everlasting existential problem for UNEP – its budget. UNEP's formal position indicates budgeting via the UN core budget. The allocation from the core budget to UNEP has always been woefully inadequate. Observers have time and again pointed to the fact that UNEP's total budget is less than the budgets of Green Peace and WWF combined. To be able to grapple with

growing environmental problems and making efforts to carry out the many decisions taken by UNEP's GC or since 2014, the different UNEAs, UNEP's staff have been adamant and creative at developing project funding and have been quite successful in doing so. In reality, UNEP is a programme developing policies on environmental problems funded in large parts by project funding. However, despite the ingenuity of staff in budgeting and a few countries' generosity in additional funding, UNEP's total budget is nowhere near what is needed in relation to the growing challenges of environmental issues. 95% of UNEP's budget derived in 2022 from voluntary funding.³

As stated, the funding shortcoming may be explained by UNEP's formal position in the UN family. UNEP's budget problems were widely discussed in the run-up to the Rio conference in 2012 when there was talk about upgrading UNEP to a Specialized Agency. A key argument against such an upgrade, was that if UNEP should become a UN Specialized Agency, the funding would be made increasingly difficult as UNEP would no longer be granted any sums from the UN core budget. That such arguments were used, and are still accepted, probably say more about governments' reluctance to upset an accepted and agreed formality in the UN structure, than the willingness to address the real and difficult environment problems of the world with new systems.

A commonly recurring phrase by UN and UNEP member states is that form must follow function. This argument is often used by governments to rationalise budget cuts in the name of modernising the organisation. Do more with less, has been the dictum after every reform effort that has struck the UN family. Turn this around and say the environmental problems facing the world today are staggering –

³ <https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment>

in more ways than one. These problems challenge the way we live and perpetuate poverty and inequality. As such, the functions of an organisation dealing with these problems, should be adequate in immediate responses and long term in lasting results. Any organisation should have a structure with a 'form' which is strong and forceful. Such organisation could be designed as lean, in terms of response time, but powerful and politically important in terms of actions, focus and implementation. Is UNEP's organisational architecture conducive to such assessment?

Deeds not words, actions to act on identified environmental problems, have been stated repeatedly by civil society and member states during UNEP's fifty years. Reports, background papers, resolutions and agreements from UNEP's 50-year existence addressing a steadily growing number of environmental problems have been piling up. Some have been dealt with, but too many have yet to be solved. Inadequate funding has turned these documents into a litany of disappointments undermining UNEP's resolve and motivation to address all these problems. The world of aspirational strategies without the means of implementation, is the world of clichés, empty meaningless jargonised words to be used by cynics and right-wing politicians in gloating ceremonies casting doubts on the multilateral and intergovernmental systems, undermining their credibility with the end result – the strategies and statements end up in the wasteland of broken promises and lack of trust.

Fulfilling the mandate, a condition for success

Despite such a gloomy appraisal and with a woefully inadequate budget, and despite a very demanding mandate and an organisa-

tion often criticised by having an inept understanding of environmental challenges, UNEP has accomplished a lot towards fulfilling its demanding mandate.

The relationship between ideas, knowledge and action is a complex one. Such a descriptive adage fits the UN system quite well. The long and often arduous way an issue takes from being identified and defined through being negotiated and finally agreed to, and ultimately translated into implementable programmes and projects, clearly illustrates this adage. In an organisation, this way often begins with its mandate. The plastics issue just described, is an ample illustration of an idea's arduous path from an identified concern and problem to a legally binding decision. Let us therefore ask – what is UNEP's mandate?

The mandate is expressed in three formal UNGA documents; the first in the original outcome document from the conference in 1972 (resolution 2997 of 15 December 1972), the second at UNEP's 25th anniversary in 1997 at a Governing Council meeting in February that year; the third was the Rio+20 Outcome Document, "The Future We Want", paragraphs 87 to 89. UNEP's mandate was strengthened considerably in 1997 and this document contains a detailed overview of all the tasks that UNEP should carry out. The mandate is outlined in the "Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of the UN Environment Programme" from that year. The Nairobi Declaration in 1997 built upon the Rio 1992 conference⁴ that gave the world Agenda 21 and, it recognised and integrated the outcome documents from this conference including referencing all its agreements and decisions. The Nairobi Declaration reiterated the original mandate agreed to in 1972 and further emphasised that UNEP is the foremost organisation within the UN family to

⁴ The UN Conference on Environment and Development, UNCED, in 1992

deal with the environment. It also added that UNEP has a prime responsibility to implement the environmental dimension of sustainable development. The Nairobi Declaration then reiterates a number of issues that are of paramount importance to UNEP and to the environmental well-being of the world. The Declaration states that UNEP shall, inter alia:

- Set the global environmental agenda
- Analyse and assess global environmental trends, provide policy advice, early warning information on environmental trends, catalyse and promote action based on scientific advice
- Promote international law and highlight interlinkages between environmental conventions
- Advance implementation of agreed international norms and principles and international agreements
- Be strengthened in its role as coordinator of environmental activities within the UN system
- Serve as an effective link between the scientific community and policy makers
- Provide policy and advisory services on key areas of institution building to governments
- Improve and strengthen the governance structure of UNEP making it the global forum for environment ministers
- Increase and strengthen regional systems
- Increase the participation of the major groups
- Secure stable and predictable financial support

A third update on the mandate was made in 2012 at Rio+20. Mandated on three different occasions by the world to be the preeminent intergovernmental organisation on the environment, UNEP should in every context be this organisation. The evolution of this mandate reflects the growing and expanding knowledge of the world's environmental problems.

It took 40 years from 1972 to reach what was finally agreed to in 2012, and the path had been long and arduous: An original mandate was agreed to in 1972, at the UN Conference on the Human Environment when UNEP was established. Then, in 1997, the mandate was further strengthened. Lastly, the mandate was further expanded in 2012, in the outcome document from the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, UNCSD⁵, the so-called Rio+20. This document again emphasised unequivocally that UNEP is the preeminent environment organisation in the UN family.

The following are the two first paragraphs of UNEP's present strong environmental mandate (from 1997):

§1 - That the United Nations Environment Programme has been and should continue to be the principal United Nations body in the field of the environment and that we, the ministers of the environment and heads of delegations attending the nineteenth session of the Governing Council, are determined to play a stronger role in the implementation of the goals and objectives of the United Nations Environment Programme

§2 - That the role of the United Nations Environment Programme is to be the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, that promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and that serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment; "(from the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme, February 7, 1997)

⁵ para 88

To what extent has UNEP and its member states been able to accomplish all that is outlined in its mandate? Criticism is always easy to pronounce. Giving praise has to be substantiated lest it should lead to platitudes.

Without nature there is nothing

Giving the keynote address at the Nachhaltigkeitstag, the Sustainability Day in Düsseldorf, Germany in December 2018, Professor Rockström concluded his statement by saying – “The biosphere is non-negotiable. Without nature, nothing exists.”⁶ Without too much generalisation, we might say that Rockström’s statement encapsulates UNEP’s mandate.

"The biosphere is non-negotiable. Without nature, nothing exists"

One of the many prerogatives of the UN system is that it can set the agenda. The UN system offers opportunities to pick up and work with issues that are of concern to people but have for a number of reasons – mostly politi-

cal, and often because of lack of knowledge – not reached the global agenda. The environmental concerns were such an issue back in the 1970s and UNEP became the response to these concerns. Dramatic manmade environmental disasters had followed one after another during the 1960s and 1970s. Something had to be done.

Rachel Carson, the US marine biologist and conservationist⁷ published her book *Silent Spring* in 1962. The book pointed to the dangers of chemical pollution and how this adversely affected the environment. The book is said to have inspired the establishment of the environmental movement, and public interest in the environment was growing during the 1960s. A number of grave environmental catastrophes accentuated this interest. Acid rain pummelled European forests and laid bare large tracts of forests; in February 1967 the 120,000 tonne super tanker *Torrey Canyon* ran aground west of Cornwall in England⁸ spilling an estimated 94 to 164 million litres of crude oil, causing the worst oil spill to date in UK history. Hundreds of kilometres of shoreline in Britain, Guernsey, France and Spain were soaked in oil. On June the 22nd, 1969, the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland Ohio caught fire⁹ and burned for several days, causing severe damage to infrastructure and nature. This was the 13th fire since 1868, and this time this man-made environmental catastrophe inspired the establishment of the Environment Protection Agency, the EPA, in the US. The Minamata disaster¹⁰ broke the news worldwide in the 1960s and people were horrified at pictures show-

6 Notes taken by the author who was present in the audience, listening to Rockström

7 <https://www.rachelcarson.org/>

8 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torrey_Canyon_oil_spill

9 <https://www.healthandenvironment.org/environmental-health/social-context/history/the-cuyahoga-river-fire-of-1969#:~:text=On%20June%2022%2C%201969%2C%20an,had%20caught%20fire%20since%201868.>

10 <https://www.verywellhealth.com/minamata-disease-2860856>



New York, 1972. The Preparatory Committee for the UN Conference on the Human Environment opens its fourth and final pre-Stockholm session. Here **Fereydoun Hoveyda** and Iran Addresses the Committee. At right is **A.S. Mani** of India © UNEP

ing how people had been poisoned by mercury that had been discharged from a chemical plant directly into the waters in the bay of Minamata in Japan. The discharge had gone on since the 1930s, and thousands had been affected and maimed for life.

Times were becoming ripe for a global institution to deal with global environmental problems, initiate global environmental research and subsequently develop environmental policies. But were decision-makers ready? And did they understand the severity of the problems?

In UNGA resolution 2398 of 1968, the agreement to organise the UN Conference on the Human Environment in June 1972 was explicitly stated. In the lead up to the conference in 1972, the UN expected opposition from international financial and private sector interests and from developing nations; the first would be opposing almost any kind of regulation, the

latter were more concerned with economic development than environmental issues. The developing nations feared the North would use environment as a “green conditionality” and hinder industrial development in the South. Both these concerns manifested themselves, and some were reflected in the outcome document from 1972. The rich north did however take the developing concerns outlined by the global south seriously and managed at the same time to focus on and highlight the necessity to take the environment seriously. Principle 1 of the Stockholm Declaration stated that we all have a right to “an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being ...”

UNEP – starting from scratch, almost

Creating an understanding and a basis for global environmental policies was a novelty in the 1960s and 1970s, as environmental

problems had by and large been viewed as something national, at best regional. If at all recognised by the international community, environmental problems were an issue that plagued the north. Transboundary issues were not well understood, neither were transcontinental issues. And if they were understood – there were few tools available to handle them, no rules, regulations or laws to mandate global action on these issues, and there was no institution to deal with the environment. UNEP's early successes can actually be measured in creating such laws and norms. But as these issues are far from the news headlines and people's everyday talk, this went by largely unnoticed.¹¹

Another issue which has often been overlooked in measuring UNEP's positive accomplishments, is what we call today our responsibility for future generations. Today in 2022, this issue is seen as a concern owned and propagated by the activities of youth and more often than not, directed solely to global warming. Implicit in UNEP's mandate is the need to look to the future with an aim to solve environmental issues of the future. The first time intergenerational responsibilities were stated in a normative and legal manner, was in the chapeau to the convention to regulate whaling adopted in 1946.¹² The first paragraph states: "Recognizing the interest of the nations of the world in safeguarding for future generations the great natural resources represented by the whale stocks;" It was only fitting that civil society organised a demonstration during the 1972 Stockholm Conference demanding that the participating governments should agree to an immediate moratorium on hunting the blue whale. Pushing a 30 metres long 'blue whale' made of paper and other materi-

als through the streets of Stockholm, civil society captured the attention of governments, and the conference proposed a ten-year moratorium on whale hunting. The International Whaling Commission, IWC, adopted a moratorium on commercial whale hunting in 1982, which is still in place. Many have asserted that the moratorium was indeed inspired and expedited by the UN 1972 conference on the Human Environment.

Environmental law gives strength to environmental policy

The International Environmental Agreements database at the University of Oregon lists more than 1300 Multilateral Environmental Agreements.¹³ In addition, there are a vast number of bilateral agreements concerning the environment. Environmental law did not begin with UNEP, as we have seen, but UNEP certainly accelerated the understanding of the need for environmental law as well as initiated and developed many new rules and provisions. When UNEP was established in 1972, the world also got an organisation which would serve as an institution for environmental law, actively promoting and developing these issues. With the development of this type of negotiated agreements, for this was the nature of these laws, environmental diplomacy also began that brought together science, politics and implementation. Developing environmental laws and agreeing to them on a global scale and thus implicitly agreeing to norms and standards as well as protocols and monitoring systems, can be counted as one of UNEP's biggest successes. And still, despite this stated success, where are the obvious and positive results?

A few years back, Lynda Warren, Emeritus

¹¹ See Maria Ivanova, Lars Engfeldt, Stanley Johnson, Tom Bigg and Birne & Boyle for further reding

¹² <https://iwc.int/commission/history-and-purpose>

¹³ <https://iea.uoregon.edu/>

Professor of Environmental Law at Aberystwyth University, wrote: "Anyone who has followed the scientific case presented by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) can be in no doubt that our current environmental laws are not succeeding in addressing global environmental problems. The big question then is this. Given that we are committed to environmental protection, based on sound science with policies enacted in law, why isn't environmental quality improving rather than deteriorating?" She then postulates the following: "I think we have failed to understand what it means to be a species, part of the natural world. Making a distinction between natural and human activities is not always helpful; we would do well to remember that we are part of nature. The most obvious manifestation of this failure is our inability to think environmentally at the level of the individual in a way that is meaningful at the society level."¹⁴ And yet, looking at a few of the seminal outcome documents from key UN summits on environment and sustainable development, they do address this challenge and provide solutions, at least in theory. The declaration from the 1972 Stockholm conference addresses the issue, Agenda 21 addresses the issue, the Rio+20 Outcome Document addresses this issue, the 2030 Agenda for a sustainable future addresses the issue.

Enacting environmental laws based on environmental science is a precondition for making sound policy that can address the problems. Without a language and facts and norms backing laws, they are neither relevant nor will they be effective. That is why there is a need for environmental jurisprudence.

When UNEP began its work, there was no global or well developed national environmental jurisprudence; today there is. "Environmental Jurisprudence's highest achievement is its codification of a change in ethics, and a legal recognition that both individual and governmental agency responsibility extend to the natural world."¹⁵ And for this, UNEP has been highly instrumental.

In 1980, the UNEP Governing Council, GC, requested senior government officials who were experts in environmental law to: "Establish a framework, methods and programme, including global, regional and national efforts for the development and periodic review of environmental law and to contribute to the preparations and implementation of the environmental law component of the System Wide Medium Term Environment Programme" (Decision 8/15 of UNEP GC, 29 April 1980)

A milestone in international environmental law was established following this GC decision when the Montevideo Programme for the Development and Periodic Review on Environmental Law, shortened to the Montevideo Programme, was agreed to. Writes the Earth Negotiations Bulletin¹⁶:

"Montevideo Programme I was adopted by the UNEP GC in 1982 as a strategic guidance plan for fulfilling UNEP's mandate to undertake activities regarding the conclusion of international agreements and the development of international principles, guidelines, and standards. It was divided into five parts: subject areas, objectives and strategies; elements of strategy; methods of implementation, review and fol-

¹⁴ "WORKING TOWARDS AN ENVIRONMENTAL JURISPRUDENCE" by Lynda M Warren, Department of Law and Criminology, Aberystwyth University, Penglais, Aberystwyth SY23 3DH, UK, lm.warren@btopenworld.com

¹⁵ "Overview of Environmental Jurisprudence within Environmental Ethics," Kemi Anthony Emina, Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy, Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria

¹⁶ https://enb.iisd.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/montevideo_programme_summary_0.pdf

low up; general development of environmental law; specific recommendations for initial action. Major subject areas included: marine pollution from landbased surfaces; protection of the stratospheric ozone layer; transport, handling and disposal of toxic and dangerous wastes. Other subject areas included international cooperation in environmental emergencies, coastal zone management, and soil conservation.”

Every decade a new Montevideo Programme has been adopted. Montevideo II adopted in 1993 responded largely to the outcomes from the Rio 1992 Conference, Montevideo III was adopted by the GC in 2001 and contained 20 components under three main areas:¹⁷

- effectiveness of environmental law, which considered capacity building, harmonization and coordination, and innovative approaches to environmental law.
- conservation and management, which addressed freshwater resources, biological diversity, and production and consumption patterns.
- relationship with other fields, which focused on trade, security and the environment, and military activities and the environment.

Montevideo IV was agreed to by the GC in 2009, this time with an ambitious 27 programme area, organised in 4 clusters:¹⁸

- the effectiveness of environmental law, focusing on crosscutting issues affecting that effectiveness;
- conservation, management, and sustainable use of natural resources, such as fresh and marine water, aquatic living re-

sources, forests, biological diversity, and sustainable production and consumption patterns;

- challenges for environmental law, such as climate change, poverty, pollution prevention and control, and new technology; and
- the relationship between environmental law and other fields, including human rights, trade, security, and military activities.

Montevideo V was agreed to by the fourth UN Environment Assembly, UNEA 4 in 2019. Titled ‘Delivering for People and the Planet’, the programme contains strategies and objectives, but the real novelty then was to align Montevideo V with the programme of work and the Medium-Term Strategies which the UNEA agree to every five years.

UNEP has since the inception of the Montevideo law programmes, developed a number of other programmes that relate to environmental law: UNEP’s Global Judges Programme, initiated during the World Summit on Sustainable Development, WSSD, in Johannesburg in 2002. Working across the UN system, a further initiative was taken to upgrade environmental rights. The Human Rights Council established the mandate for the Independent Expert on human rights and the environment in 2012 (resolution 19/10). Mr. John Knox was appointed the first Independent Expert on human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment for a three-year term.



¹⁷ ibid

¹⁸ ibid



Mr. A.I. McCutchan (left) and **Mr. S.W. Gentle**, of Australia, are seen at a meeting of the Second Committee held on 12 June 1972 at Stockholm+50 © UNEP

His mandate was further extended in March 2015 as a Special Rapporteur for another three years (resolution 28/11). In March 2018, the Human Rights Council further extended the mandate (resolution 37/8) and appointed Mr. David. R. Boyd as the Special Rapporteur for three years. In March 2021 the Human Rights Council extended the mandate for another three years (resolution 46/7).¹⁹

Finally, perhaps one of the biggest accomplishments to date, was recognising the right to having a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right. The Human Rights Council called on states, for the first time, in res-

olution 48/13 to work together, and with other partners, to implement this newly recognised right. At the same time, through a second resolution (48/14), the Council also increased its focus on the human rights impacts of climate change by establishing a Special Rapporteur dedicated specifically to that issue.²⁰

Environmental science

Studying the 1972 Stockholm Action Plan for the Human Environment it is fair to say that it was structured on three levels: Environmental Assessments, Environmental Management and Supporting Measures. From day one, UNEP

¹⁹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-environment>

²⁰ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/10/1102582>

has brought together in a unique way science, politics and implementation. Preparing for the 1972 Conference, the UN and the Swedish government spent the five preparatory years asking participating countries to provide their first environmental assessments. The UN had in 1972 132 member states, and 80 countries responded to the request and provided input. This first global effort to scientifically map the state of the environment yielded several surprising results. When environmental problems were uncovered, they appeared to be worse than anticipated. These scientific facts and reports were widely used to persuade countries to participate in the environment conference, ultimately forcing countries to begin dealing with an issue not many prioritised back then.

UNEP has since always provided state of the art research and science papers to back up what the Rio+20 Outcome Document in 2012 called 'evidence-based decisions.' The content of the scientific reports today are naturally vastly improved, and UNEP continues to publish annually so-called 'flagship reports' on key scientific issues. Available to all persons interested in the environment, UNEP publishes the well-researched – and by the way, crowd-sourced Global Environment Outlook reports, the GEO reports, on a regular basis.

The sum total of all this amounts to the following: science and research, written up in reports, and analysed well, are presented to UNEP's committees and finally to the UN Environment Assembly, which negotiates among other things, plans of implementation, resulting every five years in a Medium-Term Strategy. This is also supported by the development of legal instruments forcing gradually greater accountability and in more cases than one, levels of commitment. From UNEP's early days, science and legal matters became a basis for

policy, which was supported by environmental diplomacy and subsequently by a growing understanding of environmental governance.

Working with the global NGO community

The Stockholm conference in 1972 established a precedent by allowing the NGO community to report back to the official plenary on a regular, daily basis. The Secretary General of the Conference, Maurice Strong had commissioned Ms. Barbara Ward, the eminent and committed author and environmentalist, to write a report for the Stockholm Conference named "Only One Earth: The Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet." Seeing the large number of civil society people present in Stockholm and wanting to have their voice heard, Ms. Ward demanded in her persuasive manner that the NGO community be heard and report back to the official conference²¹. As this was accepted, a new and momentous chapter began in the history of intergovernmental governance. All subsequent UN conferences would have civil society and non-state actors present giving their input to the official plenaries in one form or another. There is a direct line from the conference in 1972 to the acceptance of the nine major groups concept adopted in 1992, in Agenda 21, at the UN Conference on Environment and Development, UNCED, another global conference where the environment played a hugely important part, and where Maurice Strong again was the Secretary General.

The presence of civil society and other stakeholders at intergovernmental conferences have always disturbed, annoyed and at times irritated official delegates. Nations with less respect for democracy have since 1972 been adamant at inventing mechanisms to curb and

21 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbara_Ward,_Baroness_Jackson_of_Lodsworth

limit the presence of non-state stakeholders. G-77 has a consistent story of making life for civil society difficult at UN meetings. In this endeavour they have always been supported by Russia and China and by countries ruled at times by heads of state inclined to despotism.

Whereas almost all UN outcome documents now refer to the participation of civil society, it does not mean that civil society organisations have been integrated in the decision-making process. The reference to civil society incurs a certain level of legitimacy and speaks to all those people who demand a voice in the development of their lives. The so called “no-objection mechanisms” invented in the late 1990s, whereby member states of any UN entity can bar even an accredited NGO from participation simply by noting their objection without giving any reason to the secretariat of the conference, speaks to censorship and not to involvement. As all UN entities are run by the member states, UNEP has also had its difficulties with allowing civil society and stakeholder involvement in decision making processes. Member states have much too often objected to having members of civil society and stakeholders in the same room as them.

Following the enthusiasm that was evident among participants and organisations present in Stockholm in 1972, civil society expressed the need to collaborate regularly with UNEP. UNEP was positive, which led to the establishment of the Environment Liaison Centre International (ELCI). ELCI was established as a network NGO to help facilitate work between UNEP and the growing NGO community. ELCI followed UNEP and located its headquarters to Nairobi. As such it was among the first global network on UN matters with a headquarter in the global south. ELCI was an early example of how the civil society and stakeholder

communities would pool their resources and establish coordinating mechanisms. Perhaps inspired by ELCI, the nine major groups after Rio and Agenda 21 in 1992, established similar coordinating mechanisms. One of the most efficient ones was for a number of years the Organising Committee which worked with the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, CSD, on Agenda 21 matters. UNEP has its own Major Group and Facilitating Committee, the MGFC, with members elected for a defined period of time from a global constituency of non-state actors.

UNEP's Governing Council in a decision in 1996, adopted the concept of the 9 Major Groups, in accordance with the unanimous outcome result in Agenda 21. And yet, several times since then, the major groups have been barred from entering plenaries during UNEP GCs. When rules of procedures were discussed in relation to the UN Environment Assembly, in 2013 and 2014, China and G-77 did their utmost to scale down the rules of procedures allowing civil society and the major groups to participate. However, thanks to the clear and strong work of the EU and at the time the US – then under the tutelage of the Obama administration, - the major groups and stakeholders still have access to plenaries and committees at UNEP.

The year 2000 was an important milestone in many respects. Sweden hosted a first UNEP Global Ministerial and Environment Forum and Governing Council – GMGF/GC - in Malmö, Sweden. Eager to pick up issues from 1972, the Swedish government used considerable time to revitalise and upgrade democratic elements of environmental governance, not the least in relation to civil society. Paragraph 14 of the Malmö Declaration decided by the GMEF/GC meeting in Malmö, states²²:

22 <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/425068?ln=en>



At the 27th United Nations Climate Change Conference, more commonly referred to as Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC, or **COP27**. Egypt, 2022 © UNEP

“Civil society plays a critically important role in addressing environmental issues. The role, capabilities and involvement of civil society organizations has seen a substantial increase over recent years, which highlights the need for national Governments and for UNEP and international organizations to enhance the engagement of these organizations in their work on environmental matters....”

Civil society and UNEP, a growing partnership – the example from chemicals

Civil society organisations have often played key roles in identifying and formulating emerging issues. Contrary to popular views, several non-state actors function as think tanks providing high level expertise and factual informa-

tion during UN conferences, information which has been pivotal in processing results. Looking at the history of the UN, we see that the system has developed organisational constructs that include civil society at a very high level of influence, precisely because they provide high level input. And when the two are acting in unison, UNEP providing the platform and civil society providing input, an outcome may be for the better. The chemical issues are case in points.

Tackling chemical issues and its ensuing pollution posed a formidable challenge to regulators. Scientific evidence, concerning nature and health, showed how dangerous chemicals could be, if not handled with utmost care. Managing and disposing of hazardous waste have been on UNEP's agenda for decades. During the 1980s reckless disposal of chemi-

cal waste in African countries made headlines all over the world, and UNEP decided in 1981 to pick up these issues as part of its Montevideo law programme. The public had voiced strong opposition to unregulated waste disposal, and operators tried to save money by switching their irresponsible waste disposal from Africa to Eastern European countries. To add insult to injury, a chemical plant in Bhopal, India, exploded in 1984, due to negligent and inadequate security measures, killing between 3 and 4 thousand people immediately and maiming another half a million for life as they had been exposed to the release of toxic chemicals following the explosion. The Bhopal industry was owned by the US based company, Union Carbide, and the disaster is known as the worst of its kind in the history of the world. Global laws were needed to regulate and literally clean up the chemical issue.

UNEP worked with several other UN bodies, of which FAO played a very significant role to finalise the development of the chemical conventions. The NGO/civil society community played a significant role in negotiating these conventions. There are three chemical conventions under a joint secretariat:

- the Basel Convention – controlling trans-boundary movements of hazardous waste and their disposal, including electronic waste
- the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade
- the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants

A fourth chemical convention, the Minamata Convention on Mercury, was negotiated and finalised in 2013. Again, we saw the consistent work of UNEP, supported by other elements of the UN family and where the NGO community played a very serious and important role. However, there is a growing development of chemical compounds and monitoring is needed. The renowned Smithsonian Magazine, in an article published in 2017²³, estimated the number of chemical compounds which are added every year to be in the vicinity of 10 million.

Demands for a monitoring system had been growing as a result of the work done on the chemical conventions. Responding to this, UNEP helped establish the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) at the First International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM1) on 6 February 2006 in Dubai. With a mandate that was set to expire in 2020, SAICM is a policy framework to promote chemical safety around the world. SAICM was developed by a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral Preparatory Committee and has worked on supporting the achievement of the 2020 goal on chemicals agreed to at the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. Several observers have said that a large part of SAICM's success is due to the involvement of civil society in negotiations and at very high levels of decision making. SAICM is often pointed to as a success model for a multistakeholder partnership. It is also an example of an intergovernmental multistakeholder process where civil society and governments have joined forces working with each other. Despite disagreements, which are always common in negotiations, the participants have over the years enjoyed each other's trust. SAICM is among the few UN institutions which also has national NGO focal points, an

23 <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/science-falling-woefully-behind-testing-new-chemicals-180962027/>



H.E. Mr. Francisco Beltrame, Minister of Environment, Uruguay talks from the panel at the Interactive Panel Discussion on Detoxifying Development. Jointly organised by the Govt of Uruguay, UNEP, the Chemicals Branch, including the Interim Secretariat for the Minamata Convention on Mercury, the SAICM Secretariat, and the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. Held at UNEP Headquarters, 2014 © UNEP

interesting way of including non-state stakeholders in relevant and meaningful ways.

UNEP has continued to work for and with civil society and stakeholders, and is today among the few UN entities to have kept a dedicated working office for non-state stakeholders. Keeping this office alive and well funded with a rigorous eye to the rights and positions of civil society and other stakeholders will be important in the years to come. Unfortunately, after a small hiatus around the turn of the century when suppressive forces were actually suppressed and everybody thought participatory and transparent democracy would win the day, we now again see the windows of opportunity close for civil society at intergovernmental meetings.

Governance – a troubled area

Governance is the art of governing, add 'good' to governance, and discussions about what

this entails may never end. Environmental governance is attributed to UNEP, and UNEP has responded to this issue in various ways. Even though UNEP has taken on the responsibility to be the focal point of environmental governance, the organisation has never involved itself in this area with an effort to develop a deeper understanding of what 'environmental governance' actually entails. But one important fact remains, UNEP has over the years contributed to and inspired a growing understanding of environmental governance. Overall environmental governance performance is a key factor in the ability of countries to effectively apply environmental legislation and policy. Public participation in government decisions are essential elements of governance. So are access, transparency, accountability, efficiency and relevance.

The UN family is no stranger to public participation – at least not in theory. The UN Charter itself recognises the Non-Governmental

Organisations, NGOs as the third actor within the UN system.²⁴ Article 71 of the UN Charter states unequivocally that: "The Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence. Such arrangements may be made with international organizations and, where appropriate, with national organizations after consultation with the Member of the United Nations concerned."

Good governance was always going to be a controversial issue. It was however, not until the 1970s that the larger NGO community began to show a growing interest in intergovernmental policies and began to engage itself with the UN. As earlier stated, the Stockholm 1972 conference represented a watershed in this context. As public interest grew in international affairs and as we have seen international laws were being developed, pressure from democratic countries including the global NGO community began to demand greater insight into decision-making processes and understanding the implications of good governance became a priority. Several global reports touched upon the issue, at first connected to international security issues. The reason for this particular focus, was that security for the individual and democracy in general are often linked. Unless a citizen can feel safe, he or she cannot express freely their opinions, engage freely with their government, expressing their critical views; in short be part of meaningful and informed decision-making processes. In 1977 the Commission on International Development Issues (ICIDI), chaired by the well-known German politician, Willy Brandt, was published. This was followed in 1982 by the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, chaired by the then Swedish prime minister Olof Palme

with the support of Mexico and Nigeria. The South Commission, chaired by President Julius Nyerere, of Tanzania, published in 1987, touched upon similar ideas. We have earlier referred to the Brundtland Commission in 1987, which has strong ideas on governance and public participation in decision-making processes.

Then, as often is the case in history, people's impatience over repressive systems grows, and people decide to take actions in their own bare hands. The Soviet system had been going through dramatic changes during the 1980s, and in November 1989, the infamous Berlin Wall, a despicable symbol of the repressive politics of the Soviet Union and the communist East European states, came down. Peoples' governance seemed victorious. And again, the international community responded in kind. Sweden, often playing the role as a neutral mediator, organised a conference in 1991 called the Stockholm Initiative on Global Security and Governance. The sum total of all these events and reports led to the establishment of the UN Commission on Global Governance (UNCGG) in 1992. Again, Sweden came to play an important role. The report was chaired by Swedish Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson and by (former) Commonwealth General Secretary Shridath Ramphal, Guyana. Their final report "Our Global Neighbourhood" does reference the 1972 Stockholm conference, including the other reports mentioned here. However, "Our Global Neighbourhood" its content and the issue itself – global governance – was considered much too controversial, and a proposed UN global conference on governance, which should have taken place in 1996, was never held.

Even if these reports have been relegated to the archives of history, the ideas and values are not shelved, and looking at how gov-

24 The other two actors being member states and International intergovernmental organisations

ernance issues have penetrated much of the thinking of the global community, governance issues will not disappear. UNEP as an intergovernmental organisation with a decent presence of civil society and non-state actors, has been influenced by governance policies, and in several cases also spearheaded such issues. Several come to mind, where UNEP has been successful in at least identifying elements of environmental governance. And as UNEP was the first intergovernmental, multilateral organisation to allow civil society and then NGO community to address the official plenary on a regular basis, UNEP's contribution in developing governance is crucial.

Environmental governance – primarily UNEP's domain?

The two-week conference in Stockholm in 1972, actually being the first in the history of intergovernmental system to allow civil society and NGOs to address an official plenary on a daily, regular basis, changed the relationship between civil society and intergovernmental organisations forever. After 1972, the presence of non-state stakeholders became a regular phenomenon at every UN meeting, irrespective of its theme. UNEP and the NGO community began a history of togetherness, which has also been, somewhat of a roller-coaster experience (see the paragraphs on UNEP and NGOs above).

There is, however, a direct line of NGO/civil society engagement and development from the foundation of UNEP in 1972 to the formation of the nine major groups and their inclusion in Agenda 21 at the World Summit in Rio in 1992, (UNCED). The active participation of civil society and other stakeholders in environmental affairs at the UN was carried over and into the Commission on Sustainable Development, CSD. Established by UNCED in 1992 to follow up on Agenda 21, CSD began its work in 1993. The active involvement and participation of the

major groups during the 20-year existence of CSD continued into the development and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda. UNGA resolution 67/290 in 2013 gave the High Level Political Forum, HLPF, its mandate and responsibility to follow up the 2030 Agenda. This resolution also guarantees that civil society, major groups and stakeholders can play an active part in elements of the decision-making process of issues related to sustainable development and the environment.

If working with civil society has been referred to as a practical but informal part of governance, the formal parts of governance may be expressed through the law systems following in the wake of intergovernmental organisations. Environmental law was given its institutional home with the foundation of UNEP. By this a more formal development of environmental governance was also established, which also by the way, has strengthened the role of civil society.

This also begins with the outcome document from Stockholm in 1972. Developing environmental governance and law is a very good example of what we may call inter-agency cross fertilization. We see that several bodies of the UN are involved in developing and negotiating norms, principles and finally protocols and conventions. As always, when the environment is involved, we find UNEP as well, either being the instigator or providing solid background information. As was pointed to earlier in this paper, in the section called "Environmental law gives strength to environmental policy" – law and governance processes are closely connected.

To be efficient and meaningful it would also be imperative that governance is thematically contextual. Participating in lobby or advocacy work for a cause is not meaningful unless those engaged also have solid knowledge about the cause.

UNEP, the incubator for environmental governance

The post-World War II area which began in 1945 brought with it a new dawn for global democracy, as expressed by the foundation of the UN in 1945. It also brought with it a growing complexity in the global agenda. With the advent of a complex global agenda dealing with a myriad of themes ranging from security issues and trade to human habitat and biodiversity, came also the need for focus and specialisation. A reasonable question which was repeatedly asked, was to what extent could 'ordinary people' understand and have a meaningful say in these complex issues. Perhaps reflecting on the content of the earlier mentioned security conferences of the 1980s, and certainly reflecting the dominant issues of the day, the Finnish philosopher Georg Henrik von Wright asked in a lecture in 1984 a series of pertinent questions in this regard. Are choices and decisions so difficult to understand that we will inevitably come to rely on elites, experts and control systems, in short - will we be subject to a dictatorship of circumstances, he mused?²⁵

There is obviously a need for thematic specialisation, but such specialisation also needs a defined thematic area. And once a thematic area has been defined, there is within a specialised domain also a need for thematic generalisation – a need to connect the dots within a thematic field like the environment to allow for larger perspectives to be included. Or connect the dots within an even more complex field like sustainable development, without losing the thematic focus and without trivialising the themes or generalising the subject matter to

such an extent that focus is lost. The UN family became a ready answer to such questions and challenges. Growing research and knowledge would lead to new competence, and the UN family would absorb much of this, present new knowledge and competence on global meetings and disseminate new information freely to nations and organisations with little resources to pay for new knowledge.

In 1972 environmental issues were not recognised as global problems that needed political actions; few lay persons if any, had heard of environmental jurisprudence, even fewer had heard of environmental governance. As often is the case with a novel area, needs are defined as deeper knowledge is gained. Ideas identified and verbalised take on a life of their own. As the eminent lawyer Phillippe Sands has observed: "The world of international law was – and still is – conservative and cautious, but once words are agreed they often take on a life of their own."²⁶

**“The world of
international law was
– and still is –
conservative and cautious,
but once words are
agreed they often take on
a life of their own.”**

25 "Of Human Freedom", Georg Henrik von Wright the Tanner lectures on human values, Delivered at The University of Helsinki May 16 and 17, 1984

26 From "The Last Colony – a tale of exile, justice and Britain's Colonial Legacy", by Philippe Sands, Publisher: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, UK, 2022

The 26 principles in the Stockholm Declaration²⁷ is as good a beginning as any to track the development of formal environmental governance. Principle 21 of the 1972 Stockholm Declaration has been referred to as significant in that it had consequences for at least two equally important agreements on environmental governance – Principle 10 (see below) in Agenda 21²⁸ and the Aarhus Convention²⁹. Fortunately, this legacy continues to influence democratising work. In April 2021 the Escazu agreement³⁰ for Latin America and the Caribbean went into force, an agreement along similar principles with the Aarhus convention.

Principle 21 of the Stockholm Declaration states: “States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.”

With UNEP, the environment coupled with jurisdiction had entered the global agenda. The legally inspired texts in the Stockholm Declaration were obviously reflecting ongoing work and ideas being expressed by others at the time. And equally obvious, the outcome document from the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment also influenced others. The Conference on Security and Co-

operation in Europe, held in Helsinki in 1975³¹ made strides in strengthening inter European cooperation on several levels; science, research, trade, culture and human rights as well as on the environment. Referencing the outcome documents from the 1972 Stockholm conference, the Helsinki conference asked the UN Economic Commission, the UNECE, in Europe to develop and continue to work on Environmental Impact Assessments, EIAs. Writes the UN ECE: “EIA procedures were in place in a number of ECE member States and, in 1982, a Groups of Experts on EIA was established under the Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on Environmental and Water Problems. In January 1987, the UNEP Group of Experts on Environmental Law elaborated the concept of EIA in a transboundary context.”³²

This work led to the development of other environment protocols such as “the Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of the Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes” which incorporates public participation as well. These instruments, and others like them, are recognized as having helped pave the road to Aarhus³³. However, one of the main stepping-stones to this Convention, is the 1995 UNECE Guidelines on Access to Environmental Decision-Making. This identified public participation as “one of seven key elements for the long-term environmental programme for Europe.” The same Ministerial Conference that endorsed the Guidelines, decided that a

27 <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/29567/ELGP1StockD.pdf>

28 <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/environment/rio1992>

29 <https://unece.org/DAM/env/pp/documents/cep43e.pdf>

30 <https://www.cepal.org/en/escazuagreement>

31 <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/c/39501.pdf>

32 <https://unece.org/history-convention-and-its-protocol>, with a focus on ESPO and Aarhus conventions

33 The Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters was also adopted at the Aarhus Conference and is generally referred to as the Aarhus Convention.

convention dedicated to public participation should be drafted.”³⁴

The Aarhus convention is so named because it was signed on June 25, 1998, in the Danish city of Aarhus. It carries the rather cumbersome title of: “The UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters” and as the name indicates, it covers three pillars in relation to environmental concerns: access to information, access to public participation and access to justice.

Running parallel to these developments were the UNEP Montevideo programmes on environmental law. And UNEP’s work on environmental governance is also found reflected in the Brundtland Commission (1987)³⁵, which again inspired one of the most important principles said to directly inspire the development of the Aarhus convention. This principle also had a significant impact on the Montevideo programmes and has become a corner stone in public participation and governance. It is Rio Principle 10 from the outcome document from UNCED in 1992. It needs to be quoted in its entirety (see footnote 29):

“Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and

administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.”

Principle 10 of Agenda 21 is often referred to as one of the most potent principles regarding environmental governance. We see this principle operationalised in the Aarhus convention, with its three pillars on access to information, public participation in decision making and access to justice.

The work that UNEP has carried out on governance and law has given impetus to other intergovernmental institutions to follow suit. Even though all EU member states have ratified the Aarhus convention, the EU has used this convention to further develop the key issues that pertains to the Aarhus convention. The European Commission has today developed an assessment framework for environmental governance covering five dimensions:

- transparency,
- participation,
- access to justice,
- compliance,
- assurance / accountability/ effectiveness / efficiency.

The formal elements of environmental governance expressed mainly through environmental law systems, may be said to have been well taken care of by UNEP’s fifty years work, and is one of its many success stories. Taking care of the public’s interests expressed through civil society and other relevant stakeholders is another story. With a formidable start in 1972, one could all the same have expected and hoped for even greater integration of civil society and non-state stakeholders in UNEP’s work.

34 “Ten Years of the Aarhus Convention: How Procedural Democracy is Paving the Way for Substantive Change in National and International Environmental Law” by Marianne Dellinger, Assistant Professor of Law at Western State University College of Law.

35 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf>



The opening of the World Conference of the International Women's Year at the Juan de la Barrera Gymnasium in Mexico City, 1975. © UN / B. Lane

Still, the fifty-year legacy of making efforts to integrate civil society and give the non-state actors a civic voice, is still vibrant, and despite efforts by autocratic member states to exclude civil society, nationally and globally, UNEP allows the civic voice to be heard. The issue of Environmental Defenders is point in case. The work of Environmental Defenders is important, and several of its members are in the forefront of the environmental struggle today. Several defenders have been murdered and their work is not only considered controversial by several governments but have been actively opposed by them. When the defenders asked for a side event at UNEA 4, UNEP granted them space, and not only was the side event dramatic and informative, but the room was packed with participants, and most of them were official delegates. In an informal and almost neutral manner, UNEP provided a voice for civil society to address decision-makers who might have had strong objections to the presentation had it been in a formal context.³⁶

UNEP – the first in the decade of summits, 1970-1980

The world was rapidly changing during the 1960s and 1970s. It was growing increasingly global. The UN espousing self-determination for all peoples of the world,³⁷ quickly became a platform for decolonisation and new nations from the so-called developing world, earlier colonies, were admitted to the UN as full-fledged nations. Membership of the UN which stood at 51 in 1945, would soon exceed 150 during the 1970s. In recognition of the new global challenges, the UN GA proclaimed the 1960s as Development Decade One (DDI), and the 1970s as Development Decade Two (DDII). Nations from Africa, Asia and Latin America began participating and engaged actively in global politics through the UN conferences, and soon established their own block within the UN, the G-77³⁸. The 1972 Stockholm Conference was the first in a row of thematic summits organised by the UN. Following the 1972 UN environ-

³⁶ <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/environmental-rights-and-governance/what-we-do/advancing-environmental-rights/who#:~:text=The%20UN%20defines%20environmental%20human,land%2C%20flora%20and%20fauna%E2%80%9D>

³⁷ See the Charter of the UN

³⁸ <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/group-77-fifty>

ment conference, the first ever global summit on population took place in Bucharest in 1974 under the aegis of the UN. This was followed by the first food summit later the same year in Rome, Italy, organised by the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation, FAO. Mexico City was host to the first global summit on the situation of women in 1975, and Canada hosted the global UN summit on housing and living conditions, Habitat 1 held in Vancouver in 1976. Driven by the need to understand the complexities of the world, and get a fact-based understanding of these complexities was a primary purpose of these summits. It was the first time in the history of humanity that the world had gotten together to study in depth these themes and to develop action plans to try to remedy problems that were plaguing the world. But these summits were also a meeting place for all the new members of the UN. The United Nations, being an intergovernmental organisation, gave them an instant platform to the global world. Instead of establishing embassies in every country, every country could meet every country at the UN hubs.

Fighting poverty and getting development started, was the main concern for the new nations. Food, housing, population, these were all themes highly prioritized by them. Control over resources was another. Breaking with the colonial past a third. The environment was considered more of a problem and a concern for the north, industrialised part of the world. This view influenced to a large degree the presence of the developing nations in Stockholm. And yet, the Stockholm conference on the Human Environment, the first of the summits in the 1970's had initiated a new way of tackling global politics. Something new was happening.

The slow process to preserve all of biodiversity

When we think about biodiversity today, the UN Convention on Biodiversity, UNCBD, from 1992 springs to mind. The UNCBD has provided the world with instruments to combat species loss. UNEP has been instrumental in developing several Multilateral Agreements, MEAs to safeguard the biodiversity of the world. Numerous reports have been written on the issue of biodiversity. But the beginning of all this work, started one might say, in the ocean.

The law of the sea, UNCLOS, which was a UN entity, and which was in operation at the time of the Stockholm conference, provided an interesting arena for the developing nations. This law was also about territorial integrity and control of fishing resources and became an early interest for the developing nations. Several of the delegates negotiating in Stockholm must have had this in mind.

50 of the 106 recommendations agreed to at the Stockholm conference in 1972 were under the heading Environmental Aspects of Natural Resource Managements (paras 19-69). A fact well worth remembering when discussing the legacies and outcomes from the 1972 conference is that none were directed to UNEP, for the simple reason that the organisation only began its concrete work nearly a year later. Thus, while negotiating outcome documents and thinking about their implementation, the proposals were all directed at existing systems of the UN. Still, several of the recommendations from the conference also seemed to be directed at an institution which was more and different from the existing organisational architecture. Stanley Johnson in his detailed book on "UNEP at 40, a narrative"³⁹, quotes rec-

³⁹ UNEP, the first 40 years – a narrative, Stanley Johnson

ommendation 32 of the Stockholm Outcome Document as case in point:

Recommendation 32:

"It is recommended that Government give attention to the need to enact international conventions and treaties to protect species inhabiting international waters or those which migrate from one country to another -

- A broadly based convention should be considered which would provide a framework by which criteria for some regulations could be agreed upon and the overexploitation curtailed by signatory countries
- A working group should be set up as soon as possible by the appropriate authorities to consider these problems and to advise on the need for, and possible scope of, such convention or treaties."

Though written and agreed with the UN Conference of the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS)⁴⁰ directly in mind, it was largely felt by participants in Stockholm that this paragraph could be directed to a much wider arena of living species than merely those that were found in the oceans. Biologists rightly pointed to the vast number of species whose habitation was purely land-based, and there was no convention to protect these species. And if a convention could be agreed to, who or what would be responsible for following up and implementing programmes? IUCN would have been a contender, but people now had begun to think about establishing an institution with the UN family. By the way, the Stockholm conference in 1972 also called for a convention on the seas, later developed and called London Convention

on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter. And through subsequent decades, and with input from UNEP, various conventions to protect oceans were developed. In some ways, it seemed as if the initiatives taken in Stockholm in 1972 were pointing in all kinds of directions. But they did all have a common ground and a common focus – nature and the environment, and implicit here, the biodiversity of the planet.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature, IUCN, had been established in 1948, with the World Wide Fund for Nature, WWF as an offshoot in 1961. Since its inception, IUCN had already had a number of outstanding members working to safeguard the environment. Thus, IUCN came to influence the shape and sound of UNEP through its formative years. An influential duo in IUCN was the Belgian-German couple Wolfgang-Burhenne and Francoise Burhenne-Gulmin. A combination of people from UNEP, IUCN with the support of a growing environmental NGO movement set to work to implement the Stockholm resolutions with an early focus on biodiversity issues.

A series of agreements, resolutions and conventions relating to the protection of the environment were agreed during the first decades of UNEP's work resulting either directly from UNEP's work or inspired by its work after 1972. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, CITES had been drafted as early as 1963 by IUCN, was opened for signatures in 1973 and went into force in 1975. It has also been referred to as the first Multilateral Environmental Agreement, MEA. The Convention on Migratory Species, the so-called Bonn-Convention or simply the CMS, was adopted in June 1979. The

⁴⁰ For an interesting presentation of anticolonial work, control over resources and the environment, territorial integrity and respect for independence, justice and human rights and majority UN decisions, see: Phillippe Sands "The Last Colony – a tale of exile, justice and Britain's colonial Legacy". Weidenfeld&Nicolson, London, UK 2022

CMS came into force in November 1983 and a year later a secretariat provided by UNEP was established in Bonn, then the Federal Republic of Germany. The CMS umbrella agreement spawned many subsidiary agreements and memoranda of understanding, such as the Africa-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement, AEWA, which entered into force in 1999. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, an NGO driven convention, had been adopted in 1971 but was in need of more government signatories and the Stockholm 1972 conference certainly inspired governments to ratify the Ramsar convention. The World Conservation Strategy, developed by UNEP, IUCN, WWF and FAO was agreed to in 1980, the World Charter for Nature developed by UNEP, was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1982, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Agreement on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources agreed to in 1985, to mention a few key nature focussed conventions and agreements obviously inspired by the work of UNEP. These agreements and conventions were all directly related to the environment and to biodiversity. As we know, the more knowledge we gain, the more we can diversify a subject area simply because we understand the depth and width of the issue. Environmentalists of all kinds were by the 1980s asking if we did not need a con-

vention to preserve a significant part of the essence of life – biodiversity itself.

UNEP and the UN Convention on Biological diversity - UNCBD

Biodiversity is perhaps more than any other environmental issue related directly to nature, and UNEP's work on this issue took on almost a life of its own. The need to preserve and protect biodiversity was identified already in the outcome document in Stockholm in 1972. As we see above, there was a growing consensus to drive the legal work forward with increasing strength in order to preserve the planet. It would take two decades before such a victory was made. It speaks to the perseverance and consistency of dedicated people that a convention was developed. But such a legal instrument would never have come about had it not been for the platform that UNEP gave this work, a platform that allowed civil society, scientists and delegates to work together. These efforts reached its first and important victory with the agreement to establish the 1992 Convention on Biodiversity, the UNCBD, adopted at the UN Conference for Environment and Development in Rio.



To some extent we now (2022) see biodiversity issues defined and contextualised in the works of the CBD and the Aichi⁴¹ targets on biodiversity. But this has not always been the case. As Johnson writes⁴², the key issues to be resolved back in the 1980s were: was a Convention (on biodiversity) primarily a 'conservation' convention aimed at protecting biodiversity? Or was it dealing principally with the question of genetic resources, including the issues of access and fair compensation? Or could it cover both issues at the same time? Understanding the issues today, we benefit from fifty years of research into environmental matters. We can differentiate between eco-systems analysis, nature-based solutions and bio-diversity conservation. A ten-year assessment on environmental issues was conducted in 1982, when UNEP celebrated its first decade of work, which led to a decision by the 11th session of the UNEP Governing Council to recommend to the UNGA to establish a special commission to propose long term environmental strategies for achieving sustainable development to the year 2000 and beyond. The result was the establishment of the "UN World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future," or commonly referred to as the Brundtland Commission after the chair of the commission, the former prime minister of Norway, Ms. Gro Harlem Brundtland⁴³. Of the many findings the commission identified was that of protecting natural resources. Wildlife and ecosystems were also vital components, indeed the essential underpinning of sustainable development. The overview on the section on these issues in the report is titled: "Species and Ecosystems – Resources for Development."

UNEP in general and the Executive Director of UNEP, the Egyptian Mustafa Tolba in particular (UNEP ED from 1975 to 1992), were instrumental in setting up the Brundtland Commission. The UNEP Governing Council in its session in 1983, proposed to the UN GA to establish a Special Commission that later became the Brundtland Commission. A key proposal in the writing of the commission was to investigate the possibilities of agreeing to a species convention. The report of the commission is rife with examples of how species are threatened by extinction all over the world, in some ways anticipating the more substantive analysis of the 2019 report from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, IPBES (see below).

The 1987 UNEP Governing Council most probably spurred on and inspired by the work of the Brundtland Commission, adopted decision 14/26 on the "Rationalisation of international conventions on biological diversity". More deliberations followed where also IUCN came to play a crucial role. Supported by the UK delegation and the IUCN Law Commission, UNEP established simply a technical working group which at the time was chaired by Denmark. The working group was subsequently renamed the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, where the UNEP ED Mustafa Tolba played a crucial role. The group had a series of meetings and by May 1990 had a text ready for possible final adoption at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro Brazil in 1992. There a text was finally adopted as the UN Framework Convention Biological Diversity, UNCBD.

41 <https://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/>

42 S.Johnson: UNEP, the first 40 years – a narrative, p 121

43 Cfr footnote 36

Since 1992, protecting biodiversity from unregulated trade has been high on the agenda for UNEP, and on January 29, 2000, chaired by Colombian Minister of Environment, Juan Mayor, the Biosafety Protocol was agreed which changed the ground rules under which trade versus environment was to be conducted in favour of the environment. UNEP continues to work on biodiversity issues, but as often has been the case, was not endowed by an additional expert secretariat. The headquarters of the UNCBD resides in Montreal, Canada.

UNEP and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification - UNCCD

Together with UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) on climate and UNCBD on biodiversity, the UNCCD is the third of the so-called Rio conventions. UNCCD which was adopted in 1994, is called the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. UNCCD is the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.

The drought in North Africa, in the Sahel, began in 1968. By 1973 the worst was over, but remnants of the drought continued until 1976. Through regular reporting in media, people everywhere became aware of this frightening phenomenon and its consequences. Dr. Mustafa Tolba from Egypt, who had played an important role in the 1972 Stockholm conference during its many negotiations, succeeded Maurice Strong as the Executive Director of UNEP in 1975. Tolba responded to a UNGA resolution and used UNEP as the venue to organise the UN Conference on Desertification in Nairobi in 1977. Nearly 100 governments and close to 70 NGOs participated. The outcome

document named a Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, PACD, covered three areas – a political process, a scientific process and a financial action process.

Moreover, the UNEP (1995) estimated that if trends of desertification had continued unabated, about eight billion acres of grazing land, irrigated zones, and croplands would have been in jeopardy by the end of the century, threatening the livelihoods of 1.2 billion of the world's 5.5 billion people.⁴⁴

By a resolution in 1977, the UN GA entrusted the implementation of the PACD to UNEP's Governing Council, the Executive Director of UNEP, and the Environment Coordination Board. Following this, UNEP acted to establish an organisational structure to begin its work. A desertification unit within UNEP, an interagency working group on desertification, and a consultative group on desertification control, comprised of relevant bodies of the United Nations, as well as other international organisations, donor countries, multilateral financial agencies, and developing nations were established. In 1978, a Desertification Unit was further established within the Secretariat of UNEP to handle "all activities related to arid and semi-arid land ecosystems and to combating desertification." The Unit served as the Secretariat for the Consultative Group for Desertification Control.⁴⁵

The work on a convention to combat desertification had begun as early as in the 1970s, and several delegates had hoped for a breakthrough during the 1992 UNCED conference. The developing nations prioritised this issue, and the result of the deliberations was a call to the UNGA to convene work to develop

44 Michigan Journal of International Law, Volume 16, Issue 3, 1995, The International Convention to Combat Desertification: Drawing a Line in the Sand? William C. Burns Pacific Center for International Studies

45 Ibid



UN Drought Appeal. A boy and his donkey brave the dry heat in Maalimin, Kenya. 2022
© UNEP / Miranda Grant

a convention on the issue of desertification as soon as possible. An Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification was organised, and its first meeting was convened at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi in 1992. Two years later, after often complicated and laborious negotiations, the convention was ready for adoption in Paris in 1994. Despite UNEP's high-level position in the work to develop a convention to combat desertification, the headquarters for UNCCD was established in Bonn, Germany. But without UNEP, the UNCCD would have not been developed the way it was and with the same speed and urgency.

Saving the ozone layer

UNEP began research on the ozone layer in 1975, further advanced research on this important shield protecting the world, worked to place the issue on the global science and policy agenda, managed to get funds to continue this work, and finally developed work on the ozone question into a convention, a protocol and a programme of implementation, all in order to save the ozone layer. It would be fair to say that among the most unique success of UNEP is the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, which is a protocol to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer agreed to in 1985-87.

What we see here is the identification of an emerging issue and a scientific early warning about an environmental problem which few had heard of, and which resulted in a growing focus by scientists on the problem which was often referred to at the time as the ozone hole. This in turn led to a slow but important acceptance of the problem by the UN system itself. For instance, the World Health Organisation, WHO, quickly involved itself and outlined the cancer problem related to increased radiation through a reduced ozone layer. The immediate health problem was identified as skin cancer, the melanoma. The work on the ozone layer resulted in a slow but growing realisation by politicians that this could turn into a problem affecting a global common good, namely the health of large tracts of the global population. Then agricultural experts added their knowledge to the list of negative consequences, by demonstrating that increased radiation also had an adverse effect on crops; as scientist's increased understanding of the ozone issues grew, focus was also directed to the entire immune system of all living species which also could be negatively affected by increased radiation through a weakened ozone layer. By then the time was ripe for a series of policy conferences which ultimately resulted in the Montreal Protocol which was aimed at protecting the ozone layer. The convention contains binding commitments punishable by sanctions if not met by countries. It is the only convention with such instruments. This convention and its protocols are to date the only ones which have been ratified universally. Whereas UNEP received accolades for identifying the ozone problem and for expediting the development of the protocol, the headquarters for the protocol, is not in UNEP, but precisely in Montreal, Canada.

Similar success – initiatives with the climate and global warming.

The climate issue is another such issue. UNEP working closely with the World Meteorological

Organization, WMO, began observing changes in the atmosphere during its first decade of work and discovered changes that were not all too positive with regard to the planet's health. By 1988, UNEP and WMO established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, which then became the foremost scientific body to deal with climate change. With the agreement to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC in 1992 at Rio, climate and global warming were given a separate home within the UN family. The inspiration to work on the climate emerged from several meetings and conferences under the auspices of UNEP, and with the IPCC a hugely important step was taken in the direction of alerting the world to the challenges and problems related to global warming. The IPCC has since 1988 published a series of reports on the climate issue, so-called Assessments Reports. The first was published in 1990 and provided a significant contribution to laying the scientific background for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the UNCCC, which was adopted at Rio in 1992. With this as its basis, countries agreed to the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, and as we know, its signatories meet regularly at the Conferences of parties, the COPs. This is where assessments are made, challenges analysed, and programmes adopted. The three so-called Rio conventions, the UNFCCC, the UN CBD and the UN CCD all have their own secretariats. Still, UNEP is the umbrella organisation for the three Rio conventions.



Concepts, science, tools and laws – a slow evolution

A cascade of ideas may result from a novel concept of a paradigmatic nature. If it makes sense and fills a gap, the concept sticks and soon people everywhere may begin to use it. The growing realisation of the importance of living in harmony with nature searching for nature-based solutions, became key elements of conceptual understanding, emanating from growing awareness and knowledge of the environment. All this led to a growing realisation of how interdependent our existence on earth is, how tenuous this existence is and how dependent on nature we all are.

Principle 1 of the Stockholm Declaration in 1972 focusses on the rights of people to an adequate environment and states: “Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being, and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations ...”. A rights issue had been added to the conceptual understanding of the environment. And as we have seen, UNEP became an organisation taking numerous initiatives to develop regulations and even conventions to safeguard the environment.

25 years after the 1972 conference, the general expressions of “rights to” was given a further legal context with a commitment through being “entitled to” a life in harmony with the environment. The 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen clearly states that: “We acknowledge that people are at the centre of our concerns for sustainable development and that they are entitled to a

healthy and productive life in harmony with the environment.”

Agenda 21, the three Rio conventions, the growing focus on environmental conventions have forced authorities to think differently about the environment and about the consequences of a gradually deteriorating environment. UNEP has since its inception emphasised the need for stronger legal frameworks. But this has been an uphill struggle, and every new idea on strengthening environmental protection had to be backed by research, facts and solid science. The insistent work of UNEP on environmental science soon began to have an effect.

The turn of the century raised expectations among people. Not only would the world enter a new millennium, we could perhaps enter a new century with better prospects for humanity and for the planet. Conferences on the millennium were organised, and the UN was in many aspects at the forefront. The then United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan presented in 2000 a substantive report to the UN General Assembly named “We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century”. In this report he stated that despite growing knowledge of the environment, our understanding of the planet’s nature was still inadequate. He therefore called for a Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. Governments subsequently supported establishing such an assessment through decisions taken by the secretariats of the three international Rio conventions, and the assessment was initiated in 2001⁴⁶. The assessment was conducted under the auspices of the UNGA with a secretariat coordinated by UNEP. The Millennium Assessment (MA)

46 <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/ecosystem-and-human-well-being-synthesis>

“was governed by a multistakeholder board that included representatives of international institutions, governments, business, NGOs, and indigenous peoples. The objective of the MA was to assess the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being, and to establish the scientific basis for actions needed to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems and their contributions to human well-being.”⁴⁷

Assessing impacts on nature by development projects was almost non-existent before UNEP was founded and was – and still is - viewed with strong scepticism by traditional developers. Why should for instance the construction of a highway respect and preserve the existence of wetland, bogs and fens when such areas can easily be drained? Not until recently has a proper assessment of their contribution to preserve carbon been understood. A recent UNEP study claims that the world's peatland store twice as much carbon as the world's forests⁴⁸. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment contributed to strengthening the development of Environmental Impact Assessment tools⁴⁹ which in turn contributed to developing new and better environmental laws. Understanding what a clean and healthy environment really meant, gave credence to legal and juridical norms. Again, we see how important it was to have an organisation whose mandate was specifically focusing on the environment. But was the organisation politically strong and forceful enough?

The advent of sustainable development – a blessing or diluting the environmental approach?

Following the 1982 Governing Council (GC) and the UNEP report covering the state of the planet from 1972 to 1982, the GC and UNEP proposed to the UN GA to set up a commission to give an appraisal of the environment towards 2000, to which it agreed. The official name given was the World Commission on Environment and Development, but it came to be known as “The Brundtland Commission”. “Our common Future”, the name of the report produced by this commission, introduced sustainable development, and became a key document in preparing for the UN Conference on Environment and Development, UNCED, in 1992.

UNEP's approach to sustainable development had always been positive. In fact, UNEP with IUCN and FAO produced in 1980 a report where the concept Sustainable Development was part of its title. This is apparently one of the first times (if not the first) the concept is used in a policy related UN document. This document offered no definition of what sustainable development might be, but seven years later, the Brundtland Commission did. Its most famous and well-known definition is the one on sustainable development – which is:

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

It contains within it two key concepts:

- the concept of “needs”, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; -

⁴⁷ [file:///C:/Users/Jan/Downloads/Ecosystem_and_human_well_being_synthesis%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Jan/Downloads/Ecosystem_and_human_well_being_synthesis%20(1).pdf)

⁴⁸ <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/peatlands-store-twice-much-carbon-all-worlds-forests>

⁴⁹ [https://www.cbd.int/impact/whatis.shtml#:~:text=Environmental%20Impact%20Assessment%20\(EIA\)%20is,impacts%2C%20both%20beneficial%20and%20adverse](https://www.cbd.int/impact/whatis.shtml#:~:text=Environmental%20Impact%20Assessment%20(EIA)%20is,impacts%2C%20both%20beneficial%20and%20adverse)

- the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.”

Agenda 21, the popular name of the outcome report from the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, gave adequate space to environmental issues. Still, sustainable development became the new normal in the world of environment, and this concept would now become the major paradigm leading the world into the future. A UN commission to follow up the Agenda 21 decisions was established, and the Commission on Sustainable Development, CSD, began its work in 1993.

The developing world, first sceptical of sustainable development as they contended it would deprive developing projects of needed funding, not the least to combat poverty, slowly changed their opinion, because they saw that social and economic aspects within sustainable development were given much more attention than environmental issues. Seriously critical voices insist that UNCED in 1992 was the conference where developmental issues according to a traditional understanding of development triumphed over environmental issues. Sustainable development had become just another word for traditional development⁵⁰.

By the turn of the millennium, the UN agreed to establish the Millennium Developing Goals, the 8 MDGs. If one studies the goal on the environment, the impression is that this is more about sustainable development than about the environment. UNDP was given the responsibility to administrate the MDGs and admitted in various reports that their key expertise did

not lie in the environmental sphere. Reading the fact sheet published by UNDP about the environment MDG, it states:

Goal 7 Ensure environmental sustainability is about:

- Integrate principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse the loss of environmental resources.
- Halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation
- Improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020

These are all targets leaning more towards traditional development and poverty eradication than towards the environment.

The UNCSD changed its momentum following the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, WSSD, conference in Johannesburg. Astute observers assert that it lost its momentum. Critical observers claim that governments failed sustainable development and allowed CSD to become a verbal circus. Sustainable development including the environment seemed to go nowhere. The world was also heading for an economic slowdown, which came full force in 2008.

When the Brazilian President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva spoke at the UN General Assembly in September 2007, he invited the UN to organise Rio + 20 and declared that Brazil would host this conference. Soon after, the UN began preparing for this conference which inspired the blueprint for a better future, which was named, when it finally appeared in 2015: “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for a Sustainable Future.” Unanimously adopted by all UN member states at the UN summit in 2015, it allowed

50 Tom Bigg et al – Survival for a small planet, Earthscan/iied, 2004

for a radical change in development and environment perspectives. Focussed on transformative change, it provided the intergovernmental system, governments and civil society with new tools and methods to – hopefully – change the world for a better one. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the SDGs with 169 targets and some 230 plus indicators were to provide the world with a new path forward. With a solid foundation in the theoretical background of sustainable development, it added new dimensions to change.

The Rio+20 Outcome Document, the "Future we Want" in 2012, also recognised the importance of UNEP. Paragraph 88 of the Rio+20 Outcome Document states unequivocally that UNEP matters to the global environment "We are committed to strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme as the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, that promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and that serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment."⁵¹

At the time few reacted to this paragraph, but of late several observers have noted that the environment as such encompasses much more than just the environmental dimension of sustainable development. Is this pettifoggery among nerds or does it have real consequences for sustainable development as well as environmental issues? The Rio + 20 Outcome document assigns the responsibility for sustainable production and consumption, also known as SCP, to UNEP. The UNEP Paris office, which had struggled with this issue since Agenda 21 in 1992, was to

continue with this issue. A question has been asked – is this issue really related to the environment, or has UNEP been given the responsibility for an issue no one wants and too many consider too difficult to handle?

Clearly aware of its many implications, not the least in economic terms, UNEP initiated several challenging discussions relating to the environment before Rio+20 which also related to the SCP issue. Leading up to Rio+20 in 2012, UNEP spearheaded Green Economy Issues seeing SCP as an element of this. The green economy issues have been seen as UNEP's efforts to deal with environment and economy, another challenge UNEP has taken on. Initially criticised by the World Bank System for dealing with an area that was actually the prerogative of the UN financing institutions, UNEP has persisted, and made several inroads into the world of finance on behalf of the environment. UNEP's green finance initiative⁵² and UNEP's responsible banking initiative⁵³ are two examples of UNEPs expanding agenda. And what other organisation would be capable of bringing the environment into the economy other than UNEP?

During the last few years, climate and global warming, sustainable development and environment are frequently used and treated as synonyms, and they are clearly not. By using them as interchangeable concepts, each is deflated and loses its specific meaning. When that happens, there is no way to develop proper monitoring, proper indicators and proper follow up, because the specific meaning is lost.

There is more to sustainable development than its environmental basis, just as there is a lot more to the environment than sustainable de-

⁵¹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/rio20/futurewewant>

⁵² <https://www.unepfi.org/>

⁵³ <https://www.unepfi.org/banking/bankingprinciples/>

velopment. There is a tendency to mainstream crucial and important new concepts especially if they challenge traditionally accepted policies. If the environment is mainstreamed into sustainable development or sustainable development is mainstreamed into environment, both lose their specific meaning. There is a need to establish both elements as separate entities in need of expert scientific bases. Once these concepts are clearly understood and are given their proper and separate basis, they can be integrated without deflating each other.

The High Level Political Forum is the main forum for sustainable development in the UN and the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs must be given sufficient resources to continue to develop its expertise in this context. UNEP has always been mindful of its focus on the environment and should continue to develop its formidable expertise on this. Dealing with these issues and building separate knowledge basis will safeguard their expertise; maybe this might be one of the challenges that UNEP and UNDESA will have to struggle with the next few years – or decades.

What next for UNEP?

The world has embraced sustainable development, the SDGs and the climate challenge. But are these issues synonymous with environmental issues? The presidency of UNEA 5 suggested that the title for this session should be “Nature based solutions for the environment.” Several member states objected, finding the title too provocative. G-77 was again against such an environmental focus. The compromise title was: “Strengthening Actions for nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. “It feels as if UNEP and the environment have

been taken hostage by the SDGs” a commentator mused during the UNEA 5 proceedings.

A recent success by UNEP to focus on nature and the environment is the establishment of Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, IPBES.

At a meeting on biodiversity and ecosystem services in June 2010 in Busan in the Republic of Korea, States adopted the Busan Document which stated that “an intergovernmental science-policy platform for biodiversity and ecosystem services should be established”. The meeting was organised by UNEP acting on a previous GC resolution to look into the matter of a multistakeholder science policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services. By resolution 65/162 of 20 December 2010, the General Assembly “took note of the Busan outcome” and requested the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), “to convene a plenary meeting...to determine modalities and institutional arrangements for IPBES”. According to the UN Office of Legal Affairs, the General Assembly by taking note of the Busan outcome did not establish IPBES as a United Nations body⁵⁴.

Subsequently, participating States at their plenary meeting in April 2012 adopted a resolution that established IPBES as “an independent intergovernmental body,” with the seat of the secretariat located in Bonn, Germany. The purpose of IPBES is to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development. It was also agreed that the first session of the IPBES plenary would decide on the link between IPBES and the United Nations system.”⁵⁵ If IPBES ac-

54 <https://ipbes.net/history-establishment>

55 <https://ipbes.net/history-establishment>

quires such status, that would perhaps be UNEP's biggest success story in its fifty-year existence.

At its first session in January 2013, the IPBES Plenary requested UNEP to provide the secretariat of IPBES, which would be solely accountable to the IPBES Plenary on policy and programmatic matters. It invited UNEP "to provide administrative arrangements for the IPBES secretariat" and requested UNEP, "to finalize a host country agreement with the Government of Germany for the presence of the IPBES secretariat in Bonn." At its 27th session in 2013, the UNEP Governing Council authorized the Executive Director, within available resources, to provide the secretariat and administrative arrangements for the IPBES secretariat. Current staff of the IPBES secretariat are employed by UNEP.⁵⁶ Several observers are now saying that the IPBES on the environment, nature and eco-systems should eventually acquire the same political position as what IPCC has on climate. If that happens, people will perhaps begin to differentiate between environment and sustainable development and give both its proper expert development. IPBES has been called the new scientific body on nature. Many voices have been raised over the past few years claiming that UNEP must refocus its attention to nature. Maybe this is a challenge that the UN environment organisation must take more seriously over the next years?

The resolution on Marine Litter – combining civic concerns, scientific reports and policy decisions - a 50-year story

We began this article on 50 years of UNEP's accomplishments by telling the story that unfolded on the 2nd of March 2022, when the UN Environment Assembly adopted the reso-

lution to end all plastic pollution through a legally binding document. But this success had been long in coming.

Formally speaking, it began in 2014, at UNEA 1, where the issue of microplastics in the oceans were introduced as a global threat at the negotiating table. But working on the plastics issue – or problem – began several years before. In fact, the success in 2022 has its roots with the establishment of UNEP, 50 years earlier.

UNEP is no stranger to assessing the quality of the environment. Water quality became one of UNEP's first area of concerns. Writes UNEP: "Since its inception, in 1972, the GEMS/ Water, the water quality component of the Global Environment Monitoring System, has uniquely become one of the longest running operational United Nations programmes, initiated by four of its agencies, and supported actively by national partner institutions in their member states."⁵⁷

In the 1990s, reports on plastic pollution of rivers and the oceans surfaced. Between the 1970s and 1990s plastic waste generation more than tripled. Whereas oceanographers had long voiced their concerns, plastic pollution had neither grasped people's or politicians' attention. Perhaps the oceans were too big? But things began to change, and UNEP was at the forefront of research issues related to the plastics issue as well as giving it political focus.

By 2012 and leading up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Conference, Rio+20, the microplastics issue had received enough attention for the multilateral system to place it prominently on the

⁵⁶ <https://ipbes.net/history-establishment>

⁵⁷ <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/water/what-we-do/monitoring-water-quality>



Beach clean up, EcoWorld, Watamu © UNEP / Florian Fusstetter

agenda. During the first decade of the 21st century, UNEP had provided the world with a stream of scientific reports on plastic pollution. The Global Partnership on Marine Litter, GPML, was launched at (Rio+20) in June 2012. The GPML emerged as a response to a request set out in the Manila Declaration on Furthering the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities⁵⁸. The GPML partnership is led by a Steering Committee and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) provides secretariat services. Parallel to the growing plastics problem, UNEP's efforts to engage and solve the issue also grew. By today some

400 million tonnes of plastic waste is produced annually, and about 8 million tonnes of these end up in the oceans costing at least an estimated 8 billion dollars to marine ecosystems. Rio+20 established the UN Environment Assembly, a universal body to replace the earlier central UNEP body, the smaller Governing Council. At its first assembly, in 2014, with more than 1000 participants in session, UNEA1 agreed to a resolution on Marine Plastic Debris and Microplastics. The resolution was backed by an authoritative report⁵⁹ and contained a number of key elements that carried the hallmark of UNEP's procedures – all future work on the issues would be based on an active involvement of member states, the UNEP secretari-

58 <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/manila-declaration-draft>

59 "Marine plastic debris and microplastics – Global lessons and research to inspire action and guide policy change" initiated and financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Environment and Climate.

at, solid science and a broad array of non-state stakeholders, major groups and civil society. The latter turned out to be a crucial factor in driving the work forward.

UNEP at its end developed and engaged in several global multilateral campaigns promoting the microplastics issue as well as new and updated scientific reports. The UNEP Clean Seas campaign, called the most massive campaign to focus on the oceans of the world, was one such campaign followed by other initiatives. In 2017 UNEP launched an unprecedented global campaign to eliminate major sources of marine litter: microplastics in cosmetics and the excessive, wasteful usage of single-use plastic by the year 2022. Almost at the same time, UNEP engaged the global fashion world and alerted it to their massive use of microplastics in producing clothes.

UNEA 2 in 2016 repeated member states' commitment to the plastics issue in a second resolution called this time "Marine Plastic Debris and Microplastics". The resolution reflected all work that was taking place under the aegis of the many faceted multilateral intergovernmental system on the plastics issue. It also repeated the necessity to work with non-state stakeholders. The following UNEAs dealt repeatedly with the issue, every time increasing the demand for action, until the decision was taken at UNEA 5 in 2022.

There is an interesting progression in the resolutions on plastic litter beginning in 2014 at UNEA 1 and ending with the legally binding resolution at UNEA 5 in 2022. UNEP has presented this in the following way:



UNEA 1 - 2014, Agreeing On The Global Emerging Threat

At the first UNEA, the nations recognized the emerging global problem negatively impacting the marine environment and requested UNEP to provide a report on marine plastic and microplastic.

UNEA 2 - 2016, Identifying Knowledge Gaps

At UNEA 2, the parties asked UNEP to produce an assessment of the effectiveness of global and regional governance strategies for marine plastics, and to support developing countries in combatting marine litter. The resolution also noted the importance of product life-cycle approaches, the polluter pays principle, and reduction, reuse and recycling (the "three Rs")

UNEA 3 - 2017, Recognizing the Inefficient Global Governance

At UNEA 3, an assessment on the effectiveness of global and regional governance was launched during the assembly. It showed that there is no existing global framework effectively dealing with marine litter and microplastic. An expert group was established to provide recommendations for global solutions; countries agreed on a long-term zero vision, no plastic litter or microplastic should enter the ocean.

UNEA 4 - 2019, Strengthening Coordination and Knowledge

At the fourth UNEA, the parties declared that more coordination and cooperation is needed, and that the expert group that had been established at UNEA 3 would continue its work. The resolution also asked UNEP to strengthen scientific and technological knowledge about the marine plastic problem, as well as gather more information on policies and action.⁶⁰



Executive Director **Inger Andersen** speaking during UNEP@50 World Environmental situation room
© UNEP

In summary: getting the decision through process needs perseverance

Backed by years of scientific research resulting in annual reports and carried forward by the Norwegian delegation with a massive support from the international NGO community, UNEA 1 in 2014 agreed to the importance of the plastics issue. UNEA 2 gave more time to the issue, then incorporating governance structures and how to set up a fund to help the global south to combat marine litter. UNEA 3 in 2017 recognised the fact that no effective governance system existed to fight marine litter, and again asked UNEP to work on a long term zero vision for marine litter including a global action plan. It was hoped – and anticipated that UNEA 4 in 2019 would agree to a resolution. Opposition came however from Russia and the US in an unexpected collaboration, but it was obvious that the US under the presidency of Trump

whose government had expressed little faith in the multilateral system of governments was against giving UNEP an authority in these matters. Member states asked UNEP however to provide more scientific background to the issue of marine litter and microplastics.

Then at UNEA 5 in 2022, came the breakthrough – the resolution on marine litter and microplastics was finally adopted. Writes ENB/IISD: “The UN Environment Assembly made history at its resumed fifth meeting, through decisions to undertake negotiations on two critical processes: an internationally legal binding instrument by 2024 to end plastic pollution and an agreement to establish a science-policy panel on chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution. The science body would be similar to the

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)."⁶⁰

Another feature of this eight-year process was the involvement of civil society and stakeholders. The so-called plastics networks and the organisations and think tanks and research centres working on this issue played a significant role by providing critical comments to proposed texts, and by providing cutting edge science to underline their presentations and criticisms. This was again, perhaps UNEP at its best:

- the identification of an emerging issue, not the least by civil society, non-state actors and accredited NGOs,
- leading to the acceptance of the issue and placing it on the global environmental agenda,
- then developing a knowledge-base and researching the issue by the best scientists available,
- formulating the problems and content in a format that would be negotiated,
- and then, through a government working group proposing texts for a resolution
- which at the end was negotiated with civil society input

and subsequently adopted with follow-up plans and governance systems supporting it.

The 2022 UNEA 5 brings hope

50 years of work to safeguard the environment. This is indeed UNEP's legacy. Two commemorative events were planned to mark UNEP's 50th birthday in 2022. The first was a two-day event at UNEP's headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya in March, called UNEP@50. This was to be fol-

lowed by a two-day conference in Stockholm. Although given a cumbersome and formal name⁶¹, it became known as Stockholm+50. Focussing on the organisation was the purpose of UNEP@50. The Stockholm conference should be an aspirational one. But because of political bickering between different fractions of the UN Member states, the commemoration was neither uplifting nor aspirational, stated a much disappointed NGO at the Stockholm conference. Perhaps this low-spirited mood reflects how the world regards the global environment today; its state of affairs is neither uplifting nor aspirational. And yet, there is hope which the outgoing President of UNEA 5 clearly and emphatically expressed. In a strange way, it was not the two commemorative events that gave the world a reason to believe in UNEP and feel hopeful. Hope came with the outcome from the regular negotiations carried out at the fifth UN Environment Assembly, UNEA 5, in March 2022.

Espen Bart Eide, the President of UNEA 5 and the Minister of Climate and Environment in Norway struck a positive note in his closing remarks on March the 2nd, 2022, saying:⁶² "Wow, we made it. We wrote history today. Men and women who went before us have indeed made life on our planet better and they inspired us...In the midst of one of the most dramatic moments in modern world history, we managed to agree on nothing less than 14 very important resolutions and to agree on a ministerial declaration and a political one in the course of only three days."

In continuing his closing statements, he paid tribute to the UN, to UNEP and to global co-operation, saying "Our accomplishments are a tribute to multilateralism, to the United Nations,

60 <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/unea-launches-negotiation-of-plastic-pollution-treaty-science-body-on-chemicals/>

61 "Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity"

62 Quotes from the closing debates available on you-tube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqLj939aouY>



Nairobi, 18 November 2004 - The Seventh UN Secretary-General, **Kofi Annan**, greets **Wangari Maathai**, Nobel Peace laureate for 2004, at Gigiri before the Security Council meeting on the situation in Sudan. © UNEP

a tribute to people of good will to come together and agree.⁶³ He stressed the need to partner with civil society, business and the youth, and he emphasised collaboration with science. UNEA 5 agreed to establish a scientific panel on chemical pollution, on par with IPCC and IPBES – and this Eide said “is a tribute to the importance of science, a tribute to the importance of truth that can be shared in a time where so many people propagate their own alternatives to truth.”⁶⁴

But perhaps most importantly, the President of UNEA 5 emphasised nature as the focus of the work of the future. Referring to the leadership debates at UNEA 5, where all stakeholders, governments, civil society, business, indigenous peoples had participated and made statements, he pointed to one important element and said: “We needed to bring nature

into the room, and we did. And (this was) not only about protecting nature, but to restoring nature, and valuing nature. Nature has immense value, and we need to get that externality into our economies. We need to agree to do that, and when we have agreed to do that, we will rearrange our economic systems so we can prosper and live good lives in partnership with nature. Because after all, the planetary boundaries are also our boundaries, they are the boundaries of our very existence.” Strong words on the day before the first commemorative event for UNEP’s 50th birthday. Strong words with a clear message to the future.

Despite all, aspirations are still alive

The UN General Assembly had back in 2018 agreed to what they had called the Global Pact for the Environment. It had then been viewed

⁶³ Ibid, youtube

⁶⁴ Ibid, youtube

as an attempt to upgrade interest and commitment to environmental policies and had since been rephrased to cover environmental governance and law. The resolution was to be adopted during the UNEP@50 high level segment back-to-back with UNEA 5.2 There was hope that the resolution would contain strong language on environmental law and governance setting the stage for a hopeful future for safeguarding the environment. Observers had to agree that the ambitious language was missing in the final proposal, and the major groups and stakeholders were very disappointed, pledging they would continue to work for a strong resolution for the future.

The outcomes from UNEA 5, from UNEP@50 and from Stockholm+50 show that we all have a long way to go before we have reached environmental stability within the framework of sustainable development. But we are on our way.

“We advanced the discord on nature-based solutions, which is essentially an existential discussion”, the President of UNEA 5 stated. In his closing statement he reminded the audience of a theme raised by the late Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme, the host of the 1972 environment conference, the theme of ecocide. The theme had been lingering under the surface for 50 years, maybe now was the time to discuss it? Civil society raised it during the Stockholm+50 conference, but it failed to reach the ears of the decision-makers and make them understand the urgency behind the issue. During the closing session of UNEA 5, the audience was also reminded of the global agreement of becoming carbon neutral by 2050.

The goals for resetting the world on a development path that will secure and safeguard the planet's environment and nature are am-

bitious. They have to be, if we are going to be able to set right what has been made so terribly wrong. There are certainly glimmers of hope in the results of UNEA 5: of 14 agreed resolutions, three stand out: the decision to create a legally binding decision to stop plastic pollution, the decision to establish a science panel to focus on stopping the chemical pollution and equally important, a resolution to strengthen nature-based solutions for sustainable development. Nature has finally been brought back solidly in the world of politics. It took 50 years, but it signals a new beginning.

Another 50-year achievement was also reached in 2022. Inspired by the Stockholm declaration from 1972, and reflecting the decision by the UN Human Rights Council, the UN General Assembly decided on 28 July 2022⁶⁵ to make access to a clean and healthy environment a universal Human Right. Nature has truly been brought back.

Maurice Strong said after the Stockholm Conference was over in June 1972: “What is important is perhaps not so much what happens at the conference but in the follow up process.”

“Once words are agreed, they often take on a life of their own ... and as with so much in life, once an idea is off the ground, there may be no stopping it” wrote the respected international lawyer Phillippe Sands.

“When we plant trees, we plant the seeds of peace and hope” stated the courageous Kenyan Nobel Laureate and environmentalist Wangari Maathai.

And that is perhaps the most important accomplishment and a lasting legacy of UNEP, planting environmentally nature-based seeds of hope pointing to our future.

⁶⁵ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1123482>



Maurice Strong, founding father and first director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and Secretary General of the UN Conference on the Human Environment (1972) © Stockholm Environment Institute / Sergio Greif

“What is important is perhaps not so much what happens at the conference but in the follow up process.”

Maurice Strong

**UNEP and
Civil Society -
a necessary
partnership:
14 case stories
showing the
outcomes of this
collaborative effort**



ROLAC: TUNZA Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean © UNEP / PNUMA

UNEP and Civil Society – a necessary partnership

Case stories and essays showing results from this collaborative effort

by **Jan Gustav Strandenaes**, Senior Adviser, Stakeholder Forum

An introduction to the anthology Chapter

This Chapter of the PEN is an anthology, a collection of well documented narratives written about collaboration between civil society and UNEP. It is also written from the authors' points of view. Each article expresses the author's own experiences and conclusions. This first article is the author's effort to provide a background to the following anthology articles.

The largest voice in the world is the voice of civil society. The largest force in the world is the force of civil society. These may be truisms, but if we stop and think for a minute or two, the statements ring true. Civil society constitutes the backbone of nearly every unit in society, be they political constituencies, scientific units, think tanks, glee clubs, choirs, sports clubs, community-based interest groups and more. The elements of civil society have over centuries found organisational expressions in various ways, from the Greek polis in ancient Athens to modern days Friday's for Future¹.

The People's Environment Narrative (PEN) pays tribute to two major actors in the global system – Civil Society and UNEP. While the entire UN family with UNEP provide the institutional set-up and offers tools for channelling advocacy issues, facts about environmental science, global concerns and implementation to better humanity's life conditions, civil society provide a global conscience and critical corrigendum among others. It is today, in 2022, seen as a key provider in legitimising official decisions and actions, adding people's interests and voices to the agendas, providing new ideas and concerns to a growing global agenda and more often than not, setting the agenda. What is less recognised, though, is how civil society in organised formats is also a significant implementor of programmes, plans and projects. Civil society organisations are also often working closely with governments at all levels as well as with intergovernmental organisations, such as the UN family.

¹ <https://fridaysforfuture.org/>

This report pays tribute to UNEP's 50-year efforts to protect and safeguard the environment. But it also pays tribute to the close collaboration between UNEP and civil society. What follows are a number of articles on how civil society, people's movements, non-state stakeholders, Major Groups, all have contributed to protecting, upgrading and safeguarding the environment through close cooperation both with and within UNEP.

An enlightened civil society shall function as a critical corrigendum to official policies. It functions ideally by accountability, transparency, access, participation and relevance, bringing the uncomfortable truth in focus, asking questions which are perceived as necessary, revealing shady operations and fighting for democracy, justice, rule of law, equality and solidarity; all are hallmarks of its performance. That is also why people in positions of power, decision-makers in society, often ignore civil society, try to subjugate it, harass it and trivialise its efforts. This report and this chapter particularly, shows how wrong such opinions and actions are.

The burgeoning organised civil society

Since the formation of the United Nations and the end of World War II in 1945, NGOs and civil society organisations have become increasingly accepted players in decision-making and decision-shaping processes as well as in implementing programmes and projects. As such, NGOs have been exerting influence on local,

national, regional and international spaces. As more and more people in the West have re-oriented their approach to organised political parties, and an increasing number of people in other parts of the world are on the lookout for organisational instruments that can represent and channel their views, various organisational structures within the so-called non-governmental and civil society segment of society seem ready to 'absorb' these people and spearhead their views. India is noted as the country in the world with most registered NGOs, in total numbers and by per capita – more than 3.3 million NGOs are registered there.²

The NGO world has been one of rapid growth. There were an estimated 400 international organisations (defined as those operating in more than three countries) in 1920 and around 700 in 1939.³ The NGO/civil society world enjoyed unprecedented growth since the Second World War ended in 1945 and has done so in direct proportion to the growth of the UN, not the least because the UN gave them access to the world in ways not realised before. NGOs and civil society organisations were propelled into political importance during the cold war period,⁴ and found an outlet for engagement and expression of views through the advent and development of multilateral institutions. They became significant operators in relief and development, often viewed as impartial go-betweens, at times spearheading controversial and sensitive issues seen as too difficult for governments to touch. The many

² <https://www.icnl.org/resources/civic-freedom-monitor/india>

³ Quoted from Bill Seary, article in "The Early History: From the Congress of Vienna to the San Francisco Conference in the Conscience of the World" in the anthology: "The influence of Non-Governmental Organisations in the UN System", ed. Peter Willetts (London:Hurst, 1996); For further reading see also "Ahead of the Curve. UN Ideas and Global Challenges", Emmerij, Jolly&Weiss, Indiana University Press, 2001.

⁴ Several authors have dealt with this issue (ref: Johan Galtung, also the Bertrand Russel Peace Foundation and others), one source that deals with this issue and contains a large list for further reading is: Mary Kaldor – "Global Civil Society – an answer to war", Polity Press/Blackwell Publishing Ltd, UK, 2003.



The all-women team played for SDG Goal #14: Life Below Water at the Global Goals World Cup in Nairobi. 2017 © UNEP

Nobel Peace Prizes awarded to various NGOs⁵ are testament to this, and NGOs and civil society organizations were given added political significance by events in the world since the beginning of the 21st century, not the least helped by social media⁶. In present day politics all over the world, NGOs and civil society can no longer be dismissed as a 'Western phenomenon'. In the 21st century, they are a global, political force, found in every country around the world⁷.

The struggle for people to be an accepted part of decision-making processes that affect their lives is as old as humanity itself. Civil society is often viewed as the antidote to administrative systems, institutions and bureaucracies. The truth of the matter is, however, that for civil society to be effective and have an impact, institutions are needed. Civil society had to organise and form institutions. Civil society came of age in the 20th Century and not without struggles. The most difficult ones were perhaps

5 Médecin Sans Frontier, 1999; International Campaign to Ban Landmines, 1997; The Pugwash Conferences on Sciences and World Affairs, 1995; International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, 1985; Amnesty International, 1977; The League of Red cross Societies, 1963 (and 1944); Friends Service Council, Quakers, 1947.

6 Engagement by NGOs and civil society at WTO meetings at UN COPS, especially in 2009 Copenhagen, and most recently in the Arab Spring process.

7 The author is aware that authoritarian states forbid the establishment of true civil society organisations. Sadly, these dictatorial states do not value the voice of free people and we also see that these states apply an increasing amount of draconian regulations to stifle, subjugate and kill the will of free people. CIVICUS, Amnesty International, the Red Cross and Human Rights organisations follow and document the plight and struggle of civil society and their annual reports are well worth reading.

fought against being ignored and to being taken seriously. For civil society to be successful in its endeavours, it needed to be organised and the organisations needed to be recognized as legitimate entities. Access, participation, transparency and accountability were key elements of this struggle, elements that are considered to be among the basic values of good governance. Without institutions, how else could issues such as accountability, rule-based behaviour and transparent processes be monitored, tested and reviewed?

It also became obvious that when acting in organised political systems as societies do, lasting change could only be achieved when civil society was granted access to organised political systems based on rule-based behaviour with developed transparent processes and where outcomes and agreements were respected⁸. The UN family offers such a system, also having evolved through more than seven decades.

NGOs – new roles in the world and at the UN

Some 40 NGOs were present at the founding conference of the UN in San Francisco in 1945. The UN Charter represents the first legal recognition of the Non-Governmental Organisations, the NGOs. Article 71 of the Charter states this, and as such the NGOs became the third formally accepted and recognised actor within the UN system. The other two are the UN member states and global intergovernmental organisations. It is however important to remember and understand that the basic tenet of the UN family is that of an intergovernmen-

tal organisation, which means that the member states 'own' the organisation.

When the UN began its work in 1945, 4 NGOs were given accreditation. After 25 years, by 1970, when the word 'international' had started to attain a deeper understanding and UN membership stood at 140 states, some 380 NGOs had been accredited to the UN by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It would take another 20 years, by the time of the first Rio Conference in 1992, for this figure to reach 900. But in less than 10 years following this, by the turn of the present century, this figure had more than doubled, and reached almost 2,000.⁹ By the end of 2015, when the 2030 Agenda was adopted, almost 4,000 NGOs had been given an ECOSOC accreditation.¹⁰

There are not many annual reports dealing with the role of NGOs and civil society in a global context. The annually published CIVICUS and Amnesty International reports are exceptions, and worth reading and studying. As CIVICUS had been an active participant and observer to the preparation of the Rio+20 Conference including the conference itself which took place in 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, CIVICUS made the following observation in its 2013 annual report and commented in detail on the changing realities for civil society:

"There is a need for a renewed debate over the roles and priorities of civil society in many parts of the world, which should reassess relationships with both the State and civil society membership and constituencies alike...

8 The anti-slavery work in Britain is point in case. After several strong persons had laboured individually against the abomination of slavery, the "Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in Britain" was founded in 1787. This was reorganised through the "Anti-Slavery Society" (ASS), founded in 1823. Its substantive objective was achieved in 1838 after seriously lobbying the British parliament for years when slavery was abolished.

9 Prof. Peter Willets in "Whose world is it anyway?", Foster & Anand, UNA, Ottawa, Canada, 1999, page 254.

10 Basic facts about ECOSOC Status: <http://csonet.org/index.php?menu=17>

The issue is therefore not just a question of resources, but also one that may challenge the very roles of organisations that were set up and driven by a specific externally funded aid agenda... Key questions here include: are the large numbers of development groups or specialised agencies as necessary as they once were?"¹¹

In a research paper on the changing roles of civil society and NGOs at the UN, this question was asked "Will specialised needs divide civil society?"¹² and its answer prompted the following observations in the paper:

"Key elements of our development demand more and expert input and as the world grows more complex, issues are singled out, and given special treatment. Processes agreed on in the Rio+20 Outcome Document will also rely on expertise at a high level. Clearly defined interest groups with expert knowledge are therefore likely to be invited to participate in these intergovernmental processes and governments often ask NGOs and civil society how they can contribute to develop and implement such processes."

Beginning in the 1990s, intergovernmental organisations such as the UN family, working on a clearly defined issue have been increasingly inclined to integrate NGOs, Major Groups and other civil society organisations at a high level of decision-making when these NGOs demonstrated relevant expertise on the identified thematic issues. The UN consists of a plethora of

Specialised Agencies, expert committees, subsidiary bodies and thematic expert groups, all with a focussed thematic mandate. The following points to a few UN bodies that have a clearly defined topical mandate which are also relevant to environmental and sustainable development issues: the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), an institution that reports on chemicals to the UNEP, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), and the many UN Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). All these UN bodies have integrated expert NGOs at a very high level in their political hierarchies, precisely because the NGOs could bring expert knowledge and experience to the table, knowledge which was either not easy to come by or thought to be too sensitive for governments to bring to the negotiating table. Some of these contributions are dealt with in detail in this chapter and also elsewhere in the PEN.

As was noted in a study on the relationship between the Major Groups and the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) which coordinates the work on the Sustainable Development Goals: "Modalities dictate the degree of engagement of stakeholders in any intergovernmental process. The UN has always found mechanisms to expand and harmonise its procedural system with current political realities while ensuring the integrity of the intergovernmental nature of the UN."¹³ Since specialised expert groups - to which many single-issue NGOs actually belong

¹¹ CivicusS; "State of Civil Society 2013: Creating an enabling environment" - <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/state-civil-society-2013-creating-enabling-environment>

¹² <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/socs-2014-expert-perspectives/585-the-future-we-want-understanding-the-new-reality-of-governance-post-rio-20>

¹³ "Participatory democracy – HLPF laying the basis for sustainable development governance in the 21st Century - Modalities for major groups, Non-Governmental Organisations and other stakeholders' engagement with the high level political forum on sustainable development", Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, for UNDESA/DSD, March 2014 <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1564>

- can provide government negotiators with cutting edge research, advice, and incisive analysis, delegates are more prone to integrate expert groups into the inner, formal sanctum of the intergovernmental systems (see for instance the article in this section on the development of the Mercury convention). It follows that Member States are more inclined to design formal rules of procedure catering to this need. Thus, it has become easier for expert groups (often from academia) and single-issue NGOs to interact with the substantive and thematic areas of intergovernmental organisations that also have a single-issue focus. The danger this raises is whether this could split the civil society community between those that have insider status and those that do not.

UNEP and the changing roles of NGOs: 'same-same' or 'soon-to-be' different?

Many have tried to classify NGOs into different categories by using their mission statements and looking at their main activities.

Three such main classifications keep returning in papers:

- Policy NGOs
- Advocacy NGOs
- Field and project NGOs

If this be accepted as a 'grundnorm'¹⁴ for NGO classification, anyone can see that there are also a host of sub-groups, often decided by their topic of interest – humanitarian NGOs, aid NGOs, human rights NGOs, environmental NGOs and so forth.

The Civil Society and Stakeholder office (former Major Groups and Stakeholders' office) at UNEP, orchestrated a debate following the establishment of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) in 2014. The discussions were on the changing roles of NGOs in UNEP. Set against the backdrop of the process on International Environmental Governance (IEG) that took place parallel to the run up to Rio+20, it still has not found its conclusion. But several thought pieces have emerged enriching this debate.

The UNEP discussions series named 'Perspectives' have contributed greatly to increasing and deepening the discourse around the NGO world. Two such papers hold relevant input and warrants a closer look: Issue No.11 "On Strengthening UNEP's Legitimacy: Towards Greater Stakeholder Engagement"¹⁵ by Joyeeta Gupta¹⁶ and Stephen Stec¹⁷, and Perspectives issue no.20 titled "UNEP and Civil Society: An Exchange - A New Landscape For Stakeholder Engagement in UNEP?" by Mark Halle¹⁸, then (2010) Executive Director at the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and Felix Dodds¹⁹, Adjunct Professor at the

14 "The ultimate, foundational principle from which the validity of all norms can be drawn by the fact that they exist." – from 'Oxford Reference'

15 http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/24105/documents/perspectives/ENVIRONMENT_PAPERS_DISCUSSION_11.pdf

16 Ms. Gupta is a respected scientist who has worked on UNEP issues for many years, and was chair of UNEP flagship report, the Global Environment Outlook until 2019. As a professor at the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, she works on challenging issues related to the Global South and the environment. <https://www.earthsystemgovernance.org/person/joyeeta-gupta/>

17 Stephen Stec, adjunct professor in international environmental law, and worked as a consultant for UNEP in many different areas, is also teaching at the Central European University, <http://isepei.org/people/stephen-stec>

18 Mark Halle's bio appears in Section 8. He has also contributed to an article in the series on civil society in this section of the PEN.

19 Felix Dodds has pioneered many innovative procedures promoting civil society and non-state actors' advocacy and lobby work in different UN forums. He has held a number of positions for non-state actors in different UN contexts and is presently a much re-



The team from the Drought Response Program handing out some food items. Maalimin, Kenya
© UNEP / Nayim Ahmed Yussuf

Global Research Institute, University of North Carolina.²⁰

Both papers are written by people with a long and diversified experience working with and on NGOs in general and with NGOs working with UNEP in particular. Both papers analyse critical aspects of NGO involvement, and there is a fair balance between criticism and positive appraisals of NGO involvement expressed by the four authors. Both papers however, clearly emphasise the positive and invaluable contributions NGOs have made to UNEP's policy work, but none of the papers seems to take a step outside of the work NGOs are doing on policy within the "confines of the UNEP plenaries" - that is within the Governing Councils or

the Ministerial Forums, and now in the UNEAs. In other words, the authors seem to think that the NGO contribution is measured by their success in terms of input in the UNEP plenaries. In one way, these papers may have only concentrated on the policy-advocacy element of the NGO world.

And yet, comparing documents and thought pieces over time – beginning in 1992 and the first Rio Conference (UNCED), the 'engagement challenge' identified in many papers seem to remain narrowly defined when it comes to NGOs and what they do at UNEP – the focus of NGO engagement is almost always the Governing Council or the UNEA. It may seem that most observers are blinded by

spected adviser on UN policies on sustainable development, the environment, UN structure and gives frequent lectures and capacity building workshops on these issues. He is also a prolific author, see: https://sph.unc.edu/adv_profile/michael-felix-dodds/

20 <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/10007>

a visual presence, the number of accredited NGO persons in the room, and thinking that 'numbers speak and numbers represent'. Even though more than a couple of decades have elapsed since these thought pieces were written, the situations that are focused on and the problems that are identified, and challenges observed concerning NGO or civil society presence, the analysis and recommendations proposed remain almost the same today in 2022. As we want to show in this report, the PEN, there is much more to civil society and UNEP than plenaries.

A look at two other papers commissioned by UNEP also demonstrates this point. What makes these papers different, is that they address the complexity of UNEP and identify issues and tasks outside of the UNEA plenary sessions. These two papers also have admittedly a slightly different mandate than the two previous ones. What is, however, rather interesting is that the papers are researched and written 11 years apart – yet pointing to the very issues as key challenges for a wider stakeholder engagement in UNEP: Johanna Bernstein's paper²¹ from December 2015²² and Rémi Parmentier's paper from September 2004 identify much the same issues and propose in general, much of the same solutions. Both warrant a closer look for the interested reader.

Johanna Bernstein's²³ massive work covering nearly 100 pages, on evaluating Major Groups and Stakeholders' performance²⁴ reveals op-

tions, gaps, shortcomings and areas of improvement. Answering why UNEP should engage with NGOs, she states that: "As described by the 2013 Expert Group Meeting on "Models and Mechanisms of Civil Society Participation in UNEP" on engagement policies, there are several perceived benefits that flow from strengthening the participation of MGS in UNEP's work:²⁵

- Increases to UNEP's relevance, authority, credibility, legitimacy and effectiveness
- Improved quality of UNEP's decision-making
- Stronger connections between UNEP and people's and communities' needs
- Stronger linkages between international public discourse to national discourses
- Increased impacts of UNEP's decisions on the ground, including increase of ownership and accountability at the national level and greater ability to promote political will related to UNEP' mandate, and
- Upgraded focus and protection of the environment including human health"

On the other hand, Parmentier's paper deals with NGOs and documents what he labels failed opportunities, failed because NGOs do not see possibilities in being involved in UNEP's Programme of Work, (PoW). The paper is a succinct analysis on stakeholder engagement issues, supplied with possible remedies to close the NGO engagement gap, which has also been visually apparent in UNEP plenaries since the beginning of this century. Even though plenaries at the UN are significant arenas for civil

21 "Review from a Civil Society Perspective of UNEP's Draft Programme of Work For 2006-07" remi@vardagroup.org This interesting and solid report may be accessed directly from Remi Parmentier: <https://www.vardagroup.org/bio/remi-parmentier>

22 Johanna Bernstein p 9 - "Terminal Evaluation of the Project: "Engaging Major Groups and Stakeholders for Policy Dialogue" <https://www.unep.org/ar/node/18660>

23 Johanna Bernstein, an international environmental lawyer has worked with the UN and UNEP for several decades and is an expert on MEAs, environmental conventions and rights issues. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/johannahbernstein/>

24 Johanna Bernstein p 9 - "Terminal Evaluation of the Project: "Engaging Major Groups and Stakeholders for Policy Dialogue" <https://www.unep.org/ar/node/18660>

25 Independent Group of Experts on New Mechanisms for Stakeholder Engagement at UNEP, 2013, pages 4-6:

society to showcase in public their positions, as Bernstein and Parmentier show in their reports, the UN family offers several other opportunities, that may not be as obvious, but nonetheless must be heeded and filled with competent people from civil society.

Bernstein and Parmentier clearly refer to the policy issues in which NGOs engage themselves, and whose performance is acted out in the plenaries where policy is developed through negotiations. But both papers also challenge the NGOs and UNEP to do more, and do so in addition to policy plenaries as well as outside of the plenaries. Both papers emphasise that there are a number of important issues that NGOs have no or little access to for various reasons – and here UNEP's Programme of Work, (PoW) is of key importance.

Bernstein referring to the way that intergovernmental organisations disseminate their policies, states that “the problem is that these engagement policies (in the PoW, my add) are not sufficiently accessible for the majority of MGS who are potentially important implementation partners.”²⁶ Parmentier, writing eleven years earlier, asserts the same but adds also that the information about UNEP's PoW is available for all to see and engage in. Commenting on the proposed PoW for 2006-2007, Parmentier writes:

“There are numerous references in the Draft Programme of Work to NGOs (21), Major Groups (21), Stakeholders (24), and Foundations (1), that clearly show that UNEP does not expect to fulfil its mandate without the cooperation of civil society organisations as full partners.”²⁷

Parmentier in his report from 2004 on UNEP/ NGO relations in carrying out the Draft Programme of Work (POW), makes an approximation stating that as much as 55 – to 60 per cent of the POW is carried out together with the global NGO community. The problem with this performance, is that the entire activity has never been properly counted in such a way that the entire number of NGOs involved globally for UNEP is displayed. And UNEP and the intergovernmental world depends on these active civil society organisations to be able to carry out the proposed and agreed programmes.

The question we need to address is the following: can this be remedied with a different approach to civil society? And if so, how do we do this? Pertinent questions having been asked repeatedly by members of civil society are:

- Is there a political will among Member States to provide solutions?
- Is there a willingness in and among UNEP's administration in Nairobi to do so?
- Is there a willingness among UNEP's six regions to do so?
- Will the NGOs see the opportunities and engage?

These six identified authors present a common conclusion, a conclusion which many later authors have reached in their papers: UNEP and the environment clearly benefits from an increased participation of NGOs and civil society. How then can this engagement be maintained and perhaps even increased in the future?

What this chapter and report tries to show is that the performance of NGOs changes in substantial ways when they are involved in

26 Paragraph 127 pp 34 and 35 of J. Bernstein: “Terminal Evaluation of the Project: “Engaging Major Groups and Stakeholders for Policy Dialogue

27 For reference – see footnote 14

what may be termed 'the more specialised elements of UNEP's work'. As pointed out in a paper on Major Groups and HLPF²⁸, the more specialised an issue becomes, the more thematically defined and focussed, the more engaged, involved and integrated into UN policies and decision-making, the NGOs with that particular competence become. Another interesting feature of this specialisation is the fact that these NGOs with a highly competent and well-trained staff often enjoy a much different and influential position within the intergovernmental system, a position not only condoned by Member States but actively encouraged and even orchestrated by Member States. SAICM, UNAIDS and UNOCHA – as already mentioned – are all illustrative examples of this. The PEN illustrates through the various chapters and papers how different civil society is included, treated and respected. This section also illustrates how effective and productive NGO cooperation with UNEP can be.

In my long personal experience, NGOs, civil society, in fact all non-state actors, will be engaged anywhere if they can see:

- Relevance
- Transparency
- Participation
- And feel ownership

Several studies, papers and evaluations have revealed that NGOs struggle to find these four points in the 'UNEP conundrum'. But these reports also point out a fact that might be perceived as slightly embarrassing to the NGO community – many NGOs are often not well-informed about UNEP's variegated work-profile. This may be because they struggle to find rel-

evant information about what UNEP is working on and how to apply this to their own priorities. And if form is to follow function, and be functional and meaningful to NGOs, programmes, proceedings and processes must be understood.

In so many words, these reports suggest that UNEP represents a tool through which organisations can work on environmental issues if they know the system. Those who do, can be very effective.

What is the total number of NGOs, Major Groups and Stakeholders in the UNEP world?

The organogram of UNEP (2020) reveals a fairly complex organisational system. There are 6 regions and about 40 different units or programme and project areas that UNEP administers. Taking a look at their own pages and looking at what is labelled either 'focal points' or 'partners' or any configuration that designates a non-government representative, approximately an average of 35 to 40 people with as many organisations from the global NGO world are listed. That actually means that at least 1500 NGO²⁹ people have an active relationship with UNEP at any given time. There are reasons to believe that the final number is much, much higher. In addition to every listed person and organisation, there are several NGOs working actively either in a country network or in a regional network. There are today also few – if any – adequate records of how many NGOs are involved in the various MEAs. But we may add numbers that exceed several hundreds to the estimate mentioned above. Considering the fact that more than 1000 MEAs

28 "Participatory democracy – HLPF laying the basis for sustainable development governance in the 21st Century - Modalities for Major Groups, Non-Governmental Organisations and other stakeholders' engagement with the high-level political forum on sustainable development" By Jan-Gustav Strandenaes For UNDESA/DSD, 2014

29 Counting local network partner organisations and an average of 20 to 30 employed or associated per NGO, the figure may approach 1500 people.



Opening Session, Science Policy Business Forum. Nairobi, Kenya. 2017 © UNEP / Natalia Mroz

are registered³⁰ and a great many of them are administrated by UNEP, it is fair to estimate that NGOs actively involved in UNEP's total work is in the range of several thousands.

There are more NGOs in the world today than at any given time before. This increase began in earnest in the 1990s, when NGOs seem to have been afforded new tasks and new mandates by the growing intergovernmental community. As the cold war thawed, the wall between West and East disappeared and politicians spoke about the peace dividend, people and organisations began working on socio-economic developments more intensely than ever before; rights-based issues progressed, and

the UN carried out several global summits, of which the first Rio conference, UNCED in 1992 was one. The sheer number of participants at this conference was for the time being overwhelming: 172 nations, 108 Heads of state or government, nearly 2,500 representatives of NGOs with more than 17,000 NGOs participating in the parallel NGO conference, and roughly 10,000 media people reporting³¹. All this was to be surpassed by far at the following Rio+20 in 2012.

The issues – rights-based concerns, sustainable development, environmental crises, new conventions to protect rights and the environment, the demands for well-being, eradica-

³⁰ Wikipedia refers to 3000 MEAs https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_international_environmental_agreements

and the University of Oregon, which also has a database for MEAs operates with the number of 1300. The difference in number is to some extent due to various definitions of MEAs.

³¹ <https://www.encyclopedia.com/environment/energy-government-and-defense-magazines/earth-summit-1992> From: "Briefing papers home page: The World Conferences – Developing Priorities for the 21st Century."

tion of poverty - were issues that political parties and politicians had been slow to embrace, but that NGOs cared strongly about and had campaigned for. With a new platform agreed to by the global intergovernmental community at UNCED in Rio in 1992, called Agenda 21, NGOs acted quickly. By the time of the Rio conference in 1992, approximately 900 NGOs had been given ECOSOC accreditation. 10 years later, by the turn of the 21st Century, this figure had more than doubled and reached almost 2000.³² And this figure has continued to grow.³³ Adding to these numbers are all the 'conference accredited NGOs' and by that token the total numbers of NGOs showing their presence at UN meetings and its themes, far exceeds tens of thousands.

Despite the increase in numbers, civil society, NGOs and other non-state actors are often ignored or minimized in importance by secretariats of intergovernmental bodies. The UN is unfortunately no exception. The so-called NGO branches of intergovernmental organisations are often staffed with people with little or no background in civil society work and engagement; they are also caught in loyalty conflicts between their own interests *vis-a-vis* the body that is their formal employer and the constituency they are supposed to serve, and their decisions tend to favour their employer more often than the groups they are supposed to serve. Unfortunately, the UN history with NGOs is rife with examples where decisions are made based on short-sighted motives to the detriment of the position of the NGOs and other civil society actors. The NGO branches also seem to be involved in perpetual battles for more financial resources.

Is civil society blinded by formalities at UNEP?

The UN system is an intergovernmental system of organisations. There are many elements that contribute to making an intergovernmental organisation with 193 Member States function. Among these elements are formalities, process, procedure and modalities. A substantive element among these are formally and by consensus, agreed decisions. "Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed – nothing is decided until everything is decided" – this is the mantra of consensus decisions and the '*sine qua non*' of a decision backed by 193 UN Member States. As the PEN is about the involvement of non-governmental organisations, Major Groups and civil society organisations in the UN system, it may serve the argumentation well to be reminded of a few of the consensus agreement promoting the presence, participation and involvement of civil society and Major Groups at the UN in general and at UNEP, in particular.

No government official today, elected or appointed, will admit to propagating undemocratic policies in public, while perhaps condoning such policies to promote his or her own positions. Over time, this discrepancy between ideals and real politics, between theoretical ideals and blatant hypocrisy has been exposed with much success and effect by the NGO community – in their method of shaming and blaming.

But it is only with increased knowledge of processes, increased understanding of the UN and increased understanding of the issues, political and thematic, that the global NGO community can challenge entrenched policies. And it is only by understanding the system and know-

32 Prof. Peter Willets in "Whose world is it anyway?", Foster & Anand, UNA, Ottawa, Canada, 1999, page 254

33 Basic facts about ECOSOC Status <http://csonet.org/index.php?menu=17>, see paragraph 2.2 for the full argument in the paper referred to in footnote 36

ing the system that NGOs might identify opportunities for improvement and engagement. And it is only by being allowed to act as a medium for a 'critical corrigendum' – a role often given to NGOs by UN Member States in theory – that the NGO community is willing to engage wholeheartedly in the UN family in general – and with UNEP and UNEA in particular.

NGOs and the UN – common challenges

As noted, civil society organisations are increasing in numbers all over the world, in terms of organisations as well as in sheer membership³⁴. There are more complex reasons for this increase in addition to those alluded to above. As people are growing weary of traditional political parties asserting that the parties are no longer capable of responding to the needs of the people nor do politicians seem willing to champion the concerns of people, people in growing numbers channel their energies and support to civil society organisations. Over time, the established ones have seen their membership increase, but if the old ones do not suffice, new NGOs are created. Unfortunately, the number of NGOs coming alive today are not always embracing basic issues or values that respect human rights or justice and democracy. Extreme right wing and left wing organisations condoning violence as, in their view, legitimate tools to create change, have proliferated since the turn of the century. These are also often servants of despotic and authoritarian regimes. In addition, we also see an increase in the numbers of social enterprises carrying out social services, and these enterprises are often organised as NGOs. There are other developments as well. The NGO community – and civil society – is considered historically a Western phenomenon³⁵. From 1970 and on-

wards, Western aid/development NGOs established themselves all over the developing world by establishing their own chapters. With the increase in the intergovernmental system which also established their own organisational hubs all over the world, the NGO/civil society community found reasons to engage with these hubs pursuing their more traditional agendas of being watch-dogs and lobby for issues. The NGO/Civil society models spread and evolved, and through the last decade of the last century and around the turn of the century, the NGOs in the developing countries and in Africa particularly, began to seek out national agendas and build national constituencies. With a growing national NGO/civil society constituency with global agendas being applied – often with acute relevance to national concerns in areas such as environment and rights, NGOs in developing countries began to change their *modus operandi*. Many have adopted approaches that are critical of their own government's performance on social, economic and environmental issues. Governments through the willing service of their civil servants have often responded negatively to this growing democratic voice from civil society, and over the last ten years enacted restrictive laws and regulations. As the UN is Member-State driven, national and restrictive policies on participation are reflected in positions taken by Member-State governments at UN negotiations, and windows of participatory opportunities at the UN are now slowly closing³⁶ as a result. The paradox here is that all the important UN conferences today include strong and positive references to civil society, stating succinctly and with peremptory force in the outcome documents that successful implementation of UN decisions will come to naught if civil society and the global NGO community are not involved. The outcome doc-

34 See the well-researched annual yearbooks on civil society from CIVICUS, 2013, 2014, 2015.

35 Frances Fukuyama: "Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment". 2018

36 See the well-researched annual yearbooks from CIVICUS, 2013, 2014, 2015

ument from the Rio+20 conference in 2012 and the UN summit in September 2015 which unanimously adopted the new 2030 agenda called “Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development” which includes the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, are points in case. The Rio+20 outcome document begins and ends with references to civil society. The 2015 UN Summit on sustainable development, attended by 140 State Leaders, made sure that their statement pointed to the necessity of involving the global NGO community and civil society at all levels of sustainable development, in policy and in implementation.

The 2030 Agenda on sustainable development is a courageous document, with strong visions and a strong value basis, beginning with a commitment to service all the peoples of the world, referring to the ‘triple bottom line of good governance’ – of the people, by the people and for the people – pronounced by the 193 UN Member States; they state: “On behalf of the peoples we serve, we have adopted a historic decision on a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative goals and targets...”³⁷, and the first chapter of the 2030 document concludes with a reference to the successful implementation and fulfilment of the agenda – which inevitably have to be based on involving NGOs, civil society organisations and similar stakeholders.

Trust and credibility – a delicate issue

Trust, credibility, engagement and participation and their principles are interwoven in all intergovernmental matters and are more important than many understand. Because of the precarious existence of many NGOs and civil society organisations – exposed as they often are to suppressive, fickle and unpredictable

policies by far too many governments today³⁸ – these issues are extremely important to deliver on, if there are serious intentions behind the expressed wish to involve non-state actors. The UN also suffers from a credibility and trust issue, and there is a growing feeling among the global NGO community that they are not being taken seriously. Informal talks and interviews I have had with NGO representatives from all over the world corroborate this general view. There is today no consistent and uniform policy at the many UN secretariats, no general code of conduct towards the global NGO community. Trust and credibility are always precarious commodities, and unfortunately, the roles of civil society and governments are at the outset one of mutual suspicion, and at times, distrust. If this were not the case, there seems to be little reason for civil society to first and foremost think of their own role as that of a watch-dog. Also, as we know, governments are often meeting civil society with attitudes ranging from benign tolerance to polite disdain, attitudes that do not break down the barrier of distrust. This is not to say that the relationship between governments, civil society, market forces and the intergovernmental community cannot be positive and productive. Suffice it to state that trust and credibility are earned – and destroyed – through actions over time. For any relationship to be constructive, creative and productive, there must be a minimum of trust. And as this ‘commodity’ is essential in future relationships, also at the UN, it warrants more discussions – as one of the many options in engaging non-state actors in UN work.

There is a wide-spread tendency among non-state actors to look at the UN as one(!); decisions made concerning the NGO community in one place of the UN is more often than not seen as relevant to the overall relationship be-

37 From paragraph 2 of the “Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” UNGA Res/70/1.

38 See the well-researched annual yearbooks on civil society from CIVICUS, 2013, 2014, 2015



Stakeholder Forum with Maria Ivanova, John Scanlon & Leida Rijnhout at Stockholm+50
© UNEP / Maria Nilsson

tween the UN and the NGO community, even if the various UN bodies may not be formally connected other than by carrying the name 'UN'. For instance, decisions taken at UNDESA and HLPF affecting the NGO/civil society community there, are in the minds of NGOs also seen as an expression of what UNEP or UNDP may think of the non-state actors. HLPF deals with the SDGs, so do UNEP/UNEA and UNDP – hence they must have the same or at least similar approaches to Major Groups and civil society. Formally this is incorrect, but such understanding and information is only gleaned and understood over time.

For instance, when the Division of Sustainable Development, the DSD, branch at UNDESA, which coordinates the Major Groups and stakeholder input at the High Level Political Forum, the HLPF, decided to change its name from the Major Groups Outreach Office to the Stakeholder Office, through an internal decision, the global NGO/Major Groups commu-

nity was outraged. A stakeholder is a non-descript and generic word signifying everything or nothing. A stakeholder can be a representative of government, of a UN administration or of a civil society organisation. The concept has no legal or formal standing. The Major Groups concept is protected and mandated by Agenda 21 which is grounded in Article 71 of the UN Charter. The Major Groups as such were also given designated roles and mandated obligations through UNGA resolution 67/290 which mandates the UN HLPF itself. The Major Groups community at HLPF rightly felt that their formal and also 'legal' identity had been stripped away by a cursory, even callous decision by UN civil servants with little or no understanding of the sensitivities of the Major Groups' community. The decision was taken by the secretariat without any consultation with the Major Groups, and despite well-crafted protests from the Major Groups, the UN secretariat remained adamant and inflexible merely pointing to their right to take administrative

decisions within the system without having to consult anybody. While formally correct, the attitude sent ripples through the global NGO/civil society community corroborating a growing and wide-spread feeling that Major Groups are more of a burden than an asset to the UN. And with such a feeling, who can blame the global Major Groups/civil society community for wanting to withdraw their active support and not participate at the UN? And whereas some may know that UNDESA is not UNEP, for most non-state actors, the UN is seen as 'one' and hence the decision taken at DSD is seen as indicative of UN policy *vis-à-vis* all NGOs and the damage is done to the entire UN system.

Major groups, stakeholders and civil society – recognised or not?

UNEP was among the first UN bodies to embrace the NGO community and work with them. The 1972 Stockholm UN Conference which decided to establish UNEP, allowed hundreds of NGOs to deliver political messages and lobby delegates and close to 150 NGOs participated in the first UNEP Governing council in Geneva in 1973.

In 1999, with financial support from Norway, UNEP established a Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch, and invited a large contingency of Major Group organisations to be accredited to the Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF) held in Malmö, Sweden in May 2000. UNEP's GMEF spent much time considering the civil society question and responding to what may have appeared as the political currency at the time, and stated that: "Governments have a role to promote cooperation and encourage a "culture of civil socie-

ty" with values of tolerance and respect for the rights of others³⁹."

The Malmö GMEF concluded with the Malmö Declaration⁴⁰, outlining the environmental challenges for the 21st Century including a number of recommendations addressed to the UN and to governments. Paragraph 14 of that declaration states: "Civil society plays a critically important role in addressing environmental issues. The role, capabilities and involvement of civil society organizations has seen a substantial increase over recent years, which highlights the need for national governments and for UNEP and international organizations to enhance the engagement of these organizations in their work on environmental matters."

'Enhance the engagement of civil society' – a strong message to UNEP and to governments. Two UN bodies had, at the turn of the century, branches that had as its major responsibility Major Groups and civil society and worked closely with them: CSD – the Commission on Sustainable Development, and UNEP. This was however soon to change. Already in 2002, during the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), governments with the compliance of the UN reduced the well-functioning dialogue sessions at CSD, which were organised and run by the Major Groups as an official element of the CSD negotiations with the active participation of government delegates, from two full days to one and a half hours. And more was to come over the following years. As has been pointed out in this paper, the Division for Sustainable Development at UNDESA changed its name in 2015 from Major Groups branch to stakeholders branch while

39 UNEP Information Note 00/27, Global Ministerial Environment Forum, Nairobi, 2000.

40 The Malmö Declaration, found in "Report of the Governing Council Sixth special session (29-31 May 2000)" Annex 1 <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/425068?ln=en>



Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum High Level Segment on 22 June 2014 © UNEP

at the same time the staff was reduced from two persons with interns to one person and an intern.

Looking at organograms can be revealing. They give an oversight over a unit's structure and the structure tells you what its administrative priorities are. Of the 15 Specialised Agencies of the UN in 2018, not one had an office whose prime responsibility was civil society or Major Groups, at least not according to the official organograms available to the public. The situation is not better when looking at other UN bodies today in 2022, with one exception only: the World Food Programme (WFP). Several of the UN bodies have corporate outreach programmes reaching out to the business world; UNICEF has of course a division that deals with children, and the ILO has, out of necessity, both divisions for trade unions and for business. There is also a division for NGOs as a subsidiary body under ECOSOC, but this division is not a thematic or political division looking to help NGOs and civil

society to partake in the political life of the UN family. The ECOSOC-NGO division deals with administrative matters, where accreditation procedures according to roster qualification is perhaps the most important service for the global NGO community.

Despite having stated the need to increase outreach and activities with Major Groups and Stakeholders and prioritise their future participation in UNEP's programmes and UNEA, UNEP's administration seems to have reduced the importance of Major Groups and Stakeholders. Since establishing the Major Groups and Stakeholder Branch 20 years ago (in 1999, see also the article in this chapter by Anantha Krishnan), and showing this in organograms, this branch is now also changed. The ostensible reason given for this has been to increase the importance of the Major Groups and Stakeholders. Apparently, the branch has been subsumed by another unit within UNEP, though this has resulted in reduction of staff

and finance allocated to serve Major Groups and Stakeholders. As one usually UN-supportive NGO said during one of the interviews conducted in connection with this report - Why bother to try to be involved in UNEP? Actions speak louder than words, and with the Major Groups and Stakeholders branch reduced, the same is happening at UNEP as with what took place at UNDESA back in 2015. Civil society organisations are merely window-dressing.

The 21st Century – a different world

The triple bottom line for civil society – Access, Participation and Relevance– will always be a guiding light giving NGOs and civil society impetus for involvement. As UNEP has expanded its approach and understanding of environment, responding to demands made by their Member States through decisions made at the GC or the UNEA – the organisation's work has either resulted in new independent bodies being established, or divisions have been added to UNEP's own organisation. No matter what, these new 'units' have attracted issue-oriented NGOs that have directed their attention and energy to these units. This may seem obvious for any astute observer, but this fact is rarely given attention in overviews dealing with 'stakeholder engagement' in UNEP. Not understanding this and giving it proper attention, will eventually have misled anyone in trying to understand the scope of stakeholder involvement in UNEP. If this is not taken into account, future engagement policies with UNEP and UNEA will consequently fail to be optimal – or in worst case, fail totally as Member States might feel inclined to underestimate the importance of civil society at UNEP and make participation dif-

ficult through obstructive policies in regard to accreditation or reduced funding.

The world of the Non-Governmental global community two decades into the 21st Century is highly different compared to what it was in the century we left.⁴¹ Hence, a serious question must be asked – Can we deal with this community in the same way we operated in the last half of the 20th Century? The world has changed in dramatic ways in just a few decades. Not only do we possess more knowledge about the environment but, the global environmental crisis in all aspects has also deepened. The urgency has become even more urgent.

The following cases, articles and short stories will show how constructive cooperation between UNEP and civil society organisations can be. One thing is certain – less is not more. More resources are needed to create the future we want. Mutual support and respect will take us a long way forward.



41 "Participatory democracy – HLPF laying the basis for sustainable development governance in the 21st Century - Modalities for major groups, Non-Governmental Organisations and other stakeholders' engagement with the high-level political forum on sustainable development" By Jan-Gustav Strandenaes For UNDESA/DSD, 2014, pp 17 – 18.





Demonstration in front of the conference venue 1972 against Ecocide in Vietnam with 7000 participants
© Björn Gustafsson

Politics in the 1970s – An introduction

by *the editors*

The UN Conference on the Human Environment, UNCHE, in June 1972 came at the height of the Cold War. What took place before during and a few years after UNCHE will also have to be seen in this perspective. Tensions between the great powers of the day were high, the United States on one side, and the Soviet Union on the other side both fought a global war of influence, promoting ideas and ideologies openly and in clandestine ways. Infiltrations into non-state organisations by the big powers took place on a large scale, causing rise to suspicions of political motifs, between and inside of organisations.

Liberation movements were fighting for their countries' independence in former colonies, struggle for real independence was increasing in Africa, and the brutal civil war in Nigeria – called the Biafra war, ended in 1970. Civil rights movements were on the move in the US, and demonstrations against the inhuman war in Viet Nam took place all over the world. The Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968 and strangled the democracy initiatives – the so-called Prague Spring and in the far East, the Soviet Union and China clashed in a 7 month military border dispute. A little further to the west, Pakistan and India clashed over border disputes in the area of Kashmir, and the dispute had flared up again in 1971. At the same time Pakistan was waging a war against independence movements in East-Bengal, which ultimately led to the establishment of Bangladesh. The conflict was brutal, and millions of civilians were affected, thousands died or became refugees. The Soviet Union and the US were also politically involved, through expressing allegiance to different sides of the conflicts. The Middle East was teetering on the brink of armed conflicts, and the conflicts there flared up in 1972 – 73, which among many things, lead to the global oil-embargo of 1973, where the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, OPEC¹, effectively boycotted oil deliveries to the rest of the world.

Political unrest was growing in Latin America as well. The progressive Salvador Allende had been democratically elected to be president of Chile in 1970 but was killed by General Augusto Pinochet in a military coup in 1973, supported by the CIA. Pinochet's dictatorship which lasted for nearly two decades, was brutal causing the death of tens of thousands of people opposing his rule and fighting for democracy.

Students had organised sit-ins in Paris in 1968 demanding an end to archaic academic structures, which with the support of workers soon developed into a general strike in France, involving 10 million workers. Two dramatic assassinations had taken place in the US in 1968. Dr. Martin

¹ https://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/



Luther King, the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate fighting to abolish racism, had been shot dead in April of that year, and Robert Kennedy, the presidential candidate for the Democratic Party was killed in June. The events lead to mass demonstrations with arrests and left wing accusations. Youth were on the move elsewhere as well, demanding to be heard by the older generation. The Woodstock music festival in the state of New York in 1969 had gathered 400 000 participants and was seen as the epitome of rock music, and hippie culture and was motivated by a yearning for global peace and free love often stimulated by the use of drugs. Global society was changing and was, if anything, not stable.

The fight for democracy and free speech, human rights and justice were always part and parcel of these events. These democratic elements were always referred to in speeches at major events during these years. People participated and the 60s and 70s also saw an explosion of new civil society movements, and several non-governmental organisations were founded. Amnesty International was founded in May 1961 in London. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights were agreed to and adopted by the UN member states in December 1966.

When the UN announced that civil society was to be invited to the UN Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, the budding NGO world quickly found this as an event to focus their activities on. The process of organising the UNCHE took more than four years, ample time to get interested and ample time for NGOs and civil society movements to think and feel that they wanted to be part of this conference. After all, the environment was about the well-being of the environment, of nature and of people.

The following article gives an insight and understanding of what took place between 1968 and 1972 in relation to the UNCHE, from the perspective of a group of popular movements, driven by individuals with a passion for justice, solidarity, the environment, and for the well-being of all. The engagement and number of activities in these June days in Stockholm in 1972 were unparalleled. There were three main conference venues – the official UNCHE with government delegates and the UN secretariat, then the Environment Forum for the global NGO community also 'officially organised' and the third was the People's Forum, a result of a more spontaneous initiative from civil society. In addition, there were numerous daily impromptu and planned activities, demonstrations and exhibitions in Stockholm during the two-week UNCHE. There was also the (in)-famous Hog Farm, and the Skarpnäck tent camp, including the Dai Dong scientific conference. And prior to all this during more than four years, preparations had taken place. The political backdrop to all this, were the tumultuous 1960s and early 1970s draped in the cold war.

No global conference had engendered such an amount of people's energy, inspiration, innovation, creativity and action oriented ideas and plans. As a contribution to the 'culture of memory' this is part of their story, told by Tord Björk, who was very much involved in these events.





Panel discussion at the Environment forum in the White Sea hall at Konstfackskolan © UN

People's interventions at the Stockholm Conference 1972

by Tord Björk

He came walking towards me barefoot on a cold day in January in Barcelona in 2018. It was the first time we met. It was as if we always had known each other. The man was Taghi Farvar. He played a prominent role among 60 researchers and activists from the Third World who came to the Environment Forum during the Stockholm Conference in 1972, officially named the United Nation Conference on the Human Environment UNCHE. He was a participant from the Global South at the very start of the global environmental movement with which I have been heavily involved. Now, in 2018 in Barcelona Farvar represented 11 nomadic tribes in Iran at a European meeting to initiate an International Peoples Assembly, an anti-imperialist process supported by movements like the landless peasants in Brazil and by political parties such as Podemos in Spain. The story Farvar told me about what happened after UNCHE in the negotiations concerning the creation of UNEP was even more unbelievable and dramatic than his story about how he with the help of others from the Third World contributed to turning the 1972 Stockholm event upside down

The confrontation between different views in the environmental movement during the first week of UNCHE had reached a climax during meetings held at Konstfackskolan, an art academy in Stockholm in a venue called “Vita Havet”, the White Sea. “The microphone was on its way to be handed over by the chairman Peter Scott, a British upper class gentleman from the World Wildlife Fund and given to the American professor Paul Ehrlich at the opening of one of the most heated discussions at the Environment Forum, a parallel conference to the first United Nations Conference on environment. Before Ehrlich got the microphone it was taken over by Dora Obi Chizea, a biologist from Ibadan in Nigeria coming up from the audience. She said, “This discussion is about us, so we take over now”.²

This act was a disturbance of ‘formal order’ that is still reflected in books decades after the incident. The woman from Ibadan was one of 60 persons from the third world forming the Oi Committee who participated in the Environment Forum (more on the Oi Committee later). There they challenged the overwhelmingly Northern biased environmentalism that otherwise had been given more or less the entire space at this world event.

What had infuriated the Oi Committee and many others from the third world, was the view, held by Ehrlich and others from the developed world, that the population growth, especially in the South was a major cause for poverty including environmental destruction. Ehrlich’s book “The

2 Stockholm Conference ECO published by Friends of the Earth and The Ecologist.

Population Bomb", had been commissioned by the founder of Friends of the Earth and disseminated in three million copies internationally by Friends of the Earth groups. It propagated obligatory sterilization in the third world for men in families with more than two children. Ehrlich did not advise on the same for northern developed countries in spite of acknowledging that the level of environmental burden was in fact higher for these countries. Ehrlich's views had a strong influence on the international environment discussions. According to decision-makers in the United States and in many other countries in the global North, the growing number of people, especially in the third world, were held responsible for the problem of environmental destruction on earth.

The fact that people from Africa, Latin America and Asia did not accept the way a debate had been organised and then physically demonstrated their right to intervene, was provocative to many participants. Several observers described this act as if a leftist coup had taken over the whole Environment Forum. They reacted when the monopoly to speak from the podium was challenged. Highly respected scientists were being pushed aside by those directly affected by the proposed policies that were meant to reduce population growth in the South with the argument to save the natural resources of the planet for humanity.

What happened in Stockholm 1972 has still only been partially documented. How the basis for a global environmental movement was established has neither been properly identified nor has it been accepted as common knowledge of international environmentalism. On the contrary, the emergence of independent people's participation in world politics has been under severe attacks from the very start, also from inside the environmental NGOs. Many academics have followed suit.³ The way Taghi Farvar and others interfered in world politics was presented as a "pseudo-leftist elite who claimed to speak for the third world" and created an atmosphere of "elitist conspiracy"⁴. It was claimed that the third world people were not capable of leading themselves, they were also considered puppets in the hands of the biologist, Barry Commoner⁵ from the US:

"Commoner, masterminding the debunking, ... lurked in the gallery (of the auditorium), ventriloquizing to his puppet army by means of scribbled instructions carried downstairs, while Farvar, his chief lieutenant, wandered round the forum prompting and orchestrating his O.I. boys".

The organized third world intervention in Stockholm by some 60 activists in what was called the Oi Committee was met with similar accusations from dogmatic leftwingers in

3 Stone 1973, Rowlands 1973, Ehrlich 1972, Gendlin 1972 all quote ECO and their criticism against the Environment Forum for being captured by Barry Commoner and people from the third world. Rowlands talks about a leadership crisis among the Swedish organisers. The exception among Anglo-American observers is Aaronson. The dominant Anglo-American criticism still survives in literature, Brenton 1994, p 43: "This mass of bodies [NGOs] pursued a debate in their own forum, which displayed an energy and enthusiasm often depressingly absent from the formal negotiations, but also taking on a heavily new left and third worldist flavour". The narrative that global environmentalism is an Anglo-American invention has been dominating since and was never really challenged.

4 Quotes here and below from Stockholm Conference ECO published by Friends of the Earth and The Ecologist. Later the ECO initiator Ted Goldsmith have changed opinion and says that he and others were wrong at Stockholm and that Commoner was right in the population controversy between him and Ehrlich. Personal communication with Goldsmith November 1996.

5 Barry Commoner was an American cellular biologist, author, professor, politician and environmental activist. 'The Closing Circle' was his most famous book (1971), in which he suggests, among others, that the economy of a country should be restructured to conform to the laws of ecology.



Street theatre against deforestation in Brazil outside the conference venue © UN

Sweden. They accused them time and again during the events in 1972 and subsequently in a book, to be in the hands of the CIA⁶. An account of what happened when the third world activists entered the stage back in 1972 in the sunny June days and took the leadership in the long struggle for the survival of mankind has an important place in a project presenting itself as the People's Environment Narrative.

A popular movement perspective

What happened in Stockholm during the United Nations Conference on Human Environment (UNCHE) in 1972, was this: for the

first time since the creation of formal intergovernmental meetings in the modern inter-state system, ordinary lay people were allowed to participate. And not only through a limited number of representatives. The participation included a wide range of activities including interaction between popular and governmental spheres. The course of events that made this historic occasion possible, needs further scrutiny. Its consequences are far greater than has been understood. In light of the momentous issues still to be discussed with a basis in 1972 - addressing the future of mankind in relation to global social and environmental issues, calls for a study with clear perspectives especially concerning popular participatory movements.

6 Zacharias, *Skarpnäck USA*, 1975

Writing history is a precarious act of love⁷. Beautifying is not helpful, nor avoiding understanding why people act as they do without walking “in their moccasins for seven years” as the saying goes by the First Nation in what today is called North America. Trying to present the actors and what happened in a way that gives everyone a proper recognition for their historic role is not an easy task. Several, seemingly invisible acts of great importance to the outcome may take place before, on the sides and after the most dramatic events. In this context, the words we choose as well as who we ask are important. My own background is “learning by doing”, and I have done that by working in and with what in Sweden and many parts of the world is called ‘peoples or popular movements’. Academics most often use the term social movements. As a teenager towards the end of the 1960s I joined a group that called itself “Powwow”. It was inspired by indigenous language in North America meaning “coming together to create peace”. We were twelve members in this group, each one having the right to make decisions and speak for the whole group. Our purpose was to initiate independent popular participatory activities during the Stockholm Conference. Most of us were between 20 and 30 years old, some slightly older, two younger than 20, two from the US, the rest from Sweden.⁸

8 out the group of 12 once more united their efforts with others to organize alternative activities 50 years later parallel to the Stockholm+50 UN meeting in June 2022.⁹ Around 20 pre-June sessions were organized at both the ABF venue and the Solidarity house in Stockholm and some 50 sessions at the People’s Forum, from the 31st of May to 1st of June 2022 also at the ABF house. This was actually in the same place as where the People’s Forum was held in 1972. When the two coordinators Ingrid Eriksson from 1972 and Beatrice Sundberg from 2022 together went up on the same podium where people had been 50 years ago, there was a special atmosphere in the air. This can be seen as extraordinary continuity. A continuity with so many persons from the core group in 1972 coming together again also gives an important role to the oral knowledge in history and not only that which is written down.

Much of our understanding of the world back in 1972 in the Powwow group was based on exchanging experience with others. Several were connected to the international youth theological movement which used to have India as a main inspirational and organisational centre. Others were students or had started professional careers after their university studies. Many members of the group were also firmly based in Alternativ stad (Alternative City), a

7 When the BBC documentary film maker Adam Curtis visited me for his *All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace* TV Series aired in 2011 he stated that he was now aware of that another environmental movement than the Anglo American existed from the very start. Adam Curtis had in the documentary a critical view on what he sees as a weakness in hippie culture and with a mechanical view on the natural world as well as employing computer science as a way to understand society. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_Watched_Over_by_Machines_of_Loving_Grace_\(TV_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_Watched_Over_by_Machines_of_Loving_Grace_(TV_series)) Part 2 includes BBC archival material from Stockholm 1972.

8 Powwow, <http://folkrorelser.org/Stockholm1972/eng-powwow.html>

9 In their assessment of Stockholm and 1972 – capital of environmental memory, Sverker Sörlin and Erik Paglia claims that Stockholm is closely related to the emergence and evolution of global environmental governance. Their story is of “incremental progress in the long-term pursuit of sustainable development” which they juxtapose to the violent Battle of the Elms (see below). They separate the official negotiations from the movements and do not account for the dramatic events that actually took place also in the diplomatic arena and at the semi-official Environment Forum. Their claim that Stockholm is a site of memory of international importance on issues of environment and development can be said to be strengthened by this article covering a more conflict course of events relevant also today. https://issuu.com/ksla-publ/docs/kslat_1-2022_stockholmskonferensen_50_r/s/15138716



Preparing for alternative activities again 50 years later under the elms, from the left: **Göran Folin, Jan Lönn, Björn Gustafsson, Per Janse, Jan Fjellander, and Richard Noonan** on 5 June 1971. Not present Powwow members but also active both 1972 and 2022: **Ingrid Eriksson, Roland von Malmberg** © Tord Björk

local environmental and direct democracy action group with some 400 activists. These joint groups were able to mass mobilize people to protect trees and question urbanization, depopulation of the countryside and regional planning benefitting motorways and segregation.¹⁰ These groups already had experience in organizing international action days, called in the language of the time “Traffic Revolution” together with movements in a dozen other countries in the 1970s. It is still an active group that recently was able to win a struggle to protect the park in Stockholm where trees were saved back in 1971 through mass mobilization. Almost 50 years later this very group won the battle against the huge IT-company Apple which wanted to set up a promotion cen-

tre in the central part of the park. This local environmental group, today a chapter of Friends of the Earth Sweden, provided the main continuity for acting together also with members of the Powwow group. And they worked on a wide range of local, national and international social and environmental issues. Others cooperated again at Stockholm+50, for the first time in half a century.

The concepts used in this report “civil society” and NGOs were not used by the group. I claim that both concepts are democratically questionable and have a tendency to erase sharp differences within civil society and between the NGOs as a whole and with popular movements as a whole. For instance, one can claim

¹⁰ The group has been writing and documenting its history extensively: <https://alternativstad.nu/50-ar>

that the main ideological clash in Stockholm 1972 was between the NGO civil society organisation 'Club of Rome' and its established scientists and the third world activists who saw themselves as rooted in a conflictual understanding of the world between peoples who had been exploited by other nations through class conflicts. What I think is crucial, is that what civil society organisations and NGOs lack is a clear 'popular participatory element' in the definition of their character. Civil society, NGOs and other stakeholders can of course include popular movements within their category. But especially the world of NGOs also include other forms of organizations that exclude broad-based participation and often such NGOs do not have a base in a democratic membership.

The global environmental movement is exceptionally broad and include a variety of organizations. There are those where the difference between governments and civil society is blurred. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature, IUCN, is such an organization and allows both NGOs and governmental bodies to be members. There are eco-communes that are radically cutting ties to established society as much as possible. There are indigenous nations were concepts such as civil society or NGO do not fit well. We find organizations that are well integrated in established society and there are radical action-oriented groups outside of society. So far, all these various organizational forms and movements have managed to co-exist in a dynamic relationship. Conservation societies that some decades ago saw civil disobedience as a threat against democracy can today endorse such methods. Dogmatic radicals can find reformistic policies useful. A better distinction in the use of concepts when describing course of events with popular participation is essential. Such distinctions are also useful to enable a better understanding between different actors and showing how they can combine their efforts or confront each other in the

best way to protect humanity from committing collective suicide.

In general, civil society and NGO participation in global politics is less documented and discussed than how governments as well as business act at this level. Still, their interaction is fairly well described at times when looking at specific policy levels. The influence from independent popular movements at the level of global political confrontations is, as stated, rarely documented, even if such confrontation may to a high degree influence the political outcome of an issue.

Encounters between governments, business interests and popular movements in Stockholm in 1972 including conflicts within civil society, are cases of special interest when looking into the dynamics between these different kind of actors. Different ways of working including conflicts not only between different main actors but also within different issue based categories became visible in 1972. The issues on the table for the different actors were also quite comprehensive and often extended far beyond environmental issues and into North-South development, urbanization and depopulation of the countryside, indigenous and other local cultures and education, peace and working conditions in companies.

To grasp this experience of a global confrontation and cooperation, no established theory can be used. All kinds of actors are involved – established and formal NGOs, indigenous peoples and local cultures as well as popular movements that do not separate economics from culture or politics. One has to address the subject matter through different points of view and hope that a better understanding can emerge from combining not only different theories and framing but also using oral, visual and written sources.



Miljömarschen - March on the Environment in May 1972 in Kungsträdgården were the elms was saved in 1971 and Apple stopped 50 years by the same actors © Ingvar Sundén

One can argue that Western science is biased towards accumulating and structuring knowledge that benefits a world order in the interest of continuing Western global dominance. In his study of the Stockholm conference, Peter Nilsson criticize a common perception of 'conference dynamics' that claims that what governments want from NGOs is knowledge.¹¹ He makes the argument that what they also want is legitimacy from social movements. Thus, in this perspective what takes place at the formal level between NGOs and governments has to be placed in a wider context. Nilsson states: "We stress that social movements did not primarily seek to change the negotiators' minds but to mobilize people and to enforce their will through public opinion." This wider context can be seen as especially important when trying to analyse the Stockholm 72 conference and its outcome, both because broad multi-issue characters of the problem were addressed, as well as the fact that NGOs did not have direct access to the official conference. Nilsson summarizes the findings of Björn-Ola Linnér and Henrik Selin: "Selected NGOs were invited into the conference as observers. But no NGOs were permitted to speak at the plenary or participate in working groups at the official conference."¹² In spite of this

¹¹ Nilsson, *The UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm 1972 and the Interrelations between Intergovernmental Discourse Framing and Activist Influence*, Linköpings universitet, Ekonomiska institutionen, 2004.

¹² Linnér and Selin, *The Thirty Year Quest for Sustainability*, 2003, p3.

low level of NGO participation inside the official Stockholm Conference the conference is seen as the starting point and expansion of NGO participation into international conferences. Margaret E. Keck argued that "This first NGO forum parallel to the UN official conference pioneered a transnational process that would become absolutely central to the formation and strengthening of advocacy networks around the world".¹³ Nilsson summarizes the view Keck and Sikkink had about the conference as "resulting in dialogue, conflict, creativity, and advantages of co-ordination, as a result of face-to-face contact and the recognition of commonalties and establishing of trust necessary to sustain more distant network contacts."¹⁴

Other scholars, like Peter Willets, make the argument that the interaction in 1972 between governmental and non-state actors became historic and was not later surpassed, at least not at the time of his assessment.¹⁵ In his study, he looks at several innovative methods of interaction between NGOs and the UN.

"NGOs exercised influence on the official conference through four channels: public debate in the news media, open access to the forum, consultative status at the official conference

for some ECOSOC NGOs, and individuals from NGOs being appointed as government representatives at the conference. The Stockholm conference became the model for a new type of global conference."¹⁶

Willets puts emphasis on the daily NGO conference newspaper ECO as a unique new invention. He also points to the fact that mutual reporting between the official conference and the NGO Forum was also established. The main points at each of the parallel meetings in 1972 were reported to others at plenaries and the Forum daily paper was distributed to all official delegates, which established a degree of interaction which was not accounted for at later conferences¹⁷. And then he does not even account for the mass demonstration as well as a decentralized international action day that also held a central role in what made Stockholm historically unique in developing participatory democratic ways of intervening in world politics.

When researchers focus on the participation in the official processes or as Keck and Sikkink and Willets do on the Forum initiated first by the UNCHE secretariat and then by the Swedish government, we get a biased understanding in

¹³ Keck and Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders*. 1998 p123

¹⁴ Nilsson, *The UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm 1972 and the Interrelations between Intergovernmental Discourse Framing and Activist Influence*. 2004, p23.

¹⁵ Willets, *From Stockholm to Rio and beyond*, 1996, p67

¹⁶ Willets, *Non-Governmental Organizations in World Politics: The construction of global governance*, Routledge Global Institutions, 2011, p51. [https://perpus.wildanfauzy.com/Global%20Governance/\(Global%20institutions%20series%2C%2049\)%20Peter%20Willets-Non-Governmental%20Organisations%20in%20World%20Politics%20%20-Routledge%20\(2011\).pdf](https://perpus.wildanfauzy.com/Global%20Governance/(Global%20institutions%20series%2C%2049)%20Peter%20Willets-Non-Governmental%20Organisations%20in%20World%20Politics%20%20-Routledge%20(2011).pdf)

¹⁷ The Earth Negotiation Bulletin, the ENB, owned and run by the International Institute for Sustainable Development, IISD, may be seen as a continuation of the ECO initiative. Covering today almost every UN conference that deals with the environment and its related issues, as well as sustainable development, ENB has since 1992 and the Earth Summit been a daily occurrence at these conferences, featuring fact based references of the negotiations offering an analysis at the end of each conference. Being a treasure trove of information, the publication aims to be neutral in its presentation. Stakeholder Forum, SF, produced their own 8 to 12 page daily conference paper called Outreach between 1996 and 2012. Outreach presented the opinions of civil society, NGOs and the major groups at the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, UNCSD and at UNEP's Governing Councils. There have been a few similar efforts by various groups of NGOs, but they fail due to lack of funding and staff, and not by interest or necessity.

seeing the role of popular movements as an extension of the established order. Other NGOs and popular movement initiatives that strongly influenced the outcome, were organized independently from the government initiatives. These are unfortunately not accounted for in a detailed manner. Thus, this exclusion of independent activities will give a misleading picture when it comes to the encounters between different forces in Stockholm 1972, especially when claiming to address the non-governmental dimensions. This text uses a popular movement perspective seeing democratic collective efforts locally, nationally and internationally as the key for understanding social change so we can learn and move forward.



E.H. Thörnberg, the only sociologist standing statue in Sweden ©Tord Björk

The popular movement perspective is based on the oral Swedish definition of a popular movement as a “collective effort over a longer period of time using different ways of working combining living as you preach while changing society at the same time”.¹⁸ Such a combination of elements is often hard to achieve but can be seen as crucial during periods when a movement is growing. It is also based on an understanding of popular movements as linked to each other. Something we can talk about as a “popular movement complex” in the way E.H. Thörnberg did the first half of the 20th century.¹⁹ An idea may show us that the separation of movements at times is arbitrary, or a Western approach may look very different if we look upon how a movement is organized in other parts of the world. The popular movement perspective is also based on the study of the global history of popular movements by Jan Wiklund who today works in the same tradition as Thörnberg. This view on popular movement as central actors is compatible with many academic social movement theories, especially German, French, Swedish and Italian scholars.²⁰ A frequently used international definition of peoples’ movements has been formulated by Joachim Raschke: “A social movement is a mobilizing collective actor, which with some continuity on the basis of a high symbolic cohesion and weak role specification works through various forms of organization and action for the goal of implementing or preventing fundamental social changes or restoring previous social conditions.”²¹

Andrew Jamison, the internationally most cited social movement researcher in Sweden, together with Åsa Wettergren, writes a simi-

18 Tord Björk, Folkrörelsebegreppet, <http://folkrorelser.org/def/folkrorelsebegreppet.html>, Staffan Wrigge, Vad är en folkrörelse – Några definitioner med sammanhängande diskussion, <http://folkrorelser.org/def/definitioner2.html>

19 E.H. Thörnberg, *Folkrörelser och samhällsliv i Sverige*. 1943.

20 Raschke 1985, Wiklund, Bader 1991, Touraine 1982, Jamison 1991, Melucci. 1991.

21 Joachim Raschke, *Soziale Bewegungen. Ein historisch-systematischer Grundriss*, Campus Frankfurt am Main / New York 1985

lar definition of social movements: "A social movement is a kind of organised (in loose networks, groups or organisations) collective action, whose actors share some basic beliefs about the world around them, feel solidarity with each other and are in conflict with the established system in the area in which they operate and voice their protests. In order to count as a social movement, the acts of protest and the collective identity established by the movement must have a certain duration over time."²²

While 'lay researcher' Jan Wiklund, based on studies of peoples' movements globally over a long period of time, gives this picture: "Peoples' movements are formed by those classes and groups of people who are mainly affected by the compliance with the practices of states and companies, i.e. primarily the direct producers. They are the bearers of democracy. Their main objective is to defend the civil society, everyday culture or life of the direct producers, on which states and capital live and/or encroach. They defend the interests of the participants, defined as broadly as possible, particularly when these come into conflict with the interests of states and business. These interests may vary greatly at different times, depending, among other things, on the projects currently being pursued by the other actors and on their impact on the general public. The resources of the peoples' movements are the voluntary contributions of their members."²³

The wider movement's perspective

Looking at the events around the Stockholm 1972 conference from a wider perspective, one

could describe that what happened as a stage in the development of a transnational popular movement complex. It was not the first time popular movements had taken initiatives to influence a UN conference. At a conference in 1955, the International Women's League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) promoted the idea of solar and wind power as an alternative to the use of atomic energy. But the wide range of activities, such as the interaction between the official, the semi-official, and the independent conferences and forums, prolific street actions, and the establishment of a daily NGO conference paper, made what happened at the Stockholm conference, a unique event. It also became an inspiration and a model used in subsequent UN conferences as well as in connection with other global conferences, such as G7, G20, EU, WTO and at global summits.²⁴

Concerning the political content during what took place in Stockholm, it can actually be placed as an integral element of the general history of the peace and environmental movement. The global environmental movement emerged already in the late 1950s. The 'Baby Tooth Survey'²⁵ was initiated in 1958 and coordinated by Louise Reiss together with Barry Commoner and others as a means of determining the effects of nuclear fallout on the human anatomy. The team examined the levels of radioactive material absorbed into the deciduous teeth of children and found what was termed as disturbing results. On a day in 1961 the telephone rang in the house of the Reiss family. According to the story, a young family member answered the phone: "This is John Kennedy, the President of the United States," the voice said, and continued: "Can I talk to your mom?"²⁶

22 Jamison, Andrew and Wettergren, Åsa. *Sociala rörelser - politik och kultur*. 2006.

23 Wiklund, Jan, *Demokratins bärare, Det globala folkrörelsesystemet*, <http://www.folkrorelser.org/demokratins-barare.html>

24 Tord Björk, *Toppmötesprotetser 1968-2002*, <http://folkrorelser.org/toppmotesprotester.pdf>

25 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baby_Tooth_Survey

26 Ellen Gerl, Ohio University, *Scientist-citizen advocacy in the atomic age: A case study of the Baby Tooth Survey, 1958-1963*, <https://>



Ingrid Segerstedt-Wiberg, head of the International Women's League for Peace and Freedom in Sweden for many years and chair of the United Nation Association in Sweden 1972 © Folkkampanjen mot kärnkraft & kärnvapen

Louise Reiss provided Kennedy with the results of her research. The findings helped convince the US to sign the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty with the UK and Soviet Union in 1963, which ended the above-ground and atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons which was the main reason for nuclear fallout into the atmosphere at the time. In 1962 Rachel Carson's book 'Silent Spring' was published in the US. The book documents harm to people's health and the environment caused by indiscriminate use of pesticides. As the book merges the concern for public health with the new concept of environment, it thus heralds the beginning of a new popular movement.

This global peace and environmental awareness had a decisive influence on the emerging environmental movement during the protests and actions at the first UN conference on the environment in 1972. Peace activists such as Ingrid Segerstedt Wiberg²⁷, who served as an elected parliamentarian in Sweden, and representing Sweden in different UN contexts, and now chair of WILPF in Sweden (more about her later in connection with the conference) and Barry Commoner together with Taghi Farvar, Jaime Hurtubia-Urbina²⁸ and many other environmental activists from the Global South, contributed to a growing understanding of the environmental issue as an issue also of global

www.prismjournal.org/uploads/1/2/5/6/125661607/v11-no1-a1.pdf

27 https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6642844/plotsummary/?ref_=tt_ov_pl

28 Environmental activist from Chile at the Stockholm conference and still engaged



Barry Commoner holding his hand up and **Taghi Farvar** second from the left in a panel chaired by **Björn Eriksson** in the middle 12 June 1972 in the ABF venue during People's Forum 1972

justice. It had opposition against nuclear power at its core.

This antinuclear movement in Sweden claimed already in the early years of the 1970s that a solution to the use of nuclear energy or other global threats such as global warming due to carbon dioxide emissions, could be solved by a just transition to a low energy society.²⁹ Detailed studies of how such a shift could be realized were made by movements in several countries while large direct-action initiatives against the construction of new nuclear power sites were developed. This antinuclear movement also initiated through international organizations, successful protests against the emissions of sul-

phur dioxide which created so-called 'acid rain, causing mass destruction of forests in Europe and North America. They were also in opposition to corporate social and environmental strategies in the 1980s, which later was labelled 'green washing'. Simultaneously mass participation in the environmental movement was growing in the South: the Chipko movement in India began its operations in 1973, the Green Belt Movement in Kenya was initiated, indigenous and rubber tapper movements in the Amazon region and the landless movement in other places in Brazil were organized. All these movements expressed greater perseverance and defined and understood social justice better than did movements in the North. Third

29 Lågenergisamhälle men hur? <https://alternativstad.nu/lagenergisamhalle-men-hur>

World Network was established in 1984 after an initiative by Friends of the Earth Malaysia and the Consumer Association in Malaysia. This initiative also had the support of other organisations such as the Pesticide Action Network (PAN), Rainforest Action Network (RAN), International Rivers Network (IRN) and International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN). These were networks with a more focused approach, and all four with global outreach. Something was happening with the orientation of environmental movements.

The linkages between peace, environment and social rights issues within and between countries also influenced the budding environmental movements. Olof Palme, the late Prime Minister of Sweden and host to the Stockholm 1972 conference, in his opening speech denounced the US use of Agent Orange, a chemical herbicide and defoliant used by the US military in what was called the herbicidal warfare programme in the Vietnam war. After Palme had made this explicit statement and called it ecocide – which led to the US delegation leaving the conference room while he spoke – the issue became a contentious and high-profile political issue. (The US delegation later returned to the conference room). Following the statement, several independent popular movement initiatives, such as the People's Forum, the Dai Dong (see more later), the Swedish Vietnam committee including the Environment Forum focused on this issue. As Olof Palme had shown in his statement to the conference, this issue cut across the dividing lines between peace and environment, North and South, urban and rural.

But the alternative activities in Stockholm 1972 were also historical in the way technology was addressed as something questionable.³⁰ The presentations at the alternative forums often broadened the scope of environmental issues. Working conditions for people also became a central theme at these presentations, thus heralding the global importance of such networks as the Pesticide Action Network. The issue of unhealthy working conditions were carried forward by land worker unions and socially concerned environmentalists.

Official and unofficial UNCHE preparatory processes

When the decision to organise the UN Conference on the Human Environment was made in 1968³¹ the conference was perceived as a conventional meeting of experts assisting governments by searching for knowledge within the field of environmental issues.³² As stated earlier, what became a novelty with UNCHE that was held in June 1972 in the capital of Sweden, Stockholm, compared to earlier international conferences, was that several popular movements also invited any interested person or organisation to participate in parallel activities to the conference which were held in the city. In addition, decentralized actions took place in several countries at the same time as the activities in Stockholm interacted with the official conference, thus mutually influencing each other. This actually established a new bifurcated process with world politics that since then has become an established pattern at most intergovernmental conferences of

30 Harper, Peter and Sadler, Simon. *The Exhibition of People's Technology*, 1972. 2020

31 Decisions taken by the UN General Assembly in 1968-69, by resolutions 2398 (XXIII) and 2581 (XXIV), the General Assembly decided to convene, in 1972, a global conference in Stockholm,

32 Stone. *Did We Save the World at Stockholm?*, 1973

importance, whether within the UN system, Bretton Wood institutions, G-7 or regional organizations like the EU, NAFTA and APEC. What also characterized UNCHE compared to earlier environmental conferences was its action-oriented focus and outcome.

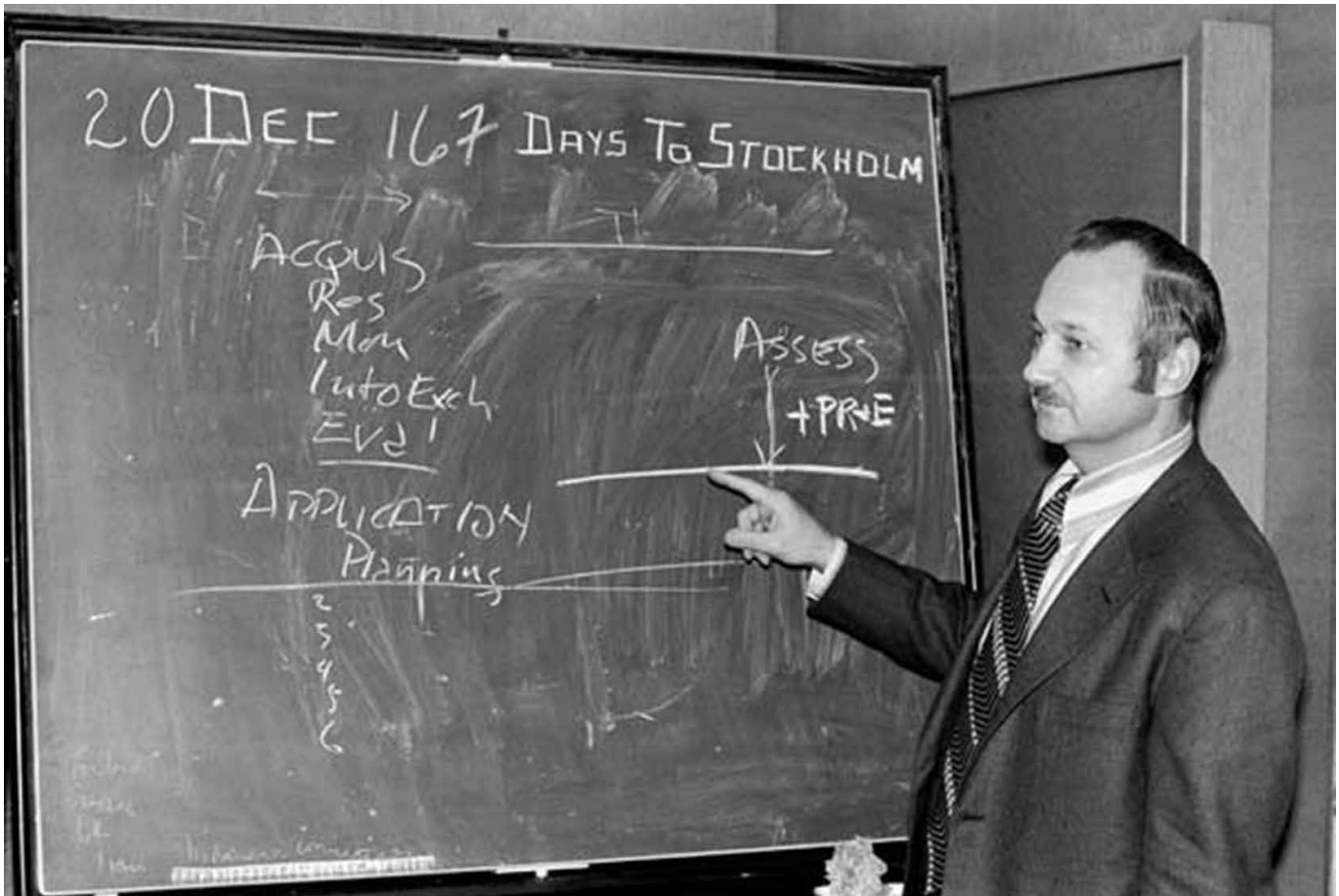
This two-pronged approach was not there from the beginning. What made UNCHE exceptional as well was the broadening of issues to include cultural, economic, and military aspects. Clearly these issues were most prevalent among the popular movements, but they were also expressed in the official processes due to pressure from third world countries. The latter group was also concerned with the operations of North American multinational business organisations and their closely related interests.

These three unique aspects, the open popular participation, the focus on action-orientation, and the broadening of the issues, were not the initiative of the UN. Some of the third world countries may have had some influence as they focussed strongly on economic and social issues. Even the established NGOs played a part in this. IUCN which at the time was one of the largest global environment organisations, played surprisingly no substantial role in the broader public activities in Stockholm. In fact, several have claimed that IUCN even gave UNCHE a low priority both in the preparation and in its assessment afterwards. The scientific community was also reluctant at first in engaging. Science and scientists had engaged with UNESCO, and the large Biosphere Conference in 1968. This had been their historical event,

and the following international conferences were considered more as follow-up activities than breaking new ground. The Biosphere Conference was actually the first broad-based environmental conference since the UN Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Resources which was held in 1949 at Lake Success in the US. Lake Success, on Long Island in New York, was the temporary headquarters of the UN from 1946 until 1951. This conference in 1949 was indeed the first time a conference had brought wider nature conservation concerns onto the agenda of a global intergovernmental event. Smaller or emerging NGOs like Friends of the Earth – established in 1969 after the split with the Sierra Club over the issue of nuclear issues – played innovative roles in the preparatory process for UNCHE. However, by and large the established NGOs did not take initiatives that also provided a democratic platform for newcomers.

There were however two actors of very different nature and focus which actually came to influence and broaden the idea for the upcoming UN environment conference during its preparatory phase. One was a business NGO linked to North America with close ties to decision makers. It was based at Aspen, Colorado, in the Rocky Mountains. The other was a globally oriented group of young theosophists in Stockholm with an expressed commitment to third world interests. The business NGO was the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies³³. Robert Orville Anderson was a US businessman, oil-millionaire and anthropologist with a keen interest in the environment. He co-founded the

³³ The website Luxuo describes the location of Aspen institute and its neighbouring institutions as follows: "Population barely 6,600, make no mistake, Aspen is as exclusive as it is luxurious. Accessible only by plane or private jet, the sophisticated ski resort and home to some of the finest hotels in the world and a capital for socio-political, cultural and intellectual discourse thanks to three institutions which call Aspen home, two of which Paepcke himself helped found: the Aspen Music Festival and School, the Aspen Center for Physics, and the Aspen Institute, a policy think tank which has trained captains of industry and political leaders for the last 70 years." <https://www.luxuo.com/business/super-rich/if-wealth-reduces-empathy-how-can-we-expect-the-aspen-institute-to-train-liberal-elites-who-will-care.html>



Maurice Strong, head of the UNCHE secretariat preparing the conference 1971 © UN

Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies in 1949 as well as later the World Watch Institute and the International Institute for Environment and Development. The Aspen Institute is an institute inspired by humanism and which brought businessmen, scientists and other scholars together to discuss world affairs, and when the UNCHE was prepared he was the chairman of the Aspen Institute. It exercised its expanding

influence by also developing an international network. Andersson also developed strong personal ties to the official UNCHE secretariat and individual scientists having high global status. The Aspen Institute³⁴ had a 'normal' business model approach, had resources and when its people came to Stockholm, they were well prepared. Its influence on the conference would also be felt.

³⁴ The main source of the role of Aspen Institute is *The Aspen Idea*, a book made for its 25th anniversary in 1975 by Sidney Hyman. The detailed listings of NGO cooperation between the UNCHE secretariat and institutes confirm a central role for Aspen Institute and other closely related foundations and new environmental institutes (IIEA), Johnson, B. *The United Nations' Institutional Response to Stockholm 1972*, Thompson Feraru, 'Transnational Political Interest and the Global Environment' 1974. McCormick, *Reclaiming Paradise*. 1989, p96. also mentions Aspen Institute but without describing its character and only in the role of sponsorship for IIEA. McCormick also mentions Robert O. Anderson, chairman of an oil company, as a seed founder of IIEA but that at the core of the network is regular meetings and seminars with up to a hundred executives involved remains outside of the picture. The journalist Mikael Nyberg has with the help of *The Aspen Idea* made the role of this business NGO visible in his assessment in *Green Capitalists* 1998 of the role of transnational corporations in international environment and development processes during the last 30 years.

The “youth theosophical lay activist group” cooperated with liberation movements in the South and had over a few years developed its scope of issues and ways of working and integrated this with emerging policies of solidarity, environment and peace issues including the organisations working for these issues. Finally, the young theosophists merged their interests with two other parallel lay person movements. One centred round the FNL Groups supporting the national liberation front of Vietnam opposing US imperialism and the other around a local, Swedish group that called itself “Alternativ Stad” (in English “Alternative City”) and which worked on direct democracy, anti-commercialisation, social equality, urbanisation and environmental issues.

The Founex conference and report

A critical flaw in the preparatory process, was the lack of serious and large-scale participation of civil society in the preparatory process. There are many reasons for this. The NGO world was not as extensively developed as it is today. The attention to civil society and NGOs from the UN or from the UN member states was not as acute as it is today. More information could have been disseminated to the NGO world by the organisers back in the 1960s and 1970s to involve the non-state actors. On the other hand, the NGO world was not as interested in intergovernmental issues then, as it is today.

One report which was of crucial importance to the participation of member states in the conference as well as in structuring the outcome as well as in providing the outcome documents with concrete and new information and knowledge, was the Founex report. It is impossible to-

day to find out how many of the non-state actors present in Stockholm in 1972 that had read the report, let alone understood its importance. It was however, perhaps one of the more significant documents to form the thinking and the content of the Stockholm plan of action and declaration.

During the spring of 1971, rumours had it a great number of developing countries would boycott the proposed environment conference. There was a growing feeling among the developing nations that the environmental problems was something that merely related to the rich industrialised North. Developing nations also feared that the industrialised North might use the environment as yet another means of controlling the south. The fear was that the North would use environmental concerns to develop new trade barriers against the South. Another concern for the developing countries was the fear that environmental issues, seen as a new fad of the rich north, would distract attention from social and economic needs in the fight against poverty and thus reduce aid to these countries. In December of 1970, the less developed countries, increasingly concerned with the direction of the (Environment) conference, voted in the UN General Assembly to recommend that the conference secretariat include agenda items ‘relating to economic and social aspects ... with a view to reconciling the national environmental policies with their national development plans and priorities’. The UN General Assembly adopted resolution UNGA 2657 to that effect.³⁵ The environmental mandate given by the UN on which to base the upcoming environment conference would be seriously undermined if the developing countries would boycott the conference. It would not have any legitimate position in world politics.

35 Developing World, Environmental Cooperation, “The Founex Seminar and the Stockholm Conference, by Michael W. Manulak, Carleton University, Canada

At the second preparatory committee meeting in February 1971, Maurice Strong therefore proposed a 'radical remake' of the conference agenda that had been approved at the first preparatory committee meeting. This new agenda linked environmental matters directly to the development process and to the interests of the developing countries. At the meeting, Strong spoke of the need to integrate environmental considerations within development goals.³⁶ He also proposed a series of regional preparatory conferences to be held in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America later that year. Strong also proposed to organise an expert seminar to develop the conceptual background to this remake. He invited 27 top experts with strong views on development issues. They represented perhaps the most brilliant minds at the time, and the representation was truly global. A leading voice was Ul Haque from Pakistan, another was Samir Amin from Egypt. Raul Prebisch from Argentina was another influential person as was Barbara Ward. Luminaries such as Jan Tinbergen, Ignacy Sachs and Enrique Iglecias also attended³⁷. Even after his death in 2018, Samir Amin continues to influence development theories and north south relations. All the people that Strong had invited, met in an unobtrusive hotel in Founex, Switzerland from the 4th to the 12th of June in 1971.

The Founex report was a trend-setting report when it came to combine environmental concerns with development issues. It rejected right out of hand the population analysis of Paul Ehrlich. At the same time, it had a critical view to GDP as a measure for economic development and focussed also strongly on social is-

ssues as an integrated element of development. The report had a strong focus on human development and saw a healthy environment as an essential part of development to secure the wellbeing of all people. It was welcomed by the developing nations. The Founex report became the most important document at the regional conferences to prepare for the UNCHE. The African nations at their regional meeting adopted it unanimously. In addition, Strong travelled to more than 30 developing countries and presented the report to their governments.

Founex was regarded by both developed and developing countries as the political compromise necessary to bridge the development/environment question'³⁸ It was also established as a basis for negotiations, offering value to all sides.

The Founex became the central document for the negotiations and had an indisputable impact on the final outcome of the Stockholm conference. Its strongest merit was that it brought environment and development together in ways it had never before been. It also brought the developing world to the conference and diffused a complex conflict that had been lingering between the rich North and the Global South.

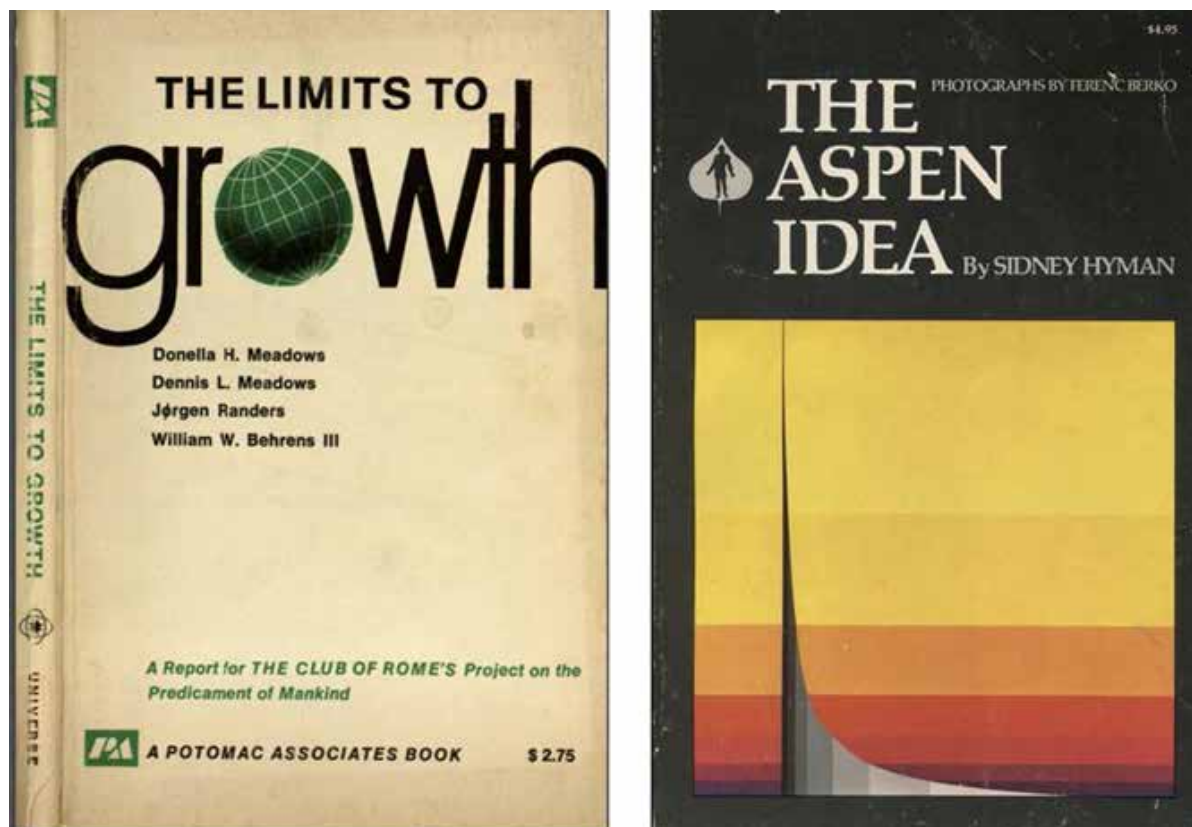
Selected alliances among the privileged

Two other well-resourced groups also played crucial roles in shaping the global environmental debate in the period when UNCHE was officially prepared, from 1968 to 1972. Both consisted of people with similar backgrounds and their projects were financed in similar ways.

³⁶ Ibid, p 5

³⁷ https://www.mauricestrong.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=146:founex-environment-conference-1971&catid=31&showall=&limitstart=1&Itemid=72

³⁸ Developing World, Environmental Cooperation, "The Founex Seminar and the Stockholm Conference, by Michael W. Manulak, Carleton University, Canada, p 16



The Limits to Growth issued by the Club of Rome in 1972 and a book about the Aspen Institute.

One group brought forward visions of global management and a fatalistic world view claiming that humanity would face a catastrophe due to exhaustion of natural resources if the development was not changed. Population and production growth had to come to a halt and a zero-growth at a global equilibrium level was required. These ideas were put forward by the Club of Rome, a self-appointed group of businessmen, scientists and high-level governmental officials funded by the Ford and Volkswagen foundations. This group was founded in 1968 and started what they called their “commando action” by launching the book “Limits to Growth” printed in more than 2 1/2 million copies and translated into more than 20 languages and distributed for free to 15.000 decision-makers³⁹. The book came to dominate the public debate in many countries. Its biologicistic paradigm

stating that nature puts limits to society still is influential. Besides the limits to growth message, the Club of Rome also had other views on how the necessary societal changes would have to be prepared. In their view, the majority of people possess a very short time-horizon including a limited capacity to think in broader perspectives. Also, politicians have a too limited thinking perspective, focusing basically on the next elections. But also “mental models”, and the “human brain”, are too primitive to grasp the complex and long-term nature of the problems facing humanity. What was needed they claimed, was elaborated computer programming and the insights from an elite capable of thinking in long term-perspectives.

The other group was directed by Joseph Slater in his capacity as director of the Aspen

39 Kristiansen, *Var der grænser for vækst?*. 1989

Institute of Humanistic Studies and Anderson Foundation. Slater worked with Anderson, co-founder of the Aspen Institute, to develop the International Institute on Environmental Affairs, IIEA.⁴⁰ This network of organizations worked in close relation with business, the UNCHE secretariat, the US State administration as well as the International Association for Cultural Freedom^{41 42}. At the core of the network were regular 'summer universities' held at the Aspen Institute in the Rocky Mountains. These gatherings were for directors of corporations and a few trade union leaders including cultural personalities. Here key figures in business and those with compatible interests could have deeper discussions on great Western ideas or find ways to actively handle crisis in society. In a report funded by the Anderson Foundation and written by Thomas Wilson who worked at first for the State Department, then for the Aspen Institute and finally in the UNCHE secretariat, he formulated the way to handle the environmental conflicts: "The international risks inherent in the present situation can be sensed if we imagine the disastrous consequences for a spaceship if it were manned by a crew comprised of a dozen astronauts, each with a different idea about where he wants to go and about the goal of the mission. Yet the imaginary picture is the real picture of how things are with Spaceship Earth. It is manned by more than a hundred governments with different and often conflicting missions and with nobody in charge of the crew".⁴³ When the UNCHE Secretary General Maurice

Strong wanted to create a conceptual framework by making a report on the human environment for the UN conference, he wanted at first to organise a broad meeting with concerned scientists. But it was apparent by the mandate from the UN and from the growing unrest from the developing nations that he had to choose another approach. The Founex initiative became one of these approaches. He was also advised by the Aspen Institute to reach out to international business.

In general, business interests were involved in the preparation for the Stockholm Conference, but its appearance was very discreet. The International Chambers of Commerce, ICC, participated as one of many NGOs lobbying in the corridors. But they did not answer the survey made about NGO participation, so their activities are not recorded in academic literature. Maurice Strong and IIEA meant that success for the environment outcome could only be guaranteed if business was involved. Sponsored by the magazines *Realité* and *Newsweek*, 150 leaders of international business enterprises were flown to a meeting on the eve of a UN Conference in Paris. A similar meeting was also held in New York. The meeting in Paris was convened and paid for by ICC and the one in New York organised by the National Conference Board. Strong talked about why business should support the UN environmental work⁴⁴ and in the end, international business was sufficiently represented in Stockholm. The Club of Rome present in Stockholm had many in-

40 Later changed to IIED, International Institute on Environment and Development and moved its headquarters to London. Barbara Ward was its first director.

41 This association got a new name due to the exposed CIA funding in 1967 of its predecessor Congress for Culture of Freedom. After this it also took an interest in biology and environment. At the same time the Aspen Institute began its environmental focus including co-arranging a seminar with the International Association for Cultural Freedom. For an uncritical and detailed account of the informal ways the different persons, institutes and governments cooperated, see Hyman, *The Aspen idea*. 1975.

42 See also <https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/scrsc/findingaids/view.php?eadid=ICU.SPCL.IACF>

43 Hyman *The Aspen idea*. 1975:275.

44 Ibid, p289-290.

dustrialists as members who were there to influence the public and decision-makers. There are strong indications that part of the core conceptual framework and institutional follow-up was also influenced by these interests.

It is well to remember that the 1970s were also a period when the Cold War was still intense. Tensions had been high between the Western states and the Soviet Union during the preparatory phase leading up to the opening of the Stockholm Conference. They came to a head during the March 1972 preparatory meeting, the last one to take place before the opening of the UNCHE. The Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia boycotted the meeting citing the issue of East Germany's participation in Stockholm as the reason. East Germany was denied participation at UNCHE, while West Germany had already been admitted as a non-voting member of the conference. As long as only West Germany was admitted - to the exclusion of East Germany, the Soviet Union and its vassal states would not participate. The issue behind West Germany's admittance was a technicality. West Germany was a member of a couple of the UN Specialised Agencies, and because of that, could be admitted formally and legally as a non-voting member. The conflict was not solved, and East Germany was denied participation resulting in the boycott of the conference by the Soviet Union and the Eastern European communist states.

The McCarthy period in the US which was rampant in the 1950s may have been over by the 1970s, but the scare of leftists and communism was still very much alive in the world. Big business, especially in the US, acted as nations with their huge economies and large networks, and wielded enormous political influence. It is today

well proven that big business had a heavy hand in toppling the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende, in Chile, in 1973. The coup allowed the brutal dictator Augusto Pinochet to suspend all democratic rights and terrorize the country until 1990.

The UN had established an office to map the activities of big business corporations. The United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations (UNCTC) was established in 1975 and abolished in 1992. UNCTC attempted with varying success to defuse the clash between corporates and states that erupted in the turbulent 1970s. Its modus operandi was immediately and dramatically reduced by the large corporations claiming the UN had no role in curtailing the interests of business. UNCTC was an early effort by the UN to address the overlapping issues of national sovereignty, corporate responsibility and global governance, issues that have since multiplied and deepened with globalization.⁴⁵

Even though the West appeared to support the conference, and the US administration under the Republican President Richard Nixon had promised substantial sums to the new organisation which was expected to be one of the outcomes of the Stockholm Conference, a group of nations, referred to as the Brussels Group viewed the conference with growing suspicion. The group consisted of the US, the UK, Italy, Belgium, France and the Netherlands. They were apprehensive to proposals by countries and civil society demanding to have systems in place that could regulate pollution and other activities that had negative consequences on the environment. The Brussels Group made several attempts to stifle the impact of the conference.

⁴⁵ <https://www.routledge.com/United-Nations-Centre-on-Transnational-Corporations-Corporate-Conduct-and/Hamdani-Ruffing/p/book/9781138896536#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20Centre%20on,multiplied%20and%20deepened%20with%20globalization.>



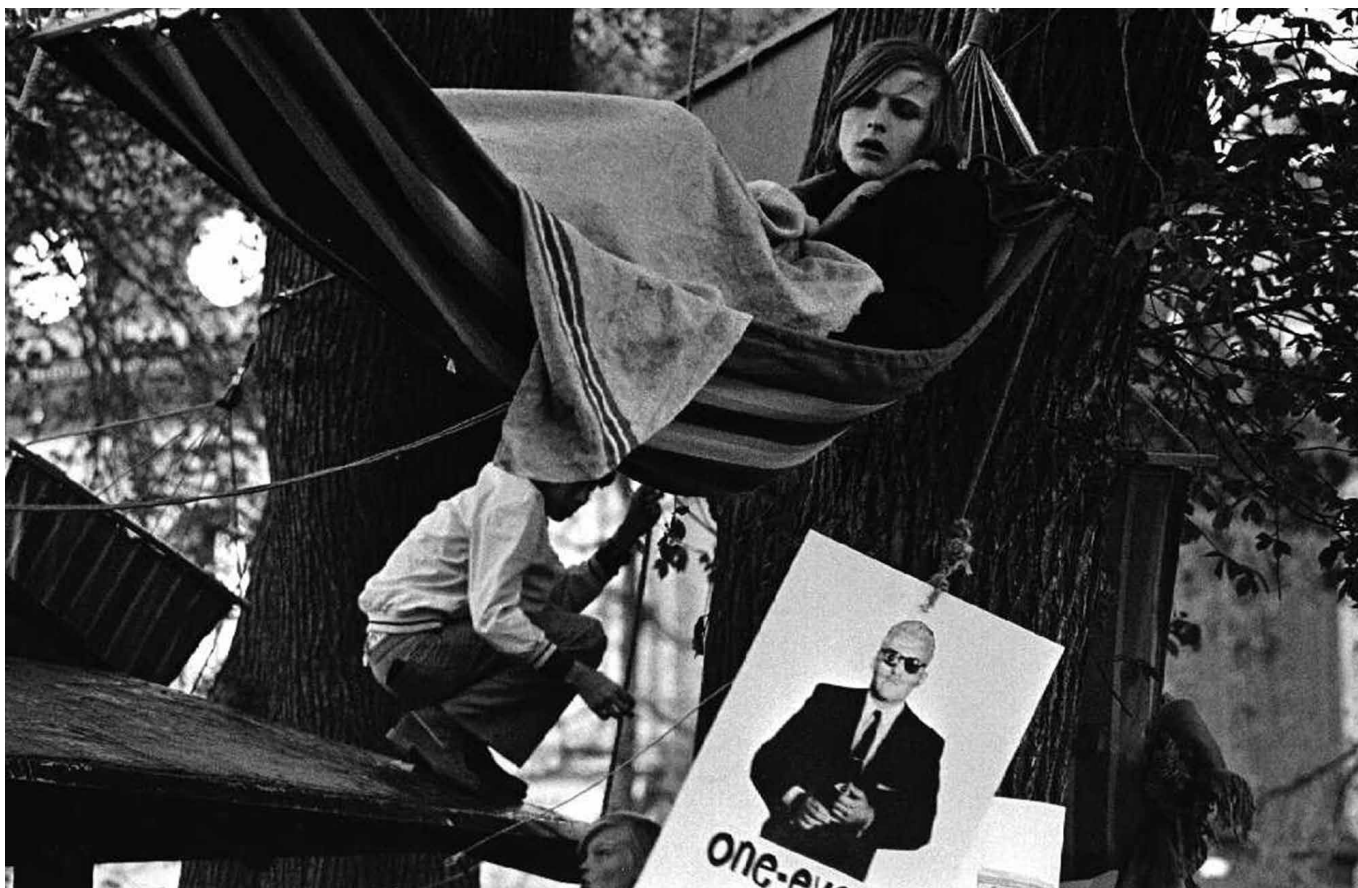
The young theosophist engaged in global solidarity struggles. Here **Kenneth Kaunda** with **Jan Fjellander** who organized printing of election campaign material and smuggled into what was then Northern Rhodesia to help Kaunda's party to win the elections in 1964 © Jan Fjellander archive

Participatory alliances among and with the under-privileged

Facing these constellations were three groups based on grass root participation which gave strength to the open and popular activities in the UNCHE-process. The most consistent group here in the preparatory process was represented by TUG, the Theosophical Youth Group in Stockholm. In 1961 they had joined thousands of engaged people and marched with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, CND to the nuclear war facility at Aldermaston in Great Britain. Together with people from 50 other nations they marched and did the same when they came back to Sweden. There they marched to the secret Swedish nuclear facility at Ursvik. They organised and mass mobi-

lized schools in Sweden in a solidarity action for countries in the third world. They danced in the streets of Stockholm shocking the police with this new untraditional behaviour. Young people thinking about alternative life-styles such as vegetarianism and living in communes, joined hands with the anti-nuclear organisations in the preparatory process for the UNCHE. These strong international connections inspired people to go to Stockholm. The youth theosophist Peter Harper stated in an interview 50 years later: "The UN Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) was the first major recognition of the significance of the global environment and a Great Event. Naturally every young environmentalist and her dog wanted to be there, and I was no exception."⁴⁶

46 Harper, Peter and Sadler, Simon. *The Exhibition of People's Technology*, 1972. 2020



Youngsters occupying the trees day and night after the victory in the battle of the Elms.

“Alternativ stad” represented a similar mode of direct democracy and action and had a well-known public name in Sweden. Beginning as an anti-commercial celebration at Christmas and with a focus on social exclusion, the group managed to turn the city up-side down by mobilising 250 000 people in May 1971 in an occupation to save a group of old elms adorning a popular park in Stockholm. The trees were to be cut down to make way for a new underground subway station. The event is known as the “Battle of the Elms” as demonstrators clashed with police and workers. Alternativ Stad saw the UNCHE as an opportunity to be engaged in.

The third group was the solidarity movement against the US and its war in Vietnam.⁴⁷ In

Sweden the Vietnam solidarity group “FNL” mobilised stronger and better than any other oppositional group, and were present everywhere, it seemed. The motto of these groups - direct democracy should prevail, and authoritarian models should be questioned at most or all levels of society.

These were contradictory ways of behaving and of understanding the world in 1972. On one side actors such as the Theosophists, Alternativ Stad and the anti-war and Vietnam solidarity groups, on the other side, well established and well-resourced NGOs like the Aspen Institute and the Club of Rome all viewing for a place to be heard in discussing the human environment. Confrontations of ideas and understanding clashed, and the same confrontations also

⁴⁷ Hammarström ed. *FNL rörelsen i Sverige*. 1975.

mobilised people in the streets and resulted in fierce debates at the three forums organised in parallel to the official conference. Some of the messages that emanated from these debates, were also brought into the official conference. There were in other words strong differences of opinions between large segments of civil society and the governments back in Stockholm during the UNCHE.

Ten forces at play in Stockholm 1972

There are at least ten distinct actors at play during UNCHE in Stockholm 1972 that were building a long-term momentum to influence the process: National states, the UN, Science and popular science authors, UN accredited NGOs, Anglo-American New Environmentalism, Anti-Vietnam war movements linked with both established and new Swedish political culture, the left, local socially oriented environmentalists, young theosophists linked to third world activists and finally business including business NGOs. Academic literature about Stockholm usually account for the first five of these but little if anything about the last five. This is interesting because the five latter contributed to agenda in more ways than is understood and accepted by observers. Their ideas and issues also caused some of the strongest conflicts.

In addition to the ten identified above, eight loosely defined different fora were either pre-organised or emerged in response to necessity and were created by engagement and the expressed need for participatory and direct democracy. All these provided space for participatory preparations for popular groups and established NGO in activities in 1972. The

eight were: NGO participation in the official preparatory meetings, the Powwow group, the Hamilton youth conference, the People's Forum, the Environment Forum, the Life Forum together with the so-called Hog Farm, the Dai Dong and finally a decentralised international action day.

The key group that initiated participatory activities was the Powwow-group which was the result of initiatives taken by the international young theosophists⁴⁸. Internally the group functioned as a form of direct democracy. Every member was entrusted to speak on behalf of the whole group and take decisions unless a specific decision had been taken by the entire group. This transparent approach also aligned itself easily and immediately with other key actors. The Powwow-group was influential also through the Powwow newsletter including the dissemination of printed information material and meetings. It initiated the People's Forum and organised activities like calling for an international action day, organizing a Peoples Technology exhibition and a seminar on ecology. Accredited NGOs present at the official preparatory meetings did not organise any joint efforts to provide broader or a more politically focused participation in spite of their privileged position to take such an initiative.⁴⁹

The civil society Hamilton preparatory conference in 1971

Only one official initiative during the preparatory phase was organized to include participants from civil society. Supported by the UNCHE Secretariat, UNESCO, IUCN and

48 3 of the members came from TUG, Jan Fjellander, Roland von Malmberg and Tord Björk. The other group with strong representation was Alternativ Stad with Per Janse, Ingrid Eriksson and Göran Folin, all continued to be active in the movement as well as the Green party and cooperated again in the Network Stockholm+50.

49 In the end "250 non-governmental organizations came to the conference—an unprecedented achievement at the time." Chasek. *Stockholm and the Birth of Environmental Diplomacy*. 2020.



Jan Fjellander to the left and **Taghi Farvar** to the right, active in Hamilton, here together in Stockholm 1972.

the International Youth Federation for the Study and Conservation of Nature, IYF, 163 young people gathered from 75 countries at the International Youth Conference on the Problems of the Human Environment, IYCHE, at Hamilton in Canada from 20 to 30 August 1971. The majority of the participants came from the third world. The programme was filled with lectures by people from North America and Britain. At the opening of the meeting, the agenda was sharply criticised for representing a Western way of looking at the problems. This point was made on the first day in plenary by Jurgenne Honculada Primavera from the Philippines and Sylvanus Ahade from Togo. Jan Fjellander who represented the Powwow group and Madeleine Engfeldt who represented the International Student Movement for the

UN, ISMUN, were both in Hamilton. They were visibly touched: "Here was what I had been searching for so many years. Here were radical and well-articulated people. I had felt that there was something wrong in our worldview, but I couldn't get it straight. It was necessary with emotional contribution from the third world delegates to make me understand what".⁵⁰

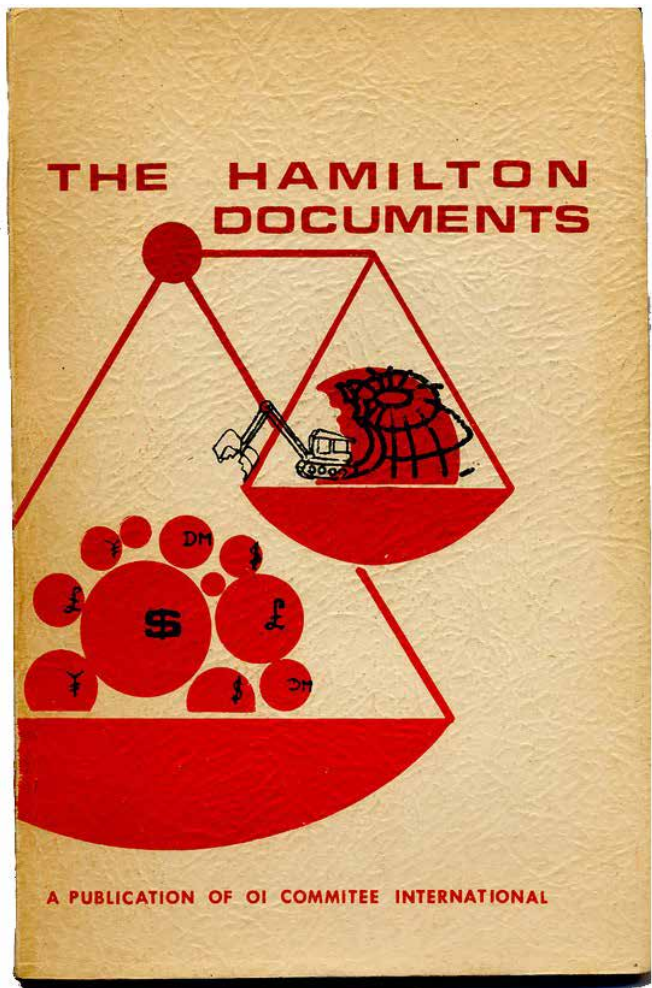
People from the US administration was also present at the Hamilton conference and seemed to observe closely what was going on. As observed earlier, the 1970s were at the height of the Cold War, and what may be called a CIA paranoia crept into the atmosphere in the Hamilton conference. People suspected there were close ties between the secretariat of the UNHCE, official think tanks and estab-

⁵⁰ Jan Fjellander interview 1996.

lished NGOs and the CIA. Taghi Farvar studied at that time in the US and was at the Hamilton Conference. As the atmosphere had become tense one evening, Fjellander and Farvar began to joke about the suspicions and Farvar told a story about a parrot in the jungle in Guatemala where he was doing his research project on DDT and PCB. The parrot always sounded like Oi, Oi.⁵¹

The Oi Oi became a code word uniting the critical people at Hamilton and stuck as the name for a people-oriented action group on the environment. A majority of participants were highly critical of the official agenda at the conference. The Oi Committee International described diplomatically the change that took place at Hamilton: "Very early in the conference it became apparent that for a multitude of reasons the nature of the programme and the composition of the participants were irreconcilably at odds. The conflicts, based on essential differences in cultural and national attitudes regarding the nature of the environmental crisis led to a complete reconstructing of the conference".⁵²

The conference worked effectively according to new ideas resulting in a more than a100 page report. Six regionally focussed and six issue-focussed workshops contributed to the report filled with recommendations to UNCHE. The joint conference message was clear, "[without] making prior commitments to bring about basic change in the present social and economic relations between the rich and the poor, it becomes fruitless to discuss the solution of the problems implied by the agenda of the United Nations 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Problems of the Human Environment ..".⁵³



The Hamilton Document published by the Oi Committee

The Youth Conference on the Problems of the Human Environment, IYCHE, elected a woman from Vietnam to represent the global youth at UNCHE in 1972. She and the IYCHE, challenged the US and demanded resources for a parallel conference completely distinct from UNCHE. They demanded from the UN that non-accredited NGOs and other independent voices be allowed to participate and stated: "that the U.N. Stockholm Conference organisers initiate

51 The public explanation given afterwards that Oi was an abbreviation of Ote Iwappo, a proverb in Swahili meaning all that is, must be considered, was a clever cover-up. For the public version see Oi committee 1972:i.

52 Oi Committee, *The Hamilton documents*. 1972. p:iv.

53 Ibid 1972.

immediate machinery to provide an independent parallel conference of such excluded parties to be held in Stockholm itself for the duration of the Conference or Environmental Forum at present being planned.”⁵⁴ Such a conference was later initiated by the Powwow-group which then invited all interested groups in Stockholm to participate in the preparations of a People's Forum. This Forum took place although a split occurred among the organisers. As the People's Forum emerged as an important venue, several groups wanted to dominate it.

The formation of the Environment Forum, the People's Forum and Dai Dong

The participants from the third world present at the Hamilton conference had established the Oi Committee International with Fjellander as their representative in Stockholm. However, the tensions that had emerged in Hamilton, were smouldering. A year later and because of the tense situation among the organisers at the People's Forum, Fjellander saw no other option than to leave the cooperation only a few weeks before UNCHE should begin. The dividing issue was actually that he and the Oi Committee refused to take a firm stand against the allegations that the Forum and UNCHE was funded by the CIA.

The Environment Forum was also under press from both official and grass root actors. The issue was that the Environment Forum should not be turned into a counter conference nor work for an output which depended on conditions drawn up by governments. Meanwhile the People's Forum was as a constant alternative and often ahead with preparations thanks to the many volunteers working there with-

out any other resources than their passion. The Environment Forum was actually not part of the original plan. The original idea by the UNCHE secretariat to make an exhibition and a gathering “in the shadow of the official conference”⁵⁵ was even in such an uncontroversial form, too controversial for the UN itself. The growing and eventually large interest among civil society, NGOs and popular movements in the theme and the official conference, seemed to have taken the official UN organisers by surprise, and they realised that they had to organise a venue to harness the ideas and energies from all these people. The responsibility for an NGO gathering was given to the Swedish government, which thus ended up with the responsibility to organise the NGO-Forum. The government in turn gave the responsibility to two fairly large and popular NGO networks in Sweden, the UN Association of Sweden and the Swedish National Council of Youth Organisations. The pressure from independent groups criticising any influence from governments and internal problems at the secretariat led to a crisis. An open split occurred within the secretariat for the Environment Forum when it was revealed that its director was in fact paid and employed by the government and not by the popular movement coalitions. In the middle of this crisis, Fjellander came and offered his practical help in organising the Forum. He had the political support from organisations in the third world. This changed the process. The programme for the Forum had been largely developed by the same North American and European organisations that were behind the Hamilton conference. With their resources they were also coming to Stockholm. As such they might have completely dominated the discussions and outcome from the Environment Forum. With the reorganization in motion the participants at the Environment Forum be-

54 Ibid 1972

55 Stone. *Did We Save the World at Stockholm?* 1973

came global. 60 members of the Oi Committee were invited, and their travel and stay were paid for by the Swedish International Development Agency, SIDA.

The director of the Environment Forum, appointed by the Swedish Social Democratic government, was herself a social democrat and represented a progressive wing of the party much in favour of the direct democracy wave in Sweden at the time. She was also the chairwomen of one of the local chapters of the Social Democratic party known for its rotation of posts and with ambitions to involve all members in the activity of the party. Her views also came to fit well with the strong direct democracy processes among local popular movements that were preparing the People's Forum. But the pressure from many well-funded actors in Western countries was hard to cope with and the administrative problems were exposed also in media.

A factor that ameliorated tensions between the many different groupings was the political position of the Swedish government on the war in Vietnam as well as its view on the developing world. The Swedish government under the leadership of its Prime Minister, Olof Palme, had taken a strong position against the US war on Vietnam. They had also a favourable approach to the developing nations regarding support to nation building there. The process from the Hamilton conference with its strong emphasis on third world issues also influenced the Environment Forum. Both the Oi Committee and the strong FNL -anti-Vietnam war movement could therefore cooperate both within the People's Forum and the Environment Forum. The people's pressure on the two Forums, resulted in giving them both a democratic structure and culture.

Finally, there was the Dai Dong. The first international European conference on the environ-

ment with members of civil society and scientists was held in Menton, France, late in 1971. Together the participants produced and published what is known as the Menton Statement, which was slated as a message to the billions inhabiting the earth. The statement offers an analysis of key environmental problems with an assessment of what may happen if the environmental problems remain unsolved. The Menton message was spread to all corners of the world, and subsequently signed by 2 200 scientist, of whom many were Nobel Laureates.

The meeting in France was convened by a new organisation which was named Dai Dong. The organisation had sprung out of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, which is a nondenominational religious organisation, founded in 1915 by prominent pacifists. "Dai Dong" literally means "a world of the great togetherness", a concept which originated in pre-Confucian China more than 2,500 years ago. Dai Dong existed as an NGO from 1970 until 1976. Dai Dong linked war, environmental problems, poverty and other social issues, made efforts to reverse the Cold War through campaigns, educational projects, civil disobedience and conferences.

Dai Dong organised an independent science conference from June 1 to June 6 outside of the Stockholm city centre. "From its opening day, the Dai Dong conference drew headlines in both the Stockholm and the world press and was the source of constant radio and television stories and interviews. The awareness of the environmental crisis has come at a time when the deprived nations and the poor and deprived people in all nations are struggling for power to control their own destinies and asserting their right to full participation in national and world affairs. On a global scale, the population problems of the developing countries have coincided with the colonial expansions of the last two centuries, and the exclu-

sion of Third World populations from full access to their own resources.”⁵⁶



Conference hall in the old parliament building in Stockholm

The environment gets an official face, but is it understood?

Sweden and the US were pioneer countries when it came to environmental issues, both nationally as well as globally, and in making environmental issues into public concerns in Europe and North America.⁵⁷ Governments

had begun to respond to environmental issues in the 1960s. Sweden became the first country to establish a government authority for the environment and enacted a comprehensive environmental law in 1968. At the same time the Swedish government responded to wide-spread popular protests in the country by forbidding the agriculture to use pesticides that contained mercury. The Swedish UN Delegation headed by Sverker Åström had brought the proposal to organize a UN-conference on the environment to the UN General Assembly, which was approved in 1968. The UN resolution stated that the aim was “to provide a framework for comprehensive consideration within the UN of problems of the human environment in order to focus the attention of governments and the public opinion on the importance and urgency of this question”. The response from countries was at first reluctant but preparations went ahead. At the outset, the UN, governments and non-governmental organization thought the conference would be a conventional scientific conference, not an action-oriented one.

Organisations and academics in the US in the 1960s had begun to challenge the status quo in several political areas including the environment. Rachel Carson had published her book *Silent Spring* in 1962 which signalled the start of environmental movements. The 1968 UNESCO conference on Man and Biosphere in San Francisco had proposed to honour peace and the earth on the first day of spring in the Northern Hemisphere; a year later senator Gaylord Nelson in the US Senate proposed to name April the 22nd the Earth Day, and 20

⁵⁶ “Toward A Just World Order”, Routledge, 1982, Edited By Richard Falk, Samuel S. Kim, Saul H. Mendlovitz

⁵⁷ For more detailed accounts, see Jamison 1995 p. 228-229, Brenton, *The Greening of Machiavelli*. 1994 p. 19-27, and McCormick, *Reclaiming Paradise*, 1989. All three tend to give most examples from the US, but Brenton points at statistics from many countries showing similar growing public concern, mainly for local and domestic environmental problems. For a comparative in-depth account on France, Germany, Great Britain, Sweden and the US, see Brand, Karl-Werner ed., *Neue soziale Bewegungen in Westeuropa und den USA*. 1985.

million US citizens responded immediately by demonstrating for the environment on that day in 1970. People and organisations were becoming aware of the hazards of pollution. The US administration under the Republican President, Richard Nixon, established the Environment Protection Agency, the EPA.

The Aspen Institute which at the time was becoming a factor in influencing how business corporations were thinking, also began to focus on the environment. Realizing that something had to be done with work on the environment, the Aspen Institute hired Ford Foundation scholar Joe Slater to become the director at the institute. Slater meant that “the old-line conservation organizations tended to focus only on single aspects of the environment”. A positive solution to challenge this thinking was the creation of an international environmental institute.⁵⁸

US biologist Paul Ehrlich published in 1968 his book named *“The Population Bomb”*. Ehrlich became a prominent spokesperson for environmental and demographic concerns and was later invited as a key speaker to the Stockholm Conference. His views were representative for mainstream thinking on demography in the 1960s and 70s. They were also later to be strongly challenged, not the least at the Stockholm conference. Among other things, Ehrlich proposed coerced vasectomy of every Indian man who had fathered more than three children and suggested to end aid to those countries with the highest population growth. Several pharmaceutical companies had earlier experimented with different devices for population control. Today the infamous trials of the prevention pills in Puerto Rico in the late 1950s is a horrible example of unethical experimentation on women. With Ehrlich these companies

felt they had a scientific spokesperson who based his postulated views on what was called science. The population growth as the key explanation for poverty and environmental problems in African, Asia and Latin America came to dominate much of the debates in the 1970s and 1980s, until it was contextualized in a different, more relevant and factual context and one realised that the cause of environmental problems and of poverty was to be found elsewhere.

The environmental movement in the industrialized countries during the 1960s and 70s was also closely linked to the student and youth movements for greater democracy, the anti-Vietnam War movement and the opposition against the nuclear arms race.⁵⁹

The first open lay popular participation since the creation of the modern inter-state system

This cannot be stated too often: It was in Stockholm at the United Nations Conference on Human Environment (UNCHE) in 1972, that for the first time, ever since the creation of formal meetings under the modern inter-state system, that popular participation was enacted, directly and open to wide ‘lay person’ participation, and not only through a limited number of representatives. It included a wide range of activities and interaction between popular and governmental groups. A group inspired by Indian ideas carried out the most sustained effort in creating this global popular participation and thus confronted Western and corporate strategies. There had been popular activities at international meetings before, as when demonstrations were held and riots occurred against the World Bank meeting in Copenhagen in 1970, but the interaction between the popular activities and the official meetings in Stockholm were minimal or non-existent except through

⁵⁸ Hyman 1975, p. 252.

⁵⁹ McCormick 1989, Brenton 1994, p. 25.

mass media and security arrangements. NGOs were no strangers to the UN family in 1972. They had been invited to participate in the founding of the United Nations in 1945 in San Francisco, which resulted in Article 71 in the UN Charter, recognizing the NGOs as the third legal actor in the UN.⁶⁰ Thus there had been interaction between NGOs the UN and governments before.⁶¹ Later this NGO-UN relation, according to intergovernmental rules and regulations, was regulated through a system of accreditation⁶² but there had been no open and direct popular participation and lobbying through independent activities that in numerous ways interacted with an official United Nations conference.

The Aspen Institute and the young theosophists represented two very different approaches to environmental issues. As the young theosophist became rather influential during the politicking of the environmental conference and its hectic two weeks, there is a need for a little more background on this group than is usually given. The theosophists had been involved in working with third world organisations for a few years, were inspired by Indian philosophy and vegetarianism. Experimentation in different lifestyles also played a part in youth counter-culture.

The Swedish 'Teosofiska Ungdomsgruppen', the Theosophical Youth Group, beginning in

the 1960s, had for more than ten years sustained a growing number of solidarity initiatives with the third world. Their initiatives were well integrated with peace, development, youth counter-culture and the emerging environmental movement. The group never registered as an organization to participate in the UNCHE, but its individuals worked closely with organisations with a strong commitment to the third world. This loosely knit north-south coalition challenged prevailing initiatives and often clashed with the perspectives of the established Anglo-American new environmentalism, including Northern governments and well established business think tanks. However, these groups also became a problem for the so-called established 'left-wing' organisations, as they often were presenting competing views. The Oi Committee, loosely founded during the Hamilton days, the year before, and which often spoke in the forums, closed ranks with these theosophists. The work of this group has never been properly accounted for in academic works covering the conference.⁶³

The Young Theosophists with left-wing anarchistic-inspired groups staged the first large environmental action in Sweden in 1966 by disposing ten thousand no-return bottles on the steps of the Swedish Parliament blocking the entrance. The message was clear – it was a direct protest against pollution and wasteful use of resources.⁶⁴

60 Shoup and Minter. *Imperial Brain Trust*. 1977.

61 For accounts of NGO-UN relations at the beginning see Seary, Bill, 'The Early History: From the Congress of Vienna to the San Francisco Conference,' 1995, p. 25-27.

62 See ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31

63 An affair for the northern dominated international environmental organizations is what is left: McCormick, *Reclaiming Paradise*, 1989, Brenton, *The Greening of Machiavelli*, 1994, Morphet, *NGOs and the environment*, 1995, Conca, *Greening the United Nations* 1995, Willets, *From Stockholm to Rio and beyond* 1996. The last time the third world initiative the Oi Committee International is mentioned is by Zacharias 1975. Reminiscences of their voices are given by referring in general to radical opinions. However, explicitly mentioned after 1975 apart from the established NGOs ICSU, IUCN, SCOPE and Friends of the Earth, is only the American hippie and crowd manager commune, the Hog Farm.

64 The young theosophists sustained a fruitful solidarity, their cultural and environmental efforts have never been described in



Young theosophist prints CANCER with the help of a stencil on tobacco advertising in the subway and paste counter propaganda replacing a well known cigarette slogan “Känt folk röker Kent” (Celebrities smoke Kent) with “Känt folk dör av Kent” (Celebrities die of Kent). The new slogan became one of the best known slogans in the 1960s. The direct action contributed to a ban on tobacco advertising.© unknown, Roland von Malmberg archive

More direct actions had followed. Neighbourhood groups began pulling down walls in backyards that had hindered people from the whole block to come together. Some also built playgrounds in this reclaimed area. Anti-commercial groups successfully stopped a teenager market focused on consumerism and immediately expanded their work and organised Alternative Christmas celebrations all over Stockholm. The biggest Christmas event took place at the Swedish Academy of Art, named “Konstfack”, which was occupied, and the students and the action groups invited homeless people to stay over Christmas. One of the immediate outcome of this was the foundation of Alternativ Stad (Alternative City) in February 1969, a group formed to continue the struggle for an anti-commercial culture, defend egal-

any literature. Academics have either been interested in formalized organizations like states, companies or non-governmental organizations within a defined issue area, or their interest has been social movements at their peak of national mass mobilization. Diffusion of ideas between countries has only recently been the object for more intensive study and then only between movements within the same issue area. The kind of qualitatively influential movement in both its local and international context described here falls outside the framework made by hitherto academic conceptualizing. Björk, Tord, *The Emergence of Popular Participation in World Politics*, 1997.



Ingrid Eriksson, active in Alternativ Stad and the Powwow-group. The sign says: Car queuing affects the environment

itarian and environmental values and mobilize against the prevailing city planning. This group is still active as the local Stockholm chapter of Friends of the Earth, Sweden.

In the summer of 1967, the world theosophical summer camp took place in Sweden under the slogan Look At, Search Out, Try Out Camp. It was given the following acronym: LASITOC. With young people from all over Europe, the summer camp was turned into a highly ambitious summer university trying to grasp the importance of global social, environmental and scientific topics. A group was formed changing the meaning of the last letter in LASITOC to 'Committee'. During the following four years this international core group with people from Sweden, Great Britain, the Netherlands, France and West Germany, met regularly every three months to discuss and coordinate a wider and expanding ambitious agenda which ended with an initiative to connect to organisations in the third world. With a view to the upcoming UNCHE in 1972, the LASITOC group decided to organise alternative activities at UNCHE. The LASITOC group began to contact well-known intellectuals when they had their international meetings. In Stockholm, the young theosophist Jan Fjellander started to work for the Nobel Foundation and efforts were made to organise alternative conferences with scientists to also take a public stance on issues.

Two young theosophists, Peter Harper and Juris Brandt, were tasked with the assignment to help prepare background material for the meetings.⁶⁵ It soon became apparent that there were differences of opinions between

LASITOC and the scientists, especially on how to conduct lobbying at the UNCHE. These differences would play out quite strongly at times in the People's Forum in Stockholm. LASITOC was also aware of the fact that Sweden was the official host to the upcoming UN Conference on the Human Environment.

Turning international initiatives towards action in 1970

The preparations for the Stockholm conference was soon to get into high gear. Direct, indirect and parallel attempts had begun to bear fruit concerning process and content. In his environmental report Wilson from the UNCHE secretariat wrote that the well-being for "space-ship earth" was at stake if none came and took charge of the crew. As "access to resources were in global short supply" this could be done "through the political-social process".⁶⁶ It was pointed out that the Stockholm Conference was a crucial political opportunity and at the same time that a "real danger exists that the outcome (from the conference) could be more divisive than anything else. Almost inescapably, the Stockholm Conference will bring to a head an incipient but necessary political collision between environmental goals and development goals."⁶⁷ In Europe, 1970 was declared a year for Conservation and official and unofficial activities to care for nature blossomed. In the US, the first Earth Day (April 22) was celebrated with more than 20 million participating. By March 1970⁶⁸ at the UN when the 27-member preparatory committee with strong representation from the third world started its

65 Mimeographed document FAQUEST 1969-02-14/150/JF. Jan Fjellander archive

66 Hyman 1975, p. 275.

67 Quoted by McCormick 1989 from Thomas W. Wilson, Draft Plan for the International Institute for Environmental Affairs, 21 September 1970 (unpubl.).

68 Stone 1973, p. 19.

huge task of organizing and preparing documentation for the Stockholm conference,⁶⁹ the concept of an “action-oriented outcome” began to be used. Still, the main-stream thinking was that the head of the conference was supposed to become “Director of Studies”⁷⁰ rather than a Secretary General of an environmental conference with an action plan as the outcome.

In May 1970, Maurice Strong, was formally approached and asked to become the head of the Stockholm Conference. Strong was at the time a well-respected Canadian businessman and director of the Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA. He accepted his position officially as Secretary-General for the Stockholm Conference in January 1971.⁷¹ Strong had not previously shown any specific interest for the environment.⁷² He was on untrod-den ground both concerning the content and the procedures and needed support. Slater, the Director of the Aspen Institute and Strong had known each other for years. Strong turned to the Aspen Institute and the recently established International Institute for Environmental Affairs, IIEA, for help, and these two institutions became influential in forming the basis for the later agenda for the UNCHE. The work concerned key areas like a conceptual framework or ideology for UNCHE intended to serve UN interests. Other issues were about the institutionalization of UNCHE and about cooperation with NGOs. It was also felt the need to have an agenda with a broad public appeal. Business interests had a low profile in the formal process, also for strategic reasons. They were however invit-

ed to input their concerns about issues that were important from a business point of view.⁷³

European organisations also became more interested, and LASITOC became more ambitious. In the summer of 1970 LASITOC with supporters, organised an international conference called “Threats and Promises of Science” at Kings College in London. The conference resulted in a broad strategy for working with the role of science in society. One idea was to organise an international parallel event to the UNCHE. They felt that what was needed was an alternative scientific, third world oriented focus to deal with the issues of the human environment. Back in Stockholm, the situation was favourable for such ideas. The local alternative movements and environmental organisations flourished. Together with groups, primarily from Amsterdam in the Netherlands, Swedish organisations organised an International Traffic Revolution with actions against cars in 10 countries during October 1970. The Stockholm LASITOC had gotten attention and grew as an organisation. At a meeting at the Swedish foundation, “Sigtunastiftelsen on Environment and Peace” much inspired by PUGWASH, the head of the Swedish direct action groups, Jan Fjellander, recruited Madeleine Engfeldt to the work towards alternative activities during UNCHE.⁷⁴ Organisations and interests began to grow and merge. “RIFO - Riksdagsmän och Forskare” (English: Parliamentarians and Researchers,) was an organisation that helped parliamentarians to keep abreast of scientific development. In late 1970 the secretary of the

69 Rowlands 1973, p. 35.

70 Stone 1973, p. 19.

71 Åström, *Ögonblick*, 1992, p. 164, Stone 1973, p. 20.

72 Åström 1992, p. 163. See also McCormick 1989, p. 110.

73 Stone 1975 notes: “just about everyone or at least everybody that seemed worthy of consultation had a chance to provide some input to the conference. There was only one exception and that was industry.” p. 25, and “large scale involvement of industry was ruled out on political grounds” p. 43.

74 Interview with Madeleine Engfeldt 9 Feb 2023.



Björn Eriksson to the right and **Hannes Alfvén** to the left during People's Forum

organisation, Björn Eriksson, got interested in the upcoming Stockholm environment conference, made sure he had the backing of his organisation, and soon became a main contributor with critical analysis of what took place in organising the UNCHE. It was soon realized that people from the whole world and especially independent groups would come to Stockholm for the UNCHE and it was high time to prepare and send information about the event to everyone in the world.

Shaping the conference or mobilising people in 1971

To manage the conference-content, Strong initiated a set of activities to create a conceptu-

al framework.⁷⁵ They included a “Distinguished Lecture Series”, and a “report on the human environment” which could become an official “Declaration on the Human Environment”. René Dubos and Barbara Ward were commissioned to write this, and it was called *Only One Earth*⁷⁶. IIEA was instrumental in managing consultations with experts around the world including corporate leaders from the Scandinavian Airlines System, (SAS), Bayer, Shell, and Nippon Steel⁷⁷ among others. Strong’s senior press adviser for the UNHCE, Peter Stone, was very positive about Ward’s book and wrote afterwards that “It led one to understand and sympathise with the captains of industry and their economic rationalisers who have got us into our present pickle, but it also glowed with humane

⁷⁵ Quotes and the description of abstract levels from Rowlands 1973, p. 38-39.

⁷⁶ Barbara Ward & Reni Dubos, *Only One Earth. The Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet*, Suffolk 1972. It was translated into 15 languages.

⁷⁷ Nyberg 1998, p 52

and zestful optimism, with the sort of spirit that we need to get us out of the mess.”⁷⁸ Not all agreed, and several voiced critical approaches to the book⁷⁹

The interest among NGOs with the UNCHE was small at the outset; only three NGOs participated at the first PrepCom in 1970. This changed at the next PrepCom in December 1970 when the NGO participation in the formal preparatory process reached its peak with 39 organizations present.⁸⁰ Different observers saw an orientation towards scientific and technical NGOs with the International Council for Scientific Unions⁸¹ and IUCN pointed to as main cooperation partners.⁸² Willets assessed that “[t]here was little sense of the intense political controversy that could surround environmental questions and few signs of any desire to hear from NGOs at the grassroots, tackling local environmental problems, or all parts of the environmental movement. Thus prior to the main conference Strong’s approach was to make sure that governments had sound advice from ‘ex-

perts’, and NGOs were predominantly seen as groupings of relevant experts.”⁸³ However, Strong, his staff and the UN itself indicated an early interest for popular activities and youth participation. This also coincided with business and government interests. The Aspen Institute involved itself in the Earth Day and the senior information advisor Peter Stone, also searched for partners that could act as “multipliers”⁸⁴ to overcome obstacles due to lack of resources to do serious outreach.

This emphasis on participation with those having an interest and were willing to spread interest about UNCHE also caused unexpected and almost “endless controversies”. In general, the governments in the preparatory committee had been very positive towards new ideas and mobilization of public opinion. What caused suspicion was projects involving “uncontrolled participation”.⁸⁵ A proposal for a forum for the global environmental movement and NGOs caused alarm. It became a conflict between those who in the post-war era were

⁷⁸ Stone 1973, p. 45-46.

⁷⁹ Mikael Nyberg, a Swedish Writer sees the book as an attempt to find a stable, defence for Western capital. He stress the way Ward and Dubos address the global environmental problem: “But suppose 7 billion try to live like Europeans or Japanese?” Ward and Dubos, p 47. Nyberg assess their argument: “Hidden in this warning about a hypothetical breakdown in global over-consumption was an urge to mobilize Western opinion against a real political spectre. People in the Third World were struggling to escape from poverty. They no longer wanted to be part of a world order where Western European and North American corporations gobbled up their natural resources and exploited their labour. That was the threat” (Nyberg p52). He sees this as an attempt to direct interest away from the conflict between Third World nations and rich countries with help of an “ecological imperative instead of changing the world order and stop the Western wars against national liberation. Ward and Dubos emphasized growth of an environmental philosophy, “a new and unexpected vision of the total unity, continuity and interdependence of the entire cosmos”. Their offer, apart from avoiding violence in defence against the unjust world order, was “a goal of 1% of GNP allocated to development aid”.

⁸⁰ All NGOs at the 1st and 2nd PrepCom were accredited to ECOSOC. At the 3rd and 4th PrepCom 25 and 22 respectively participated, one each time not accredited.

⁸¹ <https://council.science/>

⁸² Thompson Feraru 1974, Morphet 1995, Willets 1996. In spite of the clear linkage between Strong and the closely related Anderson Foundation, Aspen Institute and IIEA through key UNCHE projects this grouping is not mentioned except at random by the most comprehensive accounts as a technical help to the UNCHE secretariat for different initiatives.

⁸³ Willets 1996, p. 69.

⁸⁴ Stone 1973.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 57-58.



Some demonstrators used violence to break through the police lines and climb the trees while motor saws has started to cut into the trees. Early in the morning 12 May 1971 the police gave up and the Elms were saved © unknown, Alternativ stad archive

used to secret diplomacy and controlled official messages to the public, and those in desperate need for multipliers for publicity. One problem with this as Peter Stone stated, "had never been far from our minds: the risk that the Forum might turn into a 'counter conference'."⁸⁶ He continued "I had imagined an Environment Forum in the shadow of, but apart from, the main conference. It would be arranged more or less like an exhibition, and anyone could put up a stall and do their thing, provided they satisfied a few basic requirements such as financial solvency and a genuine interest in the envi-

ronment."⁸⁷ The plan to avoid political obstacles at the UN level was to give the Swedish government responsibility for organising the NGO the event. And as stated earlier, the Swedish United Nations Association (UNA) and the Swedish National Council for Youth Associations were commissioned to be responsible for managing this event.

Meanwhile in Stockholm, the Battle of the Elms in Stockholm in May of 1971, described above, had 'exploded'. Having involved up to 250,000 people taking part in protecting

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 65.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p.65 -66

the trees, they managed to stop the felling. It boosted the interest in environmental and anti-commercialist issues.

The Powwow group and other interest groups began developing their networks in early 1971. At Easter that year, a Powwow manifesto was finalized and translated into several languages and spread widely. The manifesto began by stating that "[o]ur planet is ruined. Economic growth has become a God in whose name all living is withering away, natural resources plundered and people enslaved."⁸⁸ The manifesto points at both that "we must create a new way of life "and that" now we must find new ways of production that allow us to live with the resources of the earth instead of poisoning and eroding them." and "we must solidarize us with the oppressed fighting for their liberation in poor countries and at other places." From the politicians, corporations and international organizations little was expected. They were seen as reacting to the intensified discussion of others and not "able to solve the problems we face." The criticism against the UN Conference was as outspoken as stated in the leaflet:

"Don't trust the UN! The economic growth of the rich countries cannot be allowed to con-

tinue. ...The water, air and soil are already being degraded to the point where the very existence of humanity is threatened. At the same time, economic powerhouses such as the multinational giants depend on economic growth for their very existence. ... As long as their power is unbroken and they are supported by their governments, the UN cannot get to the root of the problem."⁸⁹

During the rest of 1971 contacts were established internationally with local action groups and with other groups planning parallel activities in Stockholm. IFOR (International Christian Peace Movement) worked with Dai Dong, which among other things, worked on mapping ecological damage from warfare. As earlier stated, Dai Dong worked closely with scientists and a platform for anti-pollution activists.⁹⁰

The Powwow group had also sent Fjellander while Madeleine Engfeldt also active in the Powwow group was sent by International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations (ISMUN)⁹¹ to the global youth conference in Hamilton, Canada. This conference, which as stated earlier, became a cornerstone in the UNCHE preparations when it came to engaging NGOs and people from the third world.

88 The Powwow manifesto published in the Powwow newsletter n1 1971. The manifesto can be found at page 10 in RIO+20 STH+40: <http://www.folkrorelser.org/Stockholm1972/dokument/Rio20issue1.pdf>

89 *Lita inte på FN!* Se link at: <http://folkrorelser.org/Stockholm1972/eng-powwow.html> "Although the group stressed how little the conference could achieve, it was also stressed that "If, on the other hand, the consciousness of the UN's shortcomings ends the risks of the Conference ... [it can] stimulate broad actions and a new and more integrated analysis of the nature the problems and of suitable political strategies, then the Conference will have had a positive function. Then also we can welcome any contributions that the Conference makes." <http://folkrorelser.org/Stockholm1972/dokument/powwownews.pdf>

90 "Dai Dong served as a vocal and often militant mouthpiece for an emancipatory environmentalism advocating the rights of developing nations. Dai Dong included scientists and other specialists from Europe, the United States, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Ui Jun participated as the official delegate from Japan. In speeches and panel discussions he spoke passionately about the country's severe pollution and the courageous struggles of victims. Ui also took part in a public dialogue with Barry Commoner that was widely reported in Japan and worldwide. Both activists agreed that environmental problems would not be solved without accompanying solutions to "poverty, discrimination, and war.". Avaneil, *The Human Limits to Growth*, 2017

91 Personal communication 2023 with Madeleine Engfeldt. She was sent due to her involvement in Utrikespolitiska föreningen (Foreign policy association). Another Swede who went was Bo Landin representing Fältbiologerna.



From the left **Per Janse**, **Ann Zacharias** and **Björn Eriksson** talks about the coming environmental conference and alternative activities at the Gärdet festival in Stockholm in the summer of 1971.

Something unique took place at Hamilton. It was the first time in the entire process that popular organizations met internationally and where the majority of participants had come from the third world. As recounted earlier, the International Youth Conference on the Problems of the Human Environment, IYCHE⁹² was a first. On her way back from Hamilton Madeleine Engfeldt visited SIPI (Scientists Institute for Public Information) in New York strengthening the contacts with the critical scientific community in the US.

By the time the UNCHE opened in 1972, the popular movements, the NGOs and civil society organisations were quite well prepared. The Hamilton conference had set the preparation in motion. Two books played a critical role for civil society – Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" and Barry Commoner's "The Closing Circle". The two books were read, and the latter especially by the scientific community. More than 2.000 scientist had signed the Dai Dong declaration for environment and peace, and the global youth at Hamilton had chosen as its spokesperson at the official UN Conference in 1972, a Vietnamese woman, Nguyen Thanh. The UN was however still on the defensive and tried to control the NGO conference, public activities and the public image in Stockholm.

Influencing elements in the preparatory processes, pure politics or environmental concerns?

The obstacles with the participation of the non-accredited NGOs, heavily criticized by the youth in Hamilton, were partly solved at the third session of the preparatory committee in September 1971. The UN formally agreed to organise a parallel Environment Forum under Swedish responsibility to allow for wider participation of non-state actors in addition to the originally 'accepted' NGOs. The Forum was presented as independent. However, Swedish organizations were suspicious and constantly challenged what they called this 'so-called independence' and alleged that it was just a "radical alibi". Unfamiliar with UN processes at the time, they called into question that all proposals for the programme were supposed to go to an advisory panel in Geneva for a "review". The Powwow Group on their side invited a growing number of organizations which had an-

92 The Hamilton documents, <http://folkrorelser.org/Stockholm1972/dokument/Hamilton.doc>

nounced that they were coming to Stockholm, and preparations began for organising an independent and alternative conference to the Environment Forum and which would be called the People's Forum. This Forum would be organised without a leadership selected by governments and not sanctioned by the UN. Meanwhile, changes were also taking place in connection with the Environment Forum. The full decision-power was transferred from the UN to Stockholm and better premises more suitable for debates were developed.



Roland von Malmberg singing at an information meeting at Åsö Gymnasium organized by the Powwow group in the autumn of 1971.

The Powwow Group continued its preparations together with the People's Forum. A new issue of the Powwow newsletter was sent out in February 1972. During the spring of '72, the group organized seminars on ecology and third world development bringing some of the Oi Committee members to Stockholm. The official Swedish organisers with the UN had asked all UN member states to prepare a national assessment of their environments. This was a unique way to prepare governments for the debates at the UNCHE. It was also a first, as this had never taken place before. The preparations of these official national reports were a useful way to mobilize national interest. Soon alternative national reports were made by non-state actors. Especially successful was the Japanese report with the title *Polluted Japan*. It was initiated by non-state actors in Japan as a reaction to what they saw as the lack of any concrete reference to the many severe health effects from the pollution in the country.⁹³ Interests for the UNCHE among all sorts of international networks had begun to grow. An exhibition on People's Technology was also prepared and would be displayed during the conference weeks. This exhibition was developed together with Peter Harper who came over from England.⁹⁴ Preparatory meetings for the People's Forum were held at a branch of the Stockholm based 'Moderna Museum' which interested a wide range of people, many young but also some older people, who attended.

There were problems on the horizon although they did not seem to be serious at the begin-

93 "Inside *Polluted Japan*'s covers, readers discovered page after page of photo graphs, maps, sketches, tables, charts, and text documenting industrial pollution and horrific human injustice. The cover presented readers with a human hand shockingly deformed by mercury contamination, accentuated on subsequent pages by photos of fetal mercury poisoning victims, Yokkaichi asthma sufferers, PCB contamination victims, and casualties of cadmium poisoning." Avenell, *Transnational Japan in the global environmental movement*. 2017.

94 Peter Harper, Now: Head of Research and Innovation, Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT), at the University of Bath, <http://peterharper.org/>



Peter Harper to the left and others during the preparation of the People's Technology exhibition at Moderna museet



Preparatory meetings for Peoples Forum at the branch of the Moderna Museum

ning. The most important one was financing. At first there was no money available to cover expenses for people from the third world. By now the Oi Committee had grown to 60 members including a handful from the indigenous peoples. As earlier stated, this was solved by the fact that the Swedish International Development Agency, through the initiative of the Social Democratic Party, which also was the party of the government, stepped in and paid for travel and stay. Another problem was a demand from Swedish organisers at the Peoples's Forum who wanted to prioritize the needs of local inhabitants who did not un-



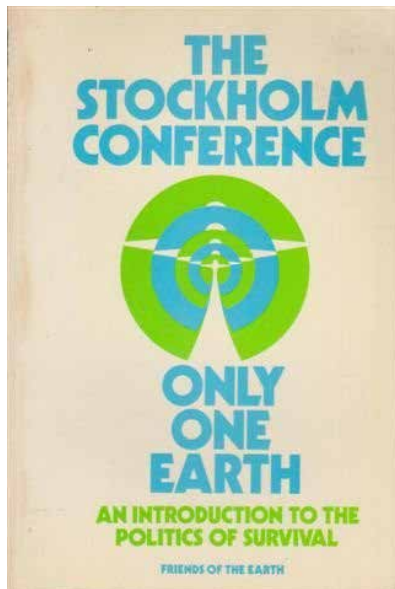
Posters at the meeting on the walls with messages as: Clean air before dirty profit, Stop Big City (...growth) Together we are strong. We demand jobs where we live.



Exhibitions. In the middle **Björn Gillberg**, wellknown Swedish environmentalist.

derstand English. They demanded continued translation into Swedish which would cause delays and prolong discussions.

During the spring there was also an explosive interest internationally in new books about the environment. *"Only One Earth"*, *"Limits to Growth"* and *"Blueprint for Survival"*, sold in millions of copies and were translated to more than 20 languages. To be able to influence the UNCHE, Friends of the Earth in the United States initiated a Swedish sister organization which started to introduce books to the Swedish public. The first to be published was *"The Population Bomb"*, by Paul Ehrlich – as earlier referred to.



Friends of the Earth issued also its own "Only one Earth" book with the same title as the official book by Ward and Dubos. The FoE book also promoted similar perspectives on the population issue as Ehrlich but without the explicit coercive methods for population control. It also included the thesis promoted by Garret Harding on what was labelled as The Tragedy of the Commons. The idea was that the environmental problems were caused by over-use of commons and the solution was in creating market ownership.⁹⁵

Another American intervention into the preparation process came in March 1972 from an organisation called the Life Forum, financed by the Kaplan Fund and the multi-millionaire Stewart Brand⁹⁶. This was a Californian social and communication inventor and drug liberal who had become rich when making and selling the alternative lifestyle book called "the Whole Earth Catalogue". The Kaplan Fund had been used since the beginning of the 1960s to channel CIA money in the interest of the US government. The Life Forum came to Stockholm in March of 1972, and met with the organisers of the People's Forum, the Environment Forum and the Swedish police. The authorities were not opposed and saw the Americans working with the Life Forum as a possible help in handling crowds. Life Forum brought with them a group of people, or 'experts' proclaiming to know how to handle crowd control and claimed experience from events like the Woodstock festival in 1969. They offered funding if they could become responsible for the information exchange during the event. Suspicion grew concerning the fact that the counter-culture groups were making propaganda for drugs and cooperated with the Kaplan fund which had been proven to channel CIA money.

At the People's Forum, the interventions proposed by the Life Forum caused a split between the Swedish and the international organizations. The Oi Committee would not guarantee to refusing money from these Americans, as the Swedish organisers wanted. Also, political tensions became so intense that the Dai Dong group and the Oi Committee saw no other solution than to leave the People's Forum process. What had begun as discussions on how to save the environment, had now turned into a discussion about the Vietnam-war. Several of the leftists' groups viewed the Life Forum

⁹⁵ Friends of the Earth, *The Stockholm Conference: Only One Earth*, 1972

⁹⁶ Stewart Brand, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stewart_Brand



Stewart Brand in a Life Forum demonstration during the UN Conference.

as a group aligned with CIA interests and that their real motif was to undermine their protests against the Vietnam war.

By the end of April, with barely a month to go before the conference would open, the third world participation was in jeopardy and a serious spilt occurred between participants and the organisers of the People's Forum, and key Swedish organiser left the process. The Swede Jan Fjellander who had been elected by the Oi Committee was one to leave. The split among the organisers appeared to be total.

Organising the representativity, credibility and legitimacy of the forums

On May 1st 1972, the biggest demonstration since World War II was organized in Stockholm. Five weeks before the UN Environment Conference, the two factions of the anti-Viet-

nam war movement joined hands in a common and unprecedented demonstration. The final meeting gathered more than 50,000 participants. People gathered right outside Folkets Hus, which was to be the venue in about one month for the UN Conference on the Human Environment. The more established popular movements and the Social Democratic Party which also was the party of the government, had accepted the demands of the radical left youth movement of not only demanding peace in Vietnam but also identifying the US as the aggressor that had to withdraw from Indochina. The demonstration caused quite a bit of consternation among UN officials, not the least because of the strong support the government of Sweden showed the anti-Vietnam-war demonstration. It was well remembered that the late Olof Palme, then Prime Minister of Sweden and soon to be the host of the UN environment conference, had only two years earlier marched in a similar demonstration. Back



The demonstration against the Vietnam war at Norra Bantorget 1 May 1972



Environment march for a car-free city and another city planning gathered around 10 000 on May 11, 1972. One of the banners also protest against depopulating the countryside © Ingvar Sundén

in February 1968, he had then been the Minister of Education, but it was obvious that the government back then also had supported his initiative. And to add insult to injury in the eyes of the Americans, in 1968, Palme had marched together with North Vietnam's ambassador.

A few days after the May demonstrations, Fjellander walked into the office of the Environment Forum. Chaos seemed to dominate the office, and employees threatened to go on strike because of political turmoil including lack of information. The head of organisation, Ms Ingrid Segerstedt-Wiberg from the UNA of Sweden, was working hard to solve the situation. In the middle of the turmoil Fjellander was asked to help the secretariat. One problem the secretariat had to deal with was the issue of population growth. It was a divisive issue and the more conservative organisations kept postulating that this was the major cause of poverty and environmental degradation in the global south. This view was vehemently opposed by the more progressive groups. Should the secretariat include prominent lectures on the population growth issue at the Environment Forum? Plans for a series of lectures at the Environment Forum had been drawn up by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), IUCN, WWF with the support of other big international NGOs. The secretariat arrived at a compromise decision: there was to be no designated key-note speaker, every person who wanted to give an introduction would be treated on an equal bases, and basically had to wait in line to be heard. The controversial demographer Paul Ehrlich had been listed as one of the keynote speakers. After the agreement among the organisers, Fjellander phoned Ehrlich and told him that the possibility for a keynote speech was cancelled. He and the other invited key-note speakers were visibly upset and protested. A set of panel debates on the issues became the solution. Each person would be treated in the same way without regard to the size of their wallet, academic position or otherwise importance. Newsweek reported on the issue calling it an embarrassing moment for the UN saying it was the result of misunderstood equal treatment of everybody: "On the side, the U.N.

is also sponsoring an 'Environment Forum,' originally intended as a high-level scientific seminar on environmental issues but now degraded into political football by the arbitrary exclusion of such prominent American environmentalists as René Dubos."⁹⁷ IIEA together with the Population Institute in cooperation with the UNCHE secretariat, had been involved in pushing the population issue to become central at the Environment Forum. When they now were refused to play a dominant role with this issue at the Environment Forum for their Distinguished Lecture Series, they had to find other premises. Having enough funds available, they reorganised their events at the ball-room of the Grand Hotel in Stockholm.

By 20th of May, just two weeks before the opening of the UNCHE, Fjellander presented the situation to the two responsible Swedish umbrella organizations for the Environment Forum. The Environment Forum could be organised with a 12-day programme at several but at times, different venues. One reason for this was that more groups than originally expected now planned to participate. Within a set organisational framework, the practical execution of the Forum had to show extreme flexibility. There was one great problem though. As it appeared, the overwhelming majority of the registered participants came from the US and almost all of the rest from Britain or Western Europe, with a handful from the East European bloc and even less from the third world. The organisers all understood that this neither contributed to the credibility of the conference, nor to the representativity or legitimacy of the voice of the peoples. By chance Fjellander said to the secretariat that he happened to be in contact with 60 persons from the third world. The people in this group had during the last half year prepared themselves to make substantial contributions on environ-

⁹⁷ Newsweek 12.6.1972.



Everyone worked intensely to prepare the activities. Here Powwow activists making posters for People's Forum from the left **Björn Eriksson**, **Ingrid Eriksson** and **Birgitta Carlberg**.



People reading the posters.

ment and development issues at events being organised on the sides of the UN environment conference. Their participation could solve the political predicament if the travel costs could be arranged. If an arrangement could not be found, Fjellander would simply tell the press that it was tantamount to a political scandal undermining the solidity of the entire conference. In two days, as told before, the Swedish development authorities now also pushed by Segerstedt-Wiberg, head of the organisation behind the Environment Forum, provided the funding for the 60 people. Madeleine Engfeldt once again came to help Fjellander and worked day and night to organise flights and arrival of the third world participants.



Bill Robertshaw and others prepare the development and environment exhibition at Environment Forum. The calendar and telephone services were the outcome of Educaids meeting in 1965. To the left is the exhibition against US ecocide in Vietnam



A delegate arriving at the conference

Organized turbulence.

The UN Conference on the Human Environment began on June 5 in 1972. Still, the struggles related to free speech, the forms of presenting contributions in public and control of access to different spaces continued all through the conference. Thousands of people from all over had 'migrated' to Stockholm for the event. The popular Swedish singer-writer Ulf Lundell wrote in his book, 'Jack'⁹⁸ that 50 000 good people had arrived. In fact, a lot less arrived, including to the youth camp at Skarpnäck (see below) where some ten thousands were expected to arrive, while in the end only several hundred turned up.

By 1st of June Stockholm was prepared for the conference. The venues for the three conferences – the official UNCHE, the Environment Forum and the People's Forum were ready. The authorities had also 'sanitized' the city. Two centrally placed houses for the homeless and chronic alcoholics had been closed⁹⁹ and police began directing people in need of these centres away from the centre town.

The American Life Forum had also arrived. Two planes with their participants had landed in Stockholm Airport late in May. Well-funded by the eccentric hippie millionaire Steward Brand, they had expected to be greeted by the organisers. No one came. The organisers had turned their backs on the Life Forum and wanted nothing to do with them. It was obvious that the hippie culture of Life Forum did not align itself with organized civil society. The Life Forum people were all the same given by the Swedish authorities a large area some ways from Stockholm centre in a district named Skarpnäck. Here they set up their Hog Farm, modelled after Hog Farm at Woodstock three

⁹⁸ [https://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_\(roman\)](https://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_(roman))

⁹⁹ Zacharias 1975, p 49.



Outdoor propaganda against the US war in Vietnam

years earlier. Music, poetry, free sex, drugs of all kinds dominated life at Hog Farm. Media informed well about the liberal conditions created there. "Our editorial idea was from the beginning not to cover the conference (UNCHE), but to write about groups like Hog Farm, Free Stage and other people that present the problems in a dramatic form. I am really much more interested in that - furthermore that was the instruction, that my chief editor gave me. Basically, we have a predilection for covering the peripheral. Nobody expects much. We had a meeting with Russell Train¹⁰⁰ in a lunchroom

before we went, and he doesn't expect much coming out of the conference either" said a seasoned reporter who had come to Stockholm to see for himself and write his impressions to his audience.¹⁰¹ The two influential US magazines, Time and Newsweek tried to spread the slogan "Woodstockholm" to describe what happened at Hog Farm. Events there were without much substance or success.¹⁰² The hundred thousand participants that Brand predicted were on their way to Stockholm had actually shrunk to a couple of hundreds who eventually showed up at Hog Farm.

¹⁰⁰ Russell E. Train was an adviser to the US Republican President Richard Nixon on environmental issues and became the second Director of the US Environment Protection Agency, the EPA, serving from 1973 to 1977. He served as an adviser to the US delegation to the UNCHE.

¹⁰¹ From an interview with a reporter from Time magazine in Ramparts sep 1972.

¹⁰² Time and Newsweek 12 June 1972.



Maurice Strong speaking at the Life Forum manifestation at Sergels torg. He said "I love your message. I hope the whole world will love it and embrace it. I feel a sense of love at the moment which I now hope will penetrate all of the meetings I will be participating in".¹⁰³

But the Hog Farmers added to the conflicts among civil society and the popular groups and often managed to distract discussions from real environmental problems. Their erratic behaviour became a constant nuisance to the larger part of civil society and to the UN. At times, they had initiatives directed at serious environmental issues, such as whaling (dealt with later in this article). But most of the times, their initiatives appeared more destructive than constructive. Hog Farmers contested and criticised the People's Forum in particular, which actually was the most critical forum to the UN Conference. One day Life Forum held its own public manifestation for a 10-year morato-

rium on human beings at Sergels Torg, a large open space in the centre of Stockholm. Strong appeared and spoke. He said that he was of the same opinion as the Hog Farmers that we should love each other and not kill each other.¹⁰⁴ Then somebody reacted, went to the microphone and said that this sounded very well, but a spokesman of UN should try to stop the ecocide in Vietnam. The audience applauded but one Hog Farmer tried to silence the speaker by putting his hand over the speaker's mouth. Similarly, at the final evaluation plenary session at the Environment Forum the Hog Farmers intervened. When the topic of the Vietnam ecocide was about to be addressed "American

¹⁰³ Source: Transcription by the author from Life forum video from the event.

¹⁰⁴ DN – Swedish newspaper 15.6.1972.



Anarchist demonstration against environmental destruction caused by capitalism and the UN Conference. Sergels torg June 4 © Henrik Henriksson

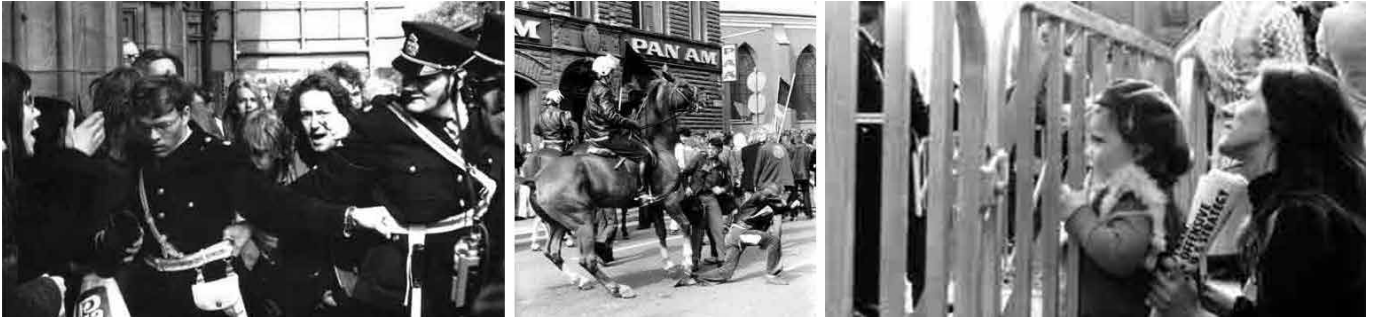
hippies” invaded the gallery and threw paper swallows crying out “action - not politics”.¹⁰⁵

During the conference days in June 1972, constant confrontations took place between the American hippies propagating liberal use of drugs and those opposing the US war in Vietnam. The press conferences and plenaries at the People’s Forum became battle grounds over the war. In the streets when people were invited to the microphone and chose to criticise US warfare, attempts were made to silence them by these ‘hippies.’ During the final

session at the People’s Forum the US warfare in Vietnam was a major issue on the agenda and was to be seriously debated. As this debate was about to begin, the American hippies invaded the podium and managed to dissolve the meeting before the discussion was finished. In such confrontational atmosphere at the People’s Forum, the international partners chose to leave.

Street manifestations against the UN Conference began already on Sunday 4 June, the day before the official opening. The Anarchist

¹⁰⁵ Zacharias 1975, p. 80. None of the two examples from how Hog Farmers tried or succeeded in stopping criticism against the US war in Indochina is accounted for by Anglo-American observers.



On the left: Demonstrators trying to storm the police lines. On the center: Confrontation with mounted police. On the right: For the first time riot fences (kravallstaket) were used during the conference © Henrik Henriksson

Federation had called for a protest against environmental destruction carried out by global capitalism and made efforts to 'reveal' the hidden truths behind the UN conference. This was followed by confrontations with police and soldiers guarding the Royal Palace and one of the other conference venues which were to be held in the old Parliament Building. Some 200 activists struggled with police and soldiers, during the Sunday. On June 6, Japanese anti-pollution activists led a street demonstration in front of the hotels where the delegates lived and then marched to the Japanese embassy. Alternativ Stad (Alternative City) made a sit-in on June 10 against car traffic. This took place close to the elms and to the Old Parliament. Inspired perhaps by the many outdoors manifestations, Maurice Strong also challenged his secretariat and delegates to go for a bicycle ride through Stockholm, which a fair number did.

The conference

On Sunday the 4th of June 1972, the government of Sweden invited all delegates to a grand opening of the conference in the Royal Opera in Stockholm. In the presence of the King of Sweden and the Secretary General of the United Nations, the delegates were informed about the serious issues they had to deal with over the next two weeks.

On the following day, Monday the June 5th, the work began:

It is still morning. Delegates from 113 countries are seated in the plenary room of the Folkets Hus, the People's House, in Stockholm, the capital of Sweden. Folkets Hus is the chief venue of the conference. After the formal opening, the Secretary General of the conference, Maurice Strong gives his opening address:

"We have made a global decision of immeasurable importance to which this meeting testifies: we have determined that we must control and harness the forces, which we have ourselves created. We know that if these forces can be effectively controlled they will provide everything that life on this planet desires and requires; but if they are permitted to dominate us, they will have an insatiable and unforgiving appetite."

His opening speech covered all issues and was received with applause. The conference was to tackle six overarching issues:

- Human Settlements
- Resource Management
- Identification and control of international pollutants
- Development and the environment
- Education and Information
- Future organisational needs



Many activities took place in the city. Here the winners in Pollution olympics are celebrated in a ceremony on Sergels torg. Among the winners were General Motors with Toyota as second © UN

At the official conference, space for the NGOs was at first very limited. The UN Association of Sweden described the Environment Forum in its publication *Världshorisont*: “The space for civil society on the Stockholm Conference was limited and many sought instead to attend the UN Association’s Environment Forum. The Environment Forum was open to NGOs and groups as well as individuals. In preparing for the Environment Forum hundreds of national

and international organisations were involved in identifying the main themes of the Forum. It became clear that many of the organisations wanted to raise issues that were not those of the Stockholm Conference, such as the US warfare and the impact of population growth on the environment. The UN Environment Forum also took environmental problems from social and economic perspectives, which the Stockholm Conference did not. The Environment Forum made it clear that environmental problems were not isolated from economic and social problems, but that many of them required the same or similar solutions. This was in contrast to the Stockholm Conference where a clear focus was on technological solutions to address environmental problems. The UN Environment Forum came both as a complement and an alternative to the Stockholm Conference in 1972 and brought together over 1,000 participants from around the world.”

Among the people that attracted most attention in Stockholm were indigenous people from North America. Madeleine Engfeldt remembers how she had to go to the Stockholm airport and solve the problem with one group that was going to participate at the Environment Forum and only had pieces of skin with signs from their tribe on them as passports. The authorities were however very helpful so entering Sweden was allowed quickly.¹⁰⁶ Several indigenous representatives came from Hopi, Navajo, Pit River, and Mohawk peoples. The Chicano culture of the southwestern United States was addressed as well as what was called “the genocide being practiced on Brazilian Indians and Alaskan Indians as the destructive consequences of oil exploration”.

One of the issues addressed by the indigenous peoples, was the story of Black Mesa. A

¹⁰⁶ Personal communication, 2023.

Miljöforum – komplement och alternativ till FN:s miljökonferens

Av MARIKA FAHLEN

FN:s miljökonferens som hölls i Stockholm 5–16 juni enotslags med stort intresse, även om förväntningarna på konferensens resultat mattats av sedan östaterarna dragit sig ur varje form av deltagande. I Stockholm fanns nästan lika många journalister från den internationella pressen som officiella regeringsdeltagare. Dessutom hade 1 000-tals representanter från internationella organisationer, framtida vetenskapliga och över huvud taget människor aktiva inom miljöområdet samlats i Stockholm. Dessa deltog inte direkt i FN-konferensen, utan uttryckte sitt engagemang i vår tids miljöproblem genom aktiviteter i andra former. En sådan samlingspunkt var Miljöforum, som ägde rum i Konstfackskolan i Stockholm och arrangerades av Svenska FN-förbundet i samarbete med Sveriges Ungdomsorganisationers Landsråd. Kostnaderna för hela arrangemanget bestod av stannslag.

Miljöforum stod öppet för icke-statliga organisationer och grupper liksom enskilda som var engagerade i kampen för en människligare miljö. Det organisatoriska förberedelsearbetet påbörjades i december '71, 100-tals internationella och svenska miljöaktiva grupper inkom med synpunkter på vilka problem som skulle behandlas inom Miljöforum och på vilket sätt de skulle diskuteras. Redan i inledningsskedet stod det klart att majoriteten av de intresserade ville ta upp sådana frågor som FN-konferensen av politiska skäl måste utelämnas från sin dagordning. Här höjde exempelvis krig som orsak till miljöförändringar och då i synnerhet USA:s krigföring i Indo-

kina, samt frågan om sambandet mellan befolkningstillväxt och miljöförändring.

Men minst lika viktig var att ta upp dessa frågor som ett komplement till FN-konferensen var det att granska alla miljöproblem utifrån såväl sociala som ekonomiska utgångspunkter. Miljö- och utvecklingsproblem skulle analyseras som ett och samma och inte som väsensskilda frågor med av varandra oberoende lösningar. På FN-konferensen diskuteras de tekniska orsakerna till miljöförändringen och de tekniska lösningarna. Miljöforum kom genom de debatter som ägde rum och det arbete som bedrevs på Konstfackskolan att utgöra inte enbart ett komplement till FN-konferensen utan även ett alternativ till den.

Miljöforum var ett tillfälligt arrangemang. När FN-konferensen slutade den 16 juni stängde också Miljöforum. Men arbetet på att förbättra den människliga miljön fortsätter, förhoppningsvis än intensivare än tidigare. I Stockholm möttes över 1 000-tal aktiva miljöintresserade. De utbytte idéer och erfarenheter. De etablerade kontakt och former för samordning av den fortsatta verksamheten. Intresset för en uppföljning av arbetet på Miljöforum var hela tiden starkt uttryckt. Redan de första dagarna bildades en arbetsgrupp med uppgift att studera och utvärdera framtida samarbetsformer mellan olika miljöaktiva organisationer och grupper. Även om Miljöforum inte lever kvar som institution, fortsätter och utvecklas det arbete som gjordes och de kontakter som togs i juni i Stockholm.



Bland de grupper som framträdde på Miljöforum var amerikanska indianer. De kunde rikna med en talrik och diskussionslysten publik. Foto: Words and Pictures.

VARLDSHORISONT

Nr 4 1972 • Årg 26

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Flera rum på Miljöforum var fyllda med utställningar. Kvaliteten skildade avsett och i en del fall var anskaffningen till miljöfrågorna mycket låg. Men de flesta var välgjorda och hade en angelägen budskap. På bilden färdigställas en utställning om miljöområdet i Indokina. Foto: Words and Pictures.

VARLDSHORISONT

Utgiven av Svenska FN-förbundet

Utkommet sex gånger om året

Ansvärgivare:

Ingrid Segerstedt Wiberg

Redaktion:

Lars Eriksson

Ingrid Segerstedt Wiberg

Prenumerationspris 16 kr per helår

(möns inräknad) — Medlemmar

i FN-förbundet 12 kr.

Pris per blommers: 3 kr.

Svenska FN-förbundet,

Box 250, 102 21 Stockholm

Tel. 11 34 31, 11 54 34, 11 54 35.

Postgiro 509 90-1, Bankgiro 567-0032

Tv-AB Förlag, Box 723484



"Alla sorters människor tyckte ha stämt möte hos Miljöforum", skriver Ingrid Segerstedt Wiberg i sin artikel. Alla hade friluft att yttra sig. Foto: Words and Pictures.

Aktivitet — engagemang på Miljöforum

Av INGRID SEGERSTEDT WIBERG

Vetenskapmän, politiker och många vars främsta tillgång var spontant och äkta engagemang möttes på Miljöforum under ett par hektiska juniveckor. Det var denna konfrontation utanför FN-konferensen som Miljöforum var till för.

— Medborgarna skall nog informeras och uppmannas att delta i beslut rörande sin miljö.

Den uppmanningen inför FN:s miljökonferens följdes till punkt och pricka när Miljöforum slog upp portarna till Konstfack i Stockholm samma dag som FN-konferensen invigdes. Den senare invigdes med pomp, ståt, sång av Birgit Nilsson och högtidligt av FN:s generalsekreterare Kurt Waldheim och statsminister Olof Palme. FN-konferensen öppnades var en imponerande högtid i konventionell stil. Utanför Operan fanns ett enormt uppbyggd polisutrustad för att förhindra varje konfrontation mellan FN-delegerade och eventuella demonstranter. Delegaterna skulle inte näs av obehagliga frågor, gläpport eller tillhyggen. De svenska myndigheterna ville under de två konferensveckorna vaken vid öppningshögtidligheten eller senare ta onödiga risker, något som kan vara förstärkt, men ibland hade Stockholm prägel av belägrad stad.

Utanför eller inne i Miljöforums lokaler syntes inte någon politisk kraftig mundering. Från första till sista timmen kunde publiken utan att möta hinder ströva omkring i lokalerna och studera de många utställningarna, se film, diskutera i grupper eller delta i de stora debatterna. Den kunde också ostörd slå sig ned i solen på gården för att snickra eller se på dans eller andra uppvisningar av mer eller mindre spontan karaktär. Alla sorters människor tyckte ha stämt möte hos Miljöforum. De svär skadade Minamata-japanerna, lappar, indianer, kineser, hippiebetonade amerikanska tillhörande Hogfarm-rörelsen, intellektuella och jobbare, gamla och unga. Kännetecknande för samtliga var att ingen misshandlade friheten. Ingen slängde ölburkar och få moraliserade över andras beteende.

Någon pompig öppningsceremoni förekom inte hos Miljöforum. Endast några korta hälsningsanföranden av ordförande för de båda arrangerande organisationerna, Sveriges Ungdomsorganisationers Landsråd och Svenska FN-förbundet, samt praktiska anvisningar av exekutivsekreteraren. Därefter gick man direkt in i debatter, som sedan pågick varje dag och långt in på kvällarna så länge FN-konferensen varade.

Barry Commoner, den oppositionelle och berömda USA-ekologen, anslöt sig i sitt första anförande. Han kritiserade FN-konferensen för att ta för yligt på miljöproblemet. Konferensen föregick, menade han, de ekonomiska och sociala orsakerna bakom miljöproblemet. I stället uppreppade man som om miljöproblemet var ett uttryck för människans kamp mot naturen mer än en följd av vissa människors önskan att exploatera andra och att slå sönder land och folk med sina vapen. Genom att med den hänsynen redan i öppningsanförandet ta upp vietnamkrigets miljöproblem tillnöt sig Commoner en allmän önskan hos de flera tusen människor, som sökt sig till alternativkonferenserna i Stockholm. Dessa upplevde en bitter beviselse över att vietnamfrågan inte fört upp på FN-konferensens dagordning. De fann en diskussion meningslös om miljö när man med tyndad förbigick dagens allvarigaste, mest akuta hot inte bara mot Vietnam folk utan mot hela dess miljö. Tacksamma noterade de statsminister Olof

The Environment Forum as described by one of the organizers, the UN Association in Sweden in its magazine Världshorisont n 4 1972, facsimil

pamphlet distributed among all the activities in Stockholm stated that this issue was "particularly appropriate for the Stockholm conferences because while it is typical of the fate of American Indians throughout the history of the United States, it is equally illustrative of the fate of Third World peoples everywhere. The Hopi and Navajo Indians of the American Southwest are a small, underdeveloped sub-country, contained within one of the world's great powers. They have managed to retain a few acres of the land they once held, and on that land is Black Mesa. ... Black Mesa is a mountain that the Hopi regard as the spiritual centre of the North American continent ... it is made of coal, and therefore, it is worth something in the white man's religion too. ... Peabody Coal Company, with the help of the US government, acquired the right to strip mine coal from Black Mesa."

What characterized the different activities taking place in Stockholm was that everything became contested ground, especially at the two Fora. Politically, four controversial issues came into focus: drugs, whaling, the extensive spraying and destruction of forests in Vietnam as a US warfare method, and the fourth and which also caused the most heated ideological debate: population control. At the same time a shift in the international environmental debate took place for the benefit of the third world among both popular movements and governments.

Population control

The main controversial clash between the dominant new environmentalism espoused by the developed world and the popular move-



PEOPLE'S FORUM
Monday, June 12

Z-salen

10am - 1pm

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

Speakers: Prof Hannes Alfvén, prof Barry Commoner
Also participating James McKinzie, Dean Abrahamson, Taghi Farvar
The risks of nuclear energy. Storage of radioactive waste, nuclear proliferation,
Why has the energy-intensive production & transportation methods developed?
Trade in oil, uranium and world politics
The energy needs for development in the third world.
Are there alternatives to increase in energy production?

2pm - 5.30

TOWARDS A PEOPLE'S TECHNOLOGY

Discussions around introductions by Peter Harper, Chris Ryan, Michael Crisp, Björn Eriksson
Critique of today's polluting, resource-depleting, inhumane technology.
Technology to meet real needs -- in industrialized countries and in the third world,
Markets and central bureaucracies to control production & distribution have both worked badly. Is local production for local use an alternative?
People's technology and political structure.

Break 3-4 pm

PRESS CONFERENCE COVERING ALL DAY'S PROGRAMME

7pm - 10pm

PEOPLE'S TECHNOLOGY IN CHINA

Speaker: Bengt Nittve
How is China in practice working towards a people's technology?
Decentralization of production
Making the harmful beneficial
Discussion and probably a film on China

8pm

Sandlersalen

2pm - 5pm

Films

5pm - 7pm

Rädda Ljusnan! (Save Ljusnan!)

Report from a group working on saving one of the last non-exploited rivers from the construction of a power-plant.

7pm - 10pm

CAPITALISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION

Three current political cases of the environmental destruction of capitalism: Urbanization, Agricultural policy and Employment and environment using an example from Svartvik, a pulp factory in Sweden. How should the immediate demands be stated within the socialist perspective.

3rd floor

3.30 pm - 5.30 On fluoridation, by Norwegian scientist Astrid Nyeggen

On the left: To the left **Ingrid Eriksson**, the coordinator of the People's Forum in the main venue at the ABF house, above **Per Kågeson** one of the main organizers. On the right: English part of the program at People's Forum. June 12.

ments with the third world, took place at the Environment Forum on the issue of population control. In spite of many well-founded attempts, the population issue has never since this confrontation been able to resurface in the way it did at the Environment Forum. Many viewed this as an attempt to launch a global ideology relevant to all environmental problems. The attempts were well supported by business think-tanks including the largest global wildlife, nature conservation and population organizations. Attempts were made to make the population issue the key issue at all levels in Stockholm. They succeeded in making this an

issue at Grand Hotel, but only for the selected elite. Their aim was also to make it an issue in public debates. This was not entirely successful.

The problems that were associated with having the population issue on the official agenda, were effectively solved. "[a]t the end of the opening plenary, Strong said: 'Our first plenary session stands adjourned, and we will now convene right here to hear the first of the Distinguished Lecture Series in the series sponsored by the International Institute of Environmental Affairs and the International Population Institute'."¹⁰⁷ The official process was

¹⁰⁷ Hyman 1975, p. 291. Barbara Ward, René Dubos, Thor Heyerdahl, Gunnar Myrdal, Carmen Miro, Lord Zuckerman, Aurelio Peccei, Maurice F. Strong. *Who Speaks for Earth*. W. W. Norton & Company. 1973

thus effectively linked to a well-financed NGO strategy to focus on population control in the third world.

At the Environment Forum, the population debates proposed by the big NGOs had been dealt with by organising open panel debates where the public could participate after the introductions. The panel participants who were to discuss population issues at the first panel, consisted of Peter Scott, an upper-class Englishman from the World Wildlife Fund, the Swedish demographer Erland Hofsten and Landing Savane, a gentleman from Senegal. Paul Ehrlich was the lead discussant and chair of the panel. This composition of the debate upset the people from the third world countries in the Oi Committee. The way vasectomy was more or less forced upon oppressed and poor people in the third world and the way development aid had diminished, while aid to family planning had skyrocketed, was for them highly provocative. As we wrote earlier in this article, a panel with three white men and one black man provoked the intervention by Dora Obi Chizea from Nigeria. She got up from her seat, walked from the audience up to the podium where the panel sat, and grabbed the microphone. She said that the population issue concerns us in the third world, so let us speak to this issue. This caused Friends of the Earth and Ecologist ECO editors to denounce the

third world intervention as masterminded by a puppet army loitering in the room. They did not only ask themselves how the population debate could have gone so wrong, their accusation went a lot further. They asked: "How did Barry and his band of lesser commoners come to take over the Environment Forum and turn a potential meeting place for many views into a semi-Marxist monologue".¹⁰⁸ (the reference here is to Barry Commoner, the progressive us biologist.)

Two books written about the conference in the 1970s, one by Peter Stone and one by Wade Rowland¹⁰⁹ draw heavily on the comments in ECO, the daily conference publication. Many articles here denounced the third world participation as incompetent and left-wing and acting with irrelevance to the truly more objective and scientific discourses. This view also permeates the two books. None of them asks why the discussion on population was fraught with a developed-country, industrialised view and completely ignored reactions from the third world, such as the political content in the report from the global youth meeting at Hamilton. And as late as in the 1990s a seminal book on environmental international negotiations, "The Greening of Machiavelli" by the British diplomat, Tony Brenton is upset about the way "so highly esteemed a figure as" Ehrlich was treated back in 1972.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Stockholm Conference ECO published by Friends of the Earth and The Ecologist

¹⁰⁹ Peter Stone "Did We Save The Earth At Stockholm?" Published by London Earth Island, 1973; Wade Rowland "The Plot to Save the World: The Life and Times of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, Published by General Distribution Services, Incorporated, 1973

¹¹⁰ Brenton 1994, p. 43. Instead of informing the reader about Ehrlich support of coercive population control against poor and oppressed people, Brenton chose to talk about Ehrlich scientific merits and in a footnote on p. 41 how Ehrlich puts an emphasis in 1990 that the environmental impact of an American is the same as that of 35 Indians or 280 Chadians or Haitians. The advocating of coercive population control is still part of the first Swedish edition in 1972 of Ehrlich's book the Population Bomb made in a Swedish edition to influence UNCHE. Ehrlich gradually emphasized population and consumption and then blaming especially industrial countries while de-emphasising the coercive part of his message, especially after the controversy in Stockholm. This ignorance in accounting for the content of Ehrlich's ideas is systematic with the case of those making the protest against his free speech the only important part of the story as if the third worlders had no other reason for their protests than pseudo-leftism and undemo-



Stockholm Conference ECO team at work. To the left in the middle Amory Lovins

The meeting in the Environment Forum on population is in many ways illustrative of the many confrontations that took place. Media often was attracted by the visual images of the confrontations, and seemed oblivious to the issues that caused the confrontations – the deep disagreement on the cause and effect of environmental problems. In that sense debates then and now, 50 years later seem very similar – facts are derided as fiction if they do not fit what we believe to be true. In 1972, the fact base was even narrower than it is today, as researchers had basically only environmental facts from the northern regions to relay on. What did actually happen at this upsetting panel discussion on the population issue back in June 1972? ECO says that Ehrlich from the outset was “facing a 2-1 panel” against his opinion, Savane and Hofsten being the opposition. In Ehrlich’s own account, Savane is called “bright” and “interested” while Hofsten, a leading Swedish demographer, is derided as “innocent of elementary demography”. ECO also talks about how “the O.I. boys (and girls) moved in a posse on to the platform and took over the meeting, adding four

of their number to the three panellists.” Stone says that “free speech was somewhat neglected” at the Environment Forum, giving the example of Ehrlich being “howled off the platform”¹¹¹. In his own account Ehrlich was strongly upset but gives surprisingly friendly accounts of the new co-chair: “Ms. Obi Chizea proved both intelligent and fair”. Furthermore, she is also one of the added Oi panellists. Another Oi person, Yusuf Ali Eraj, was also given credit by Ehrlich for his opinions against the other Oi committee panellists and “cohorts”.¹¹²

The content of the debate was heated but not lacking consensus. Some Oi Committee persons and third world participants, such as Mr. de Castro at the first day of the Forum, saw forced population control as genocide and emphasized social justice as a solution to overpopulation. Furthermore, the need for self-determination was stressed instead of an unquestioned acceptance of developed countries pre-packaged birth control programmes. A person from the UN Demographic Office pointed at the possibility that the rich developed countries advo-

cratic wishes to restrict the free scientific discussion. Apart from this narrative of suppressed scientific Anglo-American open debate in a global setting, Brenton’s book is highly informative and often less biased, and above all, daring in evaluating international environmental politics.

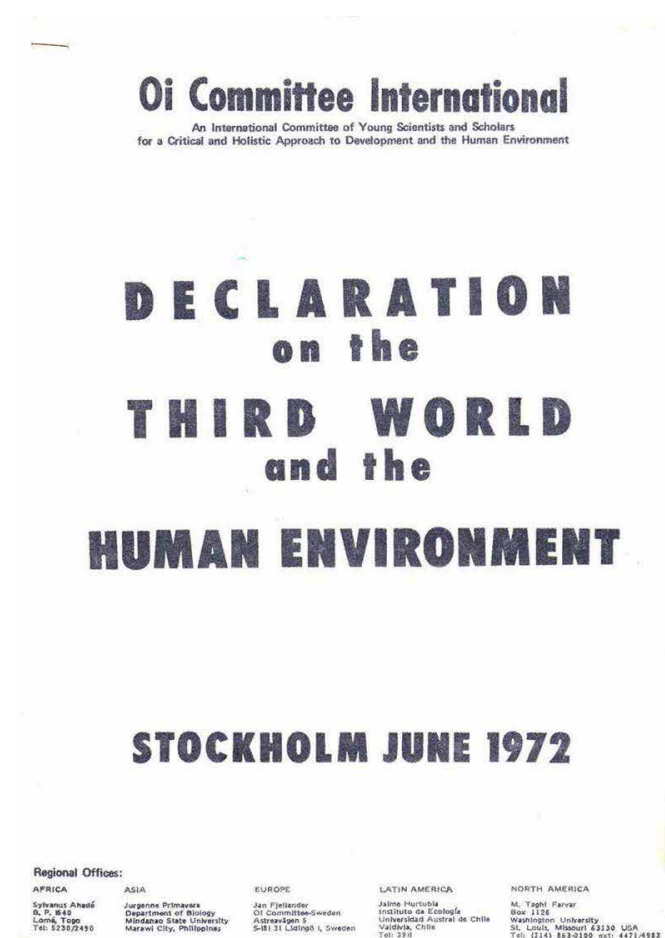
¹¹¹ Furthermore, Stone 1973 is upset about those organizations rich enough to invite those whom they want to deliver speeches, but full access to the public is hindered. Paul Ehrlich was not only “howled off the platform at the Forum”, he was also “speaking on the invitation and the expense of the International Planned Parenthood Federation.” Stone 1973, p. 133.

¹¹² Ehrlich 1972.

cated population control to preserve natural resources for their own use.¹¹³ Countering that, Ehrlich pointed out that population control was only one half of the problem, the other half consisted of two factors, affluence and technology, thus affecting the environment negatively. As the debate progressed, the tension diffused further.¹¹⁴ The Oi Committee members, however, pointed to a severe unbalance in Ehrlich's arguments saying that he did become specific when the environmental problem had to be addressed in the context of population control but refrained from being equally concrete when he talked about redistribution of wealth.

At the other fora outside the official conference, the population issue was also discussed or at least promoted extensively. At the Grand Hotel Aurelio Peccei, Vice-President of the transnational corporation Olivetti and President of the Club of Rome,¹¹⁵ made the typical dualistic explanation of the environmental crisis in the context of population growth juxtaposed to something else, in his case "urbanization". His "nightmarish vision" was of a «gargantuan overpopulated megalopolis» and his solution was similar to so many environmentalists close to business interests, a call for "la dimension de l'homme", the human dimension.¹¹⁶ The Club of Rome's report "Limits to Growth" was read by or referred to by almost everybody. Its message was clear. If the masses in poor nations get the same standard as in the developed world, there will be an environmental catastrophe. What was needed to solve the crisis was more power in the hands of experts who can monitor the situation by using computers. To aim to reorganize the economy by making it possible for everyone to live a decent life

on earth according to Gandhi's vision was not the issue: Gandhi had said "There is enough for everyone's need but not enough for everyone's greed". Changing social relations to save the planet and humanity was not to be discussed. Those reading the book and listening to the presentations by the Club of Rome got the feeling that only by addressing people's individual morals and appealing to their senses, the problems would be solved. Was this a blueprint for an elitist society where the elites through intelligent systems would be able to control the future?



The Oi Committee declaration, stencil

113 The account of the discussion basically from Aaronson 1972. Aaronson states the person to be Stanley Hoffsten but probably is mistaken as the Swedish and UN population statistician Erland Hofsten is participating in the debate.

114 Gendlin 1972, p. 28.

115 Initiator of the influential report Limits to Growth 1972.

116 Gendlin 1972, p. 29.

The Oi Committee in their final declaration opposed the Club of Rome and others by wanting to “reject models of stagnation proposed by certain alarmist Western ecologists, economists, industrialists and computer fans, ... We therefore strongly condemn the international agencies and aid programs for their involvement in population control policies which are against Third World peoples, and which will perpetuate their exploitation.”

Whaling

What had caused the most heated ideological debate was population control. Another issue that also created tensions was the whaling issue.

The founder of Friends of the Earth, David Brower with Ed Goldsmith the founder of the magazine the Ecologist, had invested 3.000 dollars in a project that proved to be a useful idea also for coming international events, the publication of a conference paper, the ECO.¹¹⁷ The British diplomat Brenton praises ECO highly: “In particular they [NGOs] made the highly successful innovation, which they have followed at every major environmental conference since, of publishing a conference newspaper, ECO, which became required reading among the delegates and thus exercised some real influence on the proceedings (as, for example, in the run-up to the whaling debate)”. The first issue of ECO had whaling as their cover story, an issue that was made into a crucial topic for most developed country organisations. The issue joined official people, non-governmental persons and the Hog Farm hippies and they all supported Friends of the Earth as the princi-

pal rallying environmental organisation to lobby for this cause. “The whales have become a symbol of the world’s endangered life, and of the success of this Conference in being able to deal with that part of our objectives.”¹¹⁸

The US delegation was under pressure. According to Time Magazine “the problem that the U.S. with less than 6% of the world’s population “consume” 40% of the world’s goods and necessarily causes by far the most pollution.... Another problem is the U.S. role in Vietnam.”¹¹⁹ Struggling to avoid letting these issues or the issue of compensating developing countries be brought up, the US seized on whaling as a popular cause to promote and support. This was uncontroversial since USA had no whaling industry, while the Soviet Union or Japan would be in focus. While the US delegation worked inside the conference, others worked outside. Everybody was supposed to support a whaling demonstration. The UN official, Peter Stone went around and tried to convince NGOs and popular movements to participate in the unofficial action against whaling. Björn Eriksson from the Powwow group including some from the People’s Forum were the only ones that were not convinced. Björn Eriksson told Stone that whales are a good thing but that if any issue should be focused on in the streets, it was the ecocide in Vietnam. The UN street mobiliser turned to others in his efforts.¹²⁰

On the eve of the decision at UN on the whaling proposal put forward by the US, a special whale ceremony was held at Hog Farm in Skarpnäck. The two processes during the June weeks in Stockholm 1972 with the greatest distance from each other, in values and politics, the official conference and the Hog Farm, met

¹¹⁷ Interview with Ed Goldsmith, nov 1996.

¹¹⁸ Bulletin of Atomic Scientists Sep 1972, p 23.

¹¹⁹ Time Magazine, June 19, 1972

¹²⁰ Interview with Björn Eriksson nov 1996.

in unity for “The Celebrations for the Whale.” On Brand’s invitation¹²¹ even the Secretary-General of the UN Conference, Maurice Strong and US Former Interior Secretary Walter Hickel had come to address the audience. Peter Stone later recounted the event: “Strong gave an impromptu speech saying that he wasn’t always able to say everything that he would like to say and that he envied the kids their freedom. He said he’d rather be down there with them, a sentiment which, coming from a millionaire, might have been greeted with derision. Somehow the way he said it made it plain clear that he meant it, which I think he really did. He also welcomed their efforts to save the whales and said that the UN had to think of some better way of relating to the non-governmental organisations. The applause overloaded the microphone on my tape recorder”.¹²²

The next day, more than a hundred persons, mainly Hog Farmers but also the US UN delegate Russel Train with a “save the whales” poster in his hand, took part in a demonstration downtown Stockholm. They all walked together behind a truck camouflaged to look like a huge blue whale. The participation from local inhabitants was so small that the press wondered where the normally so “demonstration-willing” Stockholmers had disappeared to¹²³. The participation in this demonstration had come from the many international organisations that said they supported the issue.



Life Forum manifestation at Sergels torg

Towards the end of the UNCHE, the Hog Farm made a last attempt to influence the streets of Stockholm by organising a final demonstration they called “Celebration of Life.” “The peaceful demonstrators danced and sang, some with painted faces, some with brightly coloured costumes, some nude. Conference Secretary-General Maurice F. Strong was presented with a call for a 10 year moratorium on the killing of human beings. Strong said he sensed the love in the message. Commenting on the participation of all the outside groups, Strong said: “We must add a new dimension to the discourse between governments and peoples, engaging the best technological and managerial abilities of the entire world. The global environment has a global constituency. The community of the concerned is now no less than the world community”.¹²⁴ Dagens Nyheter, the biggest daily in Sweden was somewhat more reluctant.

¹²¹ Stone 1973.

¹²² Stone 1973, p 133. New York Times June 9, 1972, also emphasise the whaling ceremony and its character of reconciliation between generations organised by the Whole Earth Catalog and National Book Award winner Brand. “Strong urged the youths to continue grading the conscience of the world’s governments. Mr. Strong remarks reached across the generation gap and his audience, rich in beards, long hair and blue jeans gave him an ovation” the newspaper wrote.

¹²³ Norra Västerbotten, a regional Swedish newspaper, June 6, 1972, saying that almost all participants were from the US and at least half of them Hog farmers. More positive was New York Times which continues to report on whaling indicating sustained protests: “After two days of demonstrations” June 10 1972. A couple of days later, anti US ecocide demonstrations gathered 50 times as many participants. The newspaper did not report on this.

¹²⁴ Gendlin, 1972, p 29. In contrast a newspaper like Le Figaro in Paris only accounts for Anti-Vietnam war protests with the FNL-flag.

They illustrated the event with a picture where the public turned their backs on three naked persons and instead listened to what was said from a platform.¹²⁵ The US proposal for a whaling moratorium was agreed to by the UN conference with an overwhelming majority.

The press was filled with positive comments on the whaling decision.¹²⁶ Less positive was the British diplomat Brenton when he assessed the results: "There was a farcical debate about whales. The US delegation, largely to please the US press and NGOs, launched and had adopted (to cheers from the public gallery), a demand for a ten-year moratorium on whaling. Within a month, however, this proposal was quietly killed by the International Whaling Commission (the body which as everybody knew, was formally responsible for the regulation of whaling) with a number of countries reversing in private the support for the proposal they had given in front of TV cameras in Stockholm".^{127 128}

Drugs, the Hog Farm alternative and suspicious infiltration

The issue that seemed to draw most attention for media and still does, 50 years later, when discussing the Stockholm Conference in 1972, was the Hog Farm and the tent camp at Skarpnäck airfield. In addition to the US hippies at Hog Farm, the airfield also accommodated people who wanted to come and

participate in UNCHE, though the accommodations were just tents.

Lars Gogman at the Swedish Labour Movements Archives and Library organised an exhibition in 2008 about the activities at Skarpnäck back in 1972. He wanted to dispel the myth that had dominated the narrative afterwards, that "the CIA and US imperialism, together with the politicians, organised a tent camp in Skarpnäck so that the young people would do drugs, play and listen to music and not demonstrate."¹²⁹

His impression when making interviews with the people who were there gave another picture than a drug infested dishevelled camp. What role did the camp play, if any? How did it influence the UNCHE and the two Fora? He asked if the Swedish movements and the organisations simply had "failed to formulate an environmental policy" back in 1972, a policy that directed itself to real environmental issues and not only to anti-Vietnam war demonstrations. Perhaps the Hog Farm actually had a sound view on environmental issues, while several at the two Fora carried a too heavy 'communist inspired ballast' that simply made it impossible for the different groups to work together? The presence of Hog Farmers and people from the Life Forum obviously had a divisive role. The People's Forum turned its back on Hog Farm and Life Forum. However, it is well to remember that the two other Fora were also not

¹²⁵ Dagens Nyheter, (the largest Swedish daily). June 15, 1972.

¹²⁶ New York Times June 9, 1972, made a hopeful prediction: "If the resolution [on the US initiative for a 10 year whaling moratorium] is passed the International Whaling Commission which meets in London late this month will find it hard to ignore."

¹²⁷ Brenton 1994.

¹²⁸ It is however generally recognised that the debates and decisions taken by the UNCHE in Stockholm in 1972, inspired and prompted the decisions by the International Whaling Commission, the IWC, to adopt a moratorium on commercial whaling. In 1982 the IWC decided that there should be a pause in hunting of all whale species and their populations from the 1985/1986 season onwards. This pause is often referred to as the commercial whaling moratorium, and it remains in place today. <https://iwc.int/management-and-conservation/whaling/commercial>

¹²⁹ Gogman: *Hog farm satte alternativrörelsens verklighetsuppfattning i gungning*, Gogman: *Hog farms tältläger på Skarpnäck 1972*, video.

immune to strong disagreements, often because of obstinate positions by engaged participants who not always spoke on behalf of their organisations or constituencies. Large segments of NGOs at the Environment Forum also disagreed with the work of the Oi Committee and Dai Dong. Alternative City and Powwow also reserved their positions on many issues. Consensus efforts were often broken.

What caused the gravest concerns was the seemingly strong connections between Hog Farm and the official US state apparatus. This was seen in various ways: its connection to the Kaplan Fund¹³⁰, its close cooperation and support of the US position in the Whale manifestation and the consistent efforts to silence voices that were critical to the US Ecocide warfare in Vietnam. It was well known at the time, that CIA used various non-profit, humanitarian funds to channel its money to promote its activities and gain influence. The US government also used a variety of ways to undermine movements that were perceived as being negative to US interests. Peter Nilsson addresses this issue in his paper about Interrelations Between Intergovernmental Discourse Framing and Activist Influence at UNCHE.¹³¹ Nilsson points to an informal FBI policy described in a memo: "COINTELPRO's sole purpose was to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities" of protest groups and individual "key activists" that in their view, engaged

in activities that threatened the security of U.S. Government.¹³² This programme was exposed in 1971 and officially ended but some have maintained that it could have inspired similar US activities in Stockholm that influenced the situation inside the People's Forum. Nilsson further states that "It is not far-fetched to assume that the FBI informal policy became extended to New-Left activists engaged in the Vietnam War and the Stockholm conference in Sweden."



"Nixon's closest man secretly in Stockholm" Aftonbladet 1973, facsimile

The Skarpnäck camp had a role in what has been described as psychedelic culture or hippie culture.¹³³ Thus several popular music bands played at the camp.¹³⁴ Hard-liners at the People's Forum felt that this happening

130 CIA was during the 1960s and 1970s often scrutinized for its activities in dealing with organisations that propagated so-called un-American activities. CIA used organisations and philanthropic funds to channel their funds. The New York Times covered these stories, and covered a story back in the 1960s which involved the Kaplan Fund. <https://www.nytimes.com/1964/09/03/archives/kaplan-fund-cited-as-cia-conduit-lists-unexplained-395-000-grant.html>

131 Nilsson, *The UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm 1972 and the Interrelations between Intergovernmental Discourse Framing and Activist Influence*, 2019

132 FBI memo from Brennan to Sullivan 9 May 1968 quoted by Nilsson.

133 Aretakis: När CIA-hippier rökte på i Woodstockholm 1972. <https://www.dn.se/kultur/las-bokutdrag-nar-cia-hippier-rokte-pa-i-woodstockholm-1972>

134 Mats Eriksson Dunér, Jonas Stål, Håkan Agnsäter, Jakob Sjöholm: Träd, Gräs och Stenar, Pärson Sound, International Harvester – En kollektiv berättelse, 2021.

TION DEBATE ON FRIDAY, AMERICAN INDIAN NIGHT ON SUNDAY - WILL BE HIGH POINTS OF STOCKHOLM, 1972.

HOG FARM are a commune - a group of about 25 people who live and travel together. IT IS A SORT OF SHOW: BUT WITH NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN LIFE AND THE SHOW (Lou Todd). They started in California seven years ago. They have travelled all over the United States; they came to Europe three years ago and forty people went over land by coach to Nepal. They have been there, living their own way, making music, helping people to relax at a mental asylum, at schools, at the Woodstock Festival.

They are concerned about violence. WE ARE GOOD AT CROWD CONTROL - AT CREATING



The Skarpnäck camp and Hog Farm as described in ECO is politics, the daily newsletter made by the Environment Forum

had little to do with real politics. The People's Forum finally decided that the members of the participating organizations should not help or visit the camp. Thus, local teenagers from the neighbouring districts turned up instead. One of them was quoted in the Swedish daily Aftonbladet as saying: "These people's 'round' philosophy of life is fantastically beautiful. The ring, the Circle, is their symbol of life. They live in a circle. They dance in a ring, they embrace each other. They rejoice with each other and by closing in a circle they shut out aggression."

Lars Gogman tries to place the Skarpnäck issues in a wider context. From an outsider's

point of view, the Skarpnäck farm looked chaotic. Yet, he claims, it was run in a quite orderly fashion, with supervision as to safety and health issues. The New York Times in an article published on June 4, the day before the opening of the UNCHE wrote about the camp that: "Those who could not find space in hotels or student apartments are beginning to fill up a special tent compound set up by the city at Skarpnack, south of Stockholm, with 175 big army tents with cooking and sanitary facilities."¹³⁵ The Swedish Red Cross had volunteers at hand, and even though drug use flourished, it was also controlled. And above all, the camp was peaceful.

¹³⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/06/05/archives/environment-conference-will-offer-some-sideshow.html>

Hog Farm was a particular area of the Skarpnäck camp. However, people at Hog Farm did not feel obliged to run meetings according to established protocol. Everything was subjected to experimentation and new methods were tried out. These did not always work, and they created a clear distance to the more orderly processes at the two Fora. One theme seemed to have stood out – a focussed interest in ecology which did not find its way into too many of the discussions at the two Fora according to New York Times. Gogman concludes his assessment: “Research may even land on the fact that it was the Hog farm and the Life Forum that stood for the new and imaginative. You have to do it yourself and take a personal stand on environmental issues as on other issues.”¹³⁶

His analysis see a combination of communist influence combined with strict anti-drug movements as the cause for the strong reaction from the People's Forum against Hog farm. This also marginalized those interested in ecology. His conclusions from this conflict of style, process and content is rather interesting as he claims that the participants at the Peoples Forum were not interested in ecology: “It (the People's Forum) had to do with politics and not the environment”.¹³⁷

Several have tried to analyse the policy of influence and infiltration during the Stockholm conference and views differ. Influencing the outcome of a conference is legitimate. How this is done may be subject to discussions. The time of the Stockholm conference was the time of the cold war. Environmental issues were seen as something new and very different. Business was suspicious and worked hard to soften or delete all efforts to regulate in favour of a clean environment. The Brussels Group of Nations

worked hard to reduce the impact of UNCHE. The US may have put the McCarthy era with the Red Scare and rife anti-communist allegations behind itself, but its methodology had not disappeared.

There are a number of indications that can be used to illustrate how the US state apparatus tried to influence the Stockholm conference. John Ehrlichman¹³⁸, was present in Stockholm in June 1972. He was also White House Counsel and Assistant to President Nixon on Domestic Affairs. Ehrlichman was also key person in creating the group for covert operations which led to the Watergate scandal for which Erlichman was convicted and sentenced to jail. The Watergate break-in and scandal became public on June 17, 1972, only days after UNCHE had closed.

Huge sums that originated in the CIA and channelled through humanitarian funds were invested in an information centre at the People's Forum. The centre could register all contacts made at the forum, something which caused suspicion. Added to these activities were the political messages from Stewart Brand and Hog Farm and their relation to the use of drugs.

During the days of the preparatory process as well as during the Stockholm conference, we had our eyes on a particular person named Richard Fishkin. He had been a member of the Powwow group in the preparatory process, but he recorded all meetings of this this unsuspecting group. He also tried instigate 'radical action' against individual officials to split the group into factions. After a while, he disappeared from the group only to turn up later during the UN conference. Now he wore completely different clothes making a totally differ-

¹³⁶ Gogman: *Hog farm satte alternativrörelsens verklighetsuppfattning i gungning* 2015

¹³⁷ Wåg. Mathias and Gogman, Lars, *Hog Farm och den andra alternativrörelsen*, 2022

¹³⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Ehrlichman



“**Richard Fishkin**”, to the left as Powwow activist in 1971 during the Gärdet festival, to the right during the UN conference; above together with **Stewart Brand**, below in the midst of the confrontations with the police and to the right together with the official US delegation © Björn Gustafsson

ent appearance. He no longer dressed as a hippie but as a journalist representing a magazine for which he never wrote an article. In addition he was also always at the forefront of the most radical direct actions organized by a few hundred Anarchists directing their efforts and energy against the UN conference.¹³⁹

The general naivete of the Powwow group did cause concerns both inside the group and among others. The fear of infiltration might be a stronger reason for what happened among the different groups working at the Environment Forum and the People's Forum, than the claim made by Gogman that communists and drug radicals together stopped the People's Forum from developing an environmental programme and integrate Hog Farm.

The establishment of an independent, critical environmental movement and its issues

Still, the People's Forum did discuss the environment in several contexts. The activities at this Forum did in many ways, also become the starting point for the collective efforts to start an anti-nuclear movement that soon became the biggest mass movement in Sweden. The same happened in many other countries.¹⁴⁰ The issue was twofold – one was the fight against nuclear armaments, the other was looking at the nuclear issue as a future energy supplier. The People's Forum organised several working groups, one of them with students at the technical university in Stockholm addressing energy issues. This group produced material which

¹³⁹ At the website <https://stockholmplus50.se/1972-2/> at the bottom of the page, Richard Fishkin is shown in his different appearances first at a macrobiotic restaurant when he tried to impress environmental activists, then during the conference in new type of clothes and trimmed beard.

¹⁴⁰ Are there alternatives to increase in energy production? is one of the questions in the program addressing energy and environment with Hannes Alfvén, Barry Commoner, James McKinzie, Dean Abrahamson, and Taghi Farvar as speakers. The program at Folkets forums: <http://folkrorelser.org/Stockholm1972/folketsforum.html>



Anti-drug activists were the main protagonists opposing Hog farm. Here is one selling their paper DROG during the demonstration against ecocide outside the conference venue at Sergels torg.



Barry Commoner to the left and **Dean Abrahamsson** in the middle, two prominent critics of nuclear power at People's Forum.

the following year was popularized and then integrated in the work of the Powwow group that turned itself into an anti-nuclear energy group.¹⁴¹ The same happened with Alternativ Stad which established an energy group which published the leaflet "Lågenergisamhälle men hur?" – in translation – "a low energy society, but how?" Some of the young theosophists in the Powwow group who lived in a collective they called "Villa Globalist" became key in establishing the first broad network against nuclear power in Sweden.¹⁴² All results of the UNCHE.

safeguard the environment. Their work also inspired a broad anti-nuclear power and energy movement. Criticising the environmental destruction as a method in warfare played a central role for the Christian Peace movement IFOR that assisted with the Dai Dong Conference. Even if the Dai Dong was dissolved in 1976, through its Menton Statement with its support from more than 2000 scientists, and its own work, it had a lasting influence and effect on the environmental movements all over Europe in the 1970s. In Denmark the start of

As described earlier, the Dai Dong conference showed the clear connection between criticising the ecocide in Vietnam and global work to

the Organisationen til Oplysning om Atomkraft (Organisation on Nuclear Information, OOA), which became a leader for the anti-nuclear

¹⁴¹ Björn Eriksson, *Det var så det började* in Eriksson et al p22.

¹⁴² Ibid, 1982, p26



Dai Dong conference in the ABF house.

movement globally was directly inspired by IFOR and what happened at Stockholm 1972.

These mass movements grew out of the concerns of Young Christians for Peace and the fight against global inequality. They singled out growing energy consumption and the plans for nuclear energy as particularly problematic developments. They voiced their concerns about what they considered problematic aspects of nuclear power. They highlighted radiation and other negative consequences of using nuclear fission for the environment, but also its consequences for global peace and global inequality, and for subsequent generations – in terms of waste and the exploitation of natural

resources. Against the backdrop of such discussions, they decided to campaign against the use of nuclear energy, which they considered the most “concrete” expression for their concerns about the pursuit of unlimited growth, which ignored consequences for the environment and humanity.¹⁴³

It seems reasonable to posit that it was the People’s Forum that gave birth to an independent environmental movement. For instance, the Energy group of the People’s Forum inspired the emerging anti-nuclear energy movement and the struggle to develop a low energy society. The Energy group of the People’s Forum back in 1972 published its

¹⁴³ Denmark - Short Country Report 18 March 2019, History of Nuclear Energy and Society. https://www.honest2020.eu/sites/default/files/deliverables_24/DK.pdf



The Danish environmental group NOAH played a central role at the alternative activities in Stockholm 1972. They came with a fishing boat along the coast testing pollution of the Baltic Sea on their way.

criticism of fossil dependency and oil empire this way in the Swedish magazine *Kommentar* in 1972:

“The carbon that has been withheld from the biosphere for millions of years is now very rapidly being added to the ecological cycle. An increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide also reduces the amount of heat radiated from the Earth, resulting in higher average temperatures ... the world's climate is getting warmer because of the “greenhouse effect” caused by excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere ... Major and unpredictable disruptions to the environment in 2030.”

The People's Forum also cooperated to bring anti-pollution activism to the centre of attention. In a lively description about the way

Japanese activists interfered in the UNCHE debates, Simon Avenell describes how the Dai Dong group, in cooperation with the People's Forum, organized a “Japan Night” attended by the press and around five hundred people. “During the evening filmmaker Tsuchimoto Noriaki screened his confronting documentary, “Minamata: The Victims and Their World”, which was rescreened by popular demand some days later. The newspaper *Asahi Shinbun* reported how the audience cried and shouted loudly during scenes of Minamata, and victims and activists directly confronted executives of the Chisso Corporation” and how “Japanese pollution has become a ‘dining room’ topic for Swedish people.”¹⁴⁴

Another important issue addressed at the People's Forum, was working conditions in in-

¹⁴⁴ Matsui Yayori, “Hisansa ni Ikinomu. Kiroku Eiga ‘Minamata’ o Jōei. Jinmin Hiroba de ‘Nihon no Yūbe,’” *Asahi Shinbun* (June 6, 1972): 8 and Matsui Yayori, “Kaimaku Semaru Kokuren Ningen Kankyō Kaigi. Kakkizuku Sutokkuhorumu. ‘Kōgai Nippon’ ni Kanshin. Oshiyoseru Hōdō Kankeisha,” *Asahi Shinbun* (evening edition, June 3, 1972): 8.

dustries and companies everywhere. Also, here collective efforts to focus on social conditions at work continued after the UNCHE was over. A working group was established that published study material about working conditions. The claim that the People's Forum only addressed environmental issues is far from correct. Including dealing with social issues, it also criticised experimentation with new technology and authoritarian rule. In the programme titled "Towards a people's technology" the group criticised "today's polluting, resource-depleting, inhumane technology". It was stated that markets and central bureaucracies that control production and distribution have both worked badly. The question was asked "Is local production for local use an alternative?"¹⁴⁵

Ecocide

In his first speech at the conference, Olof Palme, the late Prime Minister of Sweden and official host to UNCHE, brought up the US warfare in Indochina. "The immense destruction brought about by indiscriminate bombing, by large-scale use of bulldozers and herbicides is an outrage sometimes described as ecocide, which require international attention ... It is of paramount importance .. that ecological warfare cease immediately".¹⁴⁶ Russell Train, the US delegation leader was pushed by his State department at home to protest. He said: "The United States strongly objects to what it considers a gratuitous politicising of our environmental discussions ... The U.S. takes strong

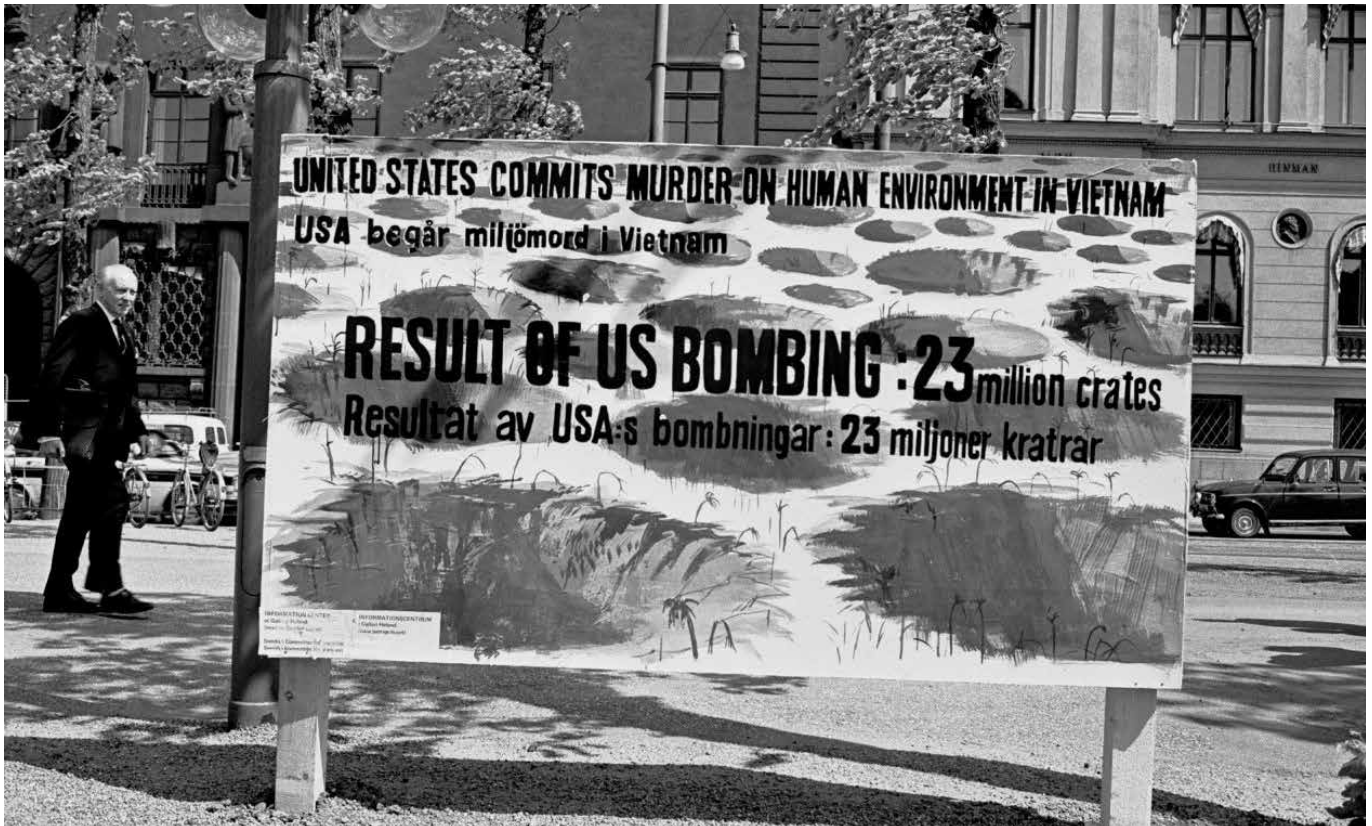
exceptions to these remarks, as Sweden is serving as the host government".¹⁴⁷ The ecocide in Vietnam continued to be a controversial issue all through the conference.¹⁴⁸ Not only Palme but also the only other Head of State at the conference, Indira Gandhi from India, including the head of the Chinese delegation, Tang Ke, as well as delegates from Iceland, Tanzania, Rumania, Algeria and Libya denounced the Vietnam war on human and environmental terms. Almost every popular movement and group of NGOs addressed the issue, that is except the Hog Farmers. A demonstration with 7.000 participants was held against ecocide. Mass media coverage was a lot weaker than what the whaling demonstration had managed to get despite a much lower number of participants demonstrating for the whales. Swedish popular movement umbrella organisations with the Social Democratic Party organised a hearing on ecocide with experts. The effects on nature and human health due to the mass-scale US techniques for destroying large parts of the Vietnamese forests were discussed. Dai Dong sponsored a "convention on ecocidal war" bringing many scientists to Stockholm to prove the disastrous effects of the US intentional ecological warfare in Vietnam. The "transnational peace effort" initiated by IFOR through Dai Dong called for "peace in Vietnam", a demand that actually caused a split. Both American experts and the Swedish Vietnam movement refused to cooperate with people who didn't recognise USA as the aggressor and the Vietnamese as defenders. But in the end the strong criticism against

145 Program Folkets forum: <http://folkrorelser.org/Stockholm1972/folketsforum.html>

146 Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, September 1972.

147 New York Times June 8 1972, quoting Train.

148 Also in 2022 Ecocide became a central issue. Although this time in a different way. In 1972 it was a way to stop an ongoing environmental destruction as part of Western warfare against a third world country. This time it was part of a campaign to include ecocide in international law.



Outdoor propaganda during the conference aimed at ecocide in Vietnam.

US ecocidal warfare prevailed. The lack of support for the Vietnamese Liberation front FNL went fairly unnoticed.¹⁴⁹

At the People's Forum and at the Environment Forum criticism of the ecocide and war in Vietnam was a recurring theme. Allen Nadler from Scientists Institute for Public Information, SIPI, got enthusiastic responses at Konstfack (The Art Academy, another venue for events) when he argued that "The prime export of my country (the US) is murder".¹⁵⁰ Inviting the more prominent SIPI scientists and other US scientists to speak up was not always as easy. The height of the ecocide discussion came when the Vietnam war was on the

formal agenda of the Environment Forum and William D. Ruckelshaus, the Environment Protection Agency Administrator, and delegate from the official US delegation was invited to discuss ecocide. The atmosphere in the room was tense. Ruckelshaus announced to the press that he sensed lynching.¹⁵¹ There was also some hesitation among many of the participating NGOs at the Environment Forum to take a public stand against the Vietnam war. But the organiser of the ecocide discussion, Mr. Wettergren, convinced Barry Commoner that he had to "pay" for the liberal use he had made of the Forum, and speak up.¹⁵² With the support of the anthropologist Margaret Mead as a leader at the Environment Forum, also

¹⁴⁹ Rowlands 1973

¹⁵⁰ Gendlin 1972, p 28.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p 28

¹⁵² Interview with Elisabet Vikund (former Wettergren) Nov 1996.

convincing Commoner and other hesitant prominent Americans, the stage was set.¹⁵³ The overcrowded meeting with mainly young people in the audience, was “aggressively critical”.¹⁵⁴ But Ruckelshaus cleverly avoided a total confrontation. On the question “Are you going to tell the President (Richard Nixon) that everyone at the conference and everyone you met demanded United States withdrawal from Vietnam” he answered: “I shall tell him that I was invited to a very interesting meeting where there were a lot of people who seemed to regard the issue of war and environment as one and the same”.

Margaret Mead was also the speaker for the NGOs at the official UNCHE conference. With Barbara Ward, she reported back daily from the Environment Forum. Here she presented the joint NGO statement where the problems with ecological warfare was addressed and stated that war as such was in every context seen as the greatest threat to humanity and the environment.¹⁵⁵ But when Mead and others spoke at the Environment Forum, they were more guarded in their criticism against the US ecocidal warfare in Vietnam. When finally, the representative from the Boy Scouts International Bureau, the World Association of Girl Guides and 9 other international youth non-governmental organisations in their statement to the official conference called for an end to “the deliberate destruction of the environment by warfare” it was clear that the criticism had broad based support. The youth groups stated that “The United States Government disgraceful war of ecocide in Indochina and similar wars in other parts of the world should have been dealt with by this conference”.¹⁵⁶ The criticism was

overwhelming from all corners and the message clear although no decision at the official conference was made. There were attempts by several third world countries to include weapons of mass destruction to be addressed including biological and chemical weapons in addition to nuclear weapons. The US however opposed anything but the general term weapons of mass destruction.

Third world influence

The Stockholm 1972 conference was an historical event for several reasons. The fact that the so-called third world countries were represented in great number, was a first. The Soviet bloc boycotted the conference, but it had participated in the preparations. For the first time the People's Republic of China was also present at an international UN summit. They claimed, however, that they had not had time to prepare properly for the conference papers. Björn-Ola Linnér and Henrik Selin, two Swedish researchers, described the general world view at the time: “The globalization discourse until the Stockholm conference was a Euro-American defined common destiny, there was a paradigmatic conception assuming that all nations of the world were perceived to be moving along the same track, sharing the same goal and of the early intended destiny.”¹⁵⁷

They continue their assessment: “The conference had at the beginning identified an ambition to consider ... the need for a common outlook and for common principles to inspire and

¹⁵³ Environmental Forum program report, Wettergren 1972.

¹⁵⁴ According to Gendlin 1972, others do not account for this debate and it seems like no offence against free speech is made except for “heckling” and the problem that the floor when lining up behind the microphones is so critical.

¹⁵⁵ aaronson 1972, p 12.

¹⁵⁶ New York Times, 13.6, 1972.

¹⁵⁷ Björn-Ola Linnér, Henrik Selin *The Global Quest for Sustainability: Accomplishments and Failures of the 1972 UN Conference on Human Environment* p.4

guide the peoples of the world..."¹⁵⁸ This idea implied that the world's nations shared the same defined historical goals. "It also reveals the ambition to establish a new discourse that describes a common understanding in defining environmental problems as global ... A unitary and undifferentiated global 'we' was defined for humankind, ignoring the fact that different groups and peoples could have diverse interests in defining policy's regarding natural resources."¹⁵⁹ Perhaps this defining of global common principles created a specific discourse that still prevails as a dominating discourse supporting a globalizing trend, the latter which also has its opponents.

Another writer, Lars-Göran Engfeldt, who also played a key role in planning the UNCHE as a young representative of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and part of the Swedish UNCHE secretariat, addressed the North and South tension this way: "The driving in-country group, Canada, the Netherlands, the United States and Sweden as the leading player, prioritised global environmental issues of common interest to all countries. Types of pollution were of particular interest. At the same time, the countries in the core group were aware that developing countries had their own specific problems that needed to be solved and spoke in general noncommittal terms about knowledge transfer and technical assistance. Perhaps the developing countries could avoid the costly mistakes of the developed countries in their own economic and social development. The self-interest of the developing countries was at the centre, with the underlying premise

that no real changes in the international economic system were required. The latter was a very weak point. Due to political and structural constraints, there was no orientation towards any change in their own unsustainable resource-consuming economic model. This fundamental constraint exacerbated the sustainability crisis over the coming decades and fuelled the destructive North-South locks."¹⁶⁰

Engfeldt also described the obstacles the global South faced as their opponents worked in what may be termed diplomatic secrecy, a legacy from the Second World War, and carried into the Cold War.:

"The UK led a secret group of Western i-countries (industrialised) (called the Brussels Group) prior to the Stockholm Conference that aimed to weaken the clout of the future UN body UNEP and to actively divert political attention from i-country responsibilities at the national level. The Group's actions had a strong impact right up to the preparations for the 1992 Rio Conference, when the UK began to soften its stance. Its existence became known in 2002."¹⁶¹ On the other hand the conference opened new avenues for cooperation that challenged the clandestine contacts between rich industrialised countries, "the Stockholm Conference demonstrated how global cooperation could take place, even amid Cold War tensions" says Engfeldt.¹⁶²

The future for third world countries was claimed to be significant both by the official organizers and by the social movements and networks.

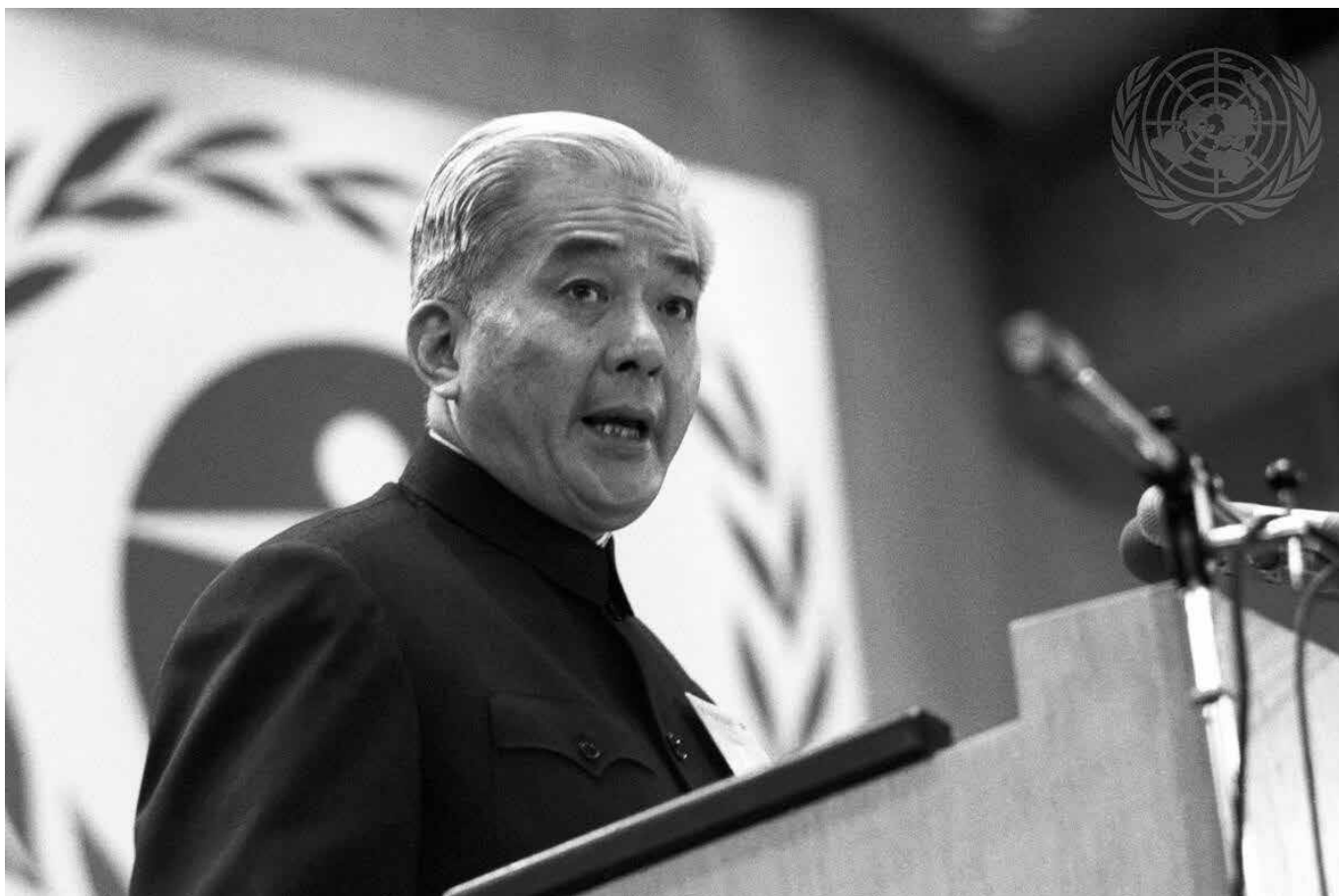
¹⁵⁸ Björn-Ola Linnér, Henrik Selin *The Global Quest for Sustainability: Accomplishments and Failures of the 1972 UN Conference on Human Environment* p. 4-5

¹⁵⁹ Björn-Ola Linnér, Henrik Selin *The Global Quest for Sustainability: Accomplishments and Failures of the 1972 UN Conference on Human Environment* p. 5

¹⁶⁰ Lars-Göran Engfeldt, *Från Stockholm till Parisavtalet*, 2020

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Engfeldt, 2009, pp31-32



Tang Ke, chairman of China's delegation, delivering a speech at the conference © UN

There were, however, formidable challenges. One had to consider environmental perspectives from the third world countries – which was also a first. These issues had been given a new context by the Founex declaration, but as with all novel ways of thinking about new issues in new ways, representatives from third world countries were suspicious and expressed dissatisfaction with what was still perceived as the dominant environmental paradigm – defined by the rich North. Activists engaged in the Stockholm conference also criticised, what they identified as the industrial world's exploitation and control of third world countries.

China entered the scene as a chief opponent to USA. At their first appearance after becoming a member of the UN, they wanted the carefully prepared draft reopened for discussion, since they had not been able to participate in the preparatory negotiations. A diplo-

matic war started which continued all through the conference. While the US and France, including a few others were not interested in a declaration with legal precepts, and thus not especially interested in a declaration consisting of more than a preamble, smaller industrial nations and the developing world wanted a declaration. The Chinese leaked through the ECO newspaper, that what they wanted was a full discussion of their proposals but not necessarily demanding that everything be included as formal statements. What they specifically wanted to oppose, was blaming human beings in general and population growth in particular for causing environmental destruction. For this they also found wide-spread support.

Especially the African delegations supported much of the Chinese proposals. Together they claimed that the causes of environmental destruction should be mentioned, and all forms

of oppression condemned. The Chinese talked about the authoritarian structure behind the production systems in capitalist countries where each owner of a company produced only to make a profit to benefit the owner and not the country. The way the super-powers¹⁶³ used exploitation, aggression and war further deteriorated the environment, they said. The Africans focussed on apartheid and foreign dominance as additional causes for environmental destruction in the third world. The prepared declaration text did not include any of this background. An assessment of the declaration commissioned by the Powwow group, stated: "it gave the impression that the Earth had been hit by a series of mishaps"¹⁶⁴. It called for "the assumption of responsibility by citizens and by societies and by companies and institutions at all levels in equal cooperation." The chapter in the Powwow text offered a detailed analysis of the negotiations. The way ECO influenced the negotiation is also described. Initially ECO welcomed the Chinese proposal¹⁶⁵ to reopen the final texts. Later however by using its unique position as the only paper which had access to leaked material from the negotiations, ECO was used to put pressure on China and their allies in the third world.

Other commentators were less critical of the conference and its outcome. They claimed that delegations and organisations found that



Stockholm Conference ECO June 14 1972

behind the Chinese ideological glossary, the Chinese wanted to strengthen the same legal principles as those that were proposed. Finally, the declaration could be agreed to after negotiations had lasted until 5.00 AM before the last day's plenary¹⁶⁶. Rowlands notes that the US had hoped for less substantive actions and legal principles promoted in the declaration. "If it can be said that international law is habitually developed by weaker nations to protect their

¹⁶³ In 1972, these were the US, the Soviet Union, France and the United Kingdom

¹⁶⁴ From an unpublished manuscript of a book planned by the Powwow group but no publisher was interested. The quote comes from the chapter 5, Spelet om deklARATIONEN written by Björn Eriksson. The discussion in the declaration group was not open to the media. But members of the Powwow group found the working papers in the garbage after the conference and analysed the material. The manuscript has been digitalized by the Network Stockholm+50 as part of a new People's Forum: <https://stockholm-plus50.se/manus>

¹⁶⁵ With "a factual tone, maybe somewhat positive". This analysis of the documents from the negotiations comes to the conclusion that "There is no difference in tone between the opening speech by the head of the Chinese delegation and the formal amendments. The only difference is that the comments were placed as amendments or additions to the text of the declaration. "Spelet om deklARATIONEN". Unpublished Powwow manuscript.

¹⁶⁶ Stone 1973.

interests from the stronger nations (who can look after themselves), Stockholm was proving to be no exception to the rule.”¹⁶⁷ The strong Chinese ideological position for the interest of the developing countries was also part of a general trend of developing countries trying to position pollution in a bigger context.

The Powwow text summarized the end result: China had included several of its proposals focussing on ‘people’ as important: “Development is created by people’s work - not by capital or other assets.” But causes of environmental problems were not included by the Chinese. The African states had managed to include the issues of apartheid and colonialism. However, their proposed formulation that these phenomena also threatened the environment, was deleted. The industrialised countries, led by the United States, were very keen that not a word about the economic causes of environmental problems should be included. On several occasions when such issues were raised, country delegates from the industrialised countries said, “we have come here to discuss the environment - not politics”.

The compromise text on the cause for environmental destruction and problems reads as follows: “Para 4 - In developing countries, most environmental problems are caused by underdevelopment. Millions continue to live far below the minimum levels required for a normal human life, ... In industrialising countries, environmental problems are generally related to industrialisation and technological development.” The text was adopted. India’s and China’s original proposals are quite interesting. The two countries consistently refer to the environmental problems of the developing

countries and the similar problems of the developed countries. But in their draft proposals, there is first an analysis of market forces and private profit as the driving force behind the environmental problems. This was deleted.

Many see the initiative by Maurice Strong to include “environment and development” as essential. A strategic understanding that rightly has been praised by many. As former head of CIDA, the Canadian International Development Agency, development issues were part of his background. Recognizing the issue of development was also imperative. The ‘environment-development nexus’ was also, as stated earlier, one of the key points in the Founex Declaration. Had this not been included, the risk had been that the lack of interest many developing nations showed towards the environmental issues, could end in a conference with many of them not participating. Strong’s diplomacy had played out well in the series of regional pre-conference meetings including his own visits to several dozens of governments he had initiated during 1971, beginning with the Founex meeting, a small place in Switzerland.¹⁶⁸

Indira Gandhi, India’s Prime Minister was the only other Head of Government at the conference, apart from the Prime Minister of Sweden, the late Olof Palme. She saw hunger, disease and poverty as the main environmental problems in her country as well as other developing countries. Many observers have concluded that she managed to widen the environmental perspective from the narrow-minded pollution oriented focus which until then had dominated the environmental discourse and which was propagated by the industrialised countries including their organisations.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Rowlands 1973, p. 100.

¹⁶⁸ Founex Conference, *The Founex Report on Environment and Development*. 1972.

¹⁶⁹ Aaronson 1972, Rowlands 1973, McCormick 1989, Williams 1993.



Indira Gandhi speaking at the conference © UN

How different actors were influenced

For non-governmental organizations, Stockholm 1972 became an innovative experimental field. The governments themselves and the UNCHE secretariat initiated many new avenues for NGOs that wanted to influence the official process. NGOs had actually been invited beforehand to take part in writing national reports or join national delegations or to participate in the semi-official Environment Forum. People's organizations on their side had taken initiatives to establish the People's Forum and Friends of the Earth and The Ecologist published daily conference newspapers.¹⁷⁰

After an initiative by Margaret Mead, the well-known and respected American cultural anthropologist and Barbara Ward, the British economist and early practitioner of sustainable development and with the support of Maurice Strong, daily reporting between the official conference and the NGO Forum was established. As such, the main points from each of the parallel meetings were reported to others. In addition, the forum daily papers were distributed to all official delegates, a degree of interaction that has been used intermittently at later environment conferences as well.

¹⁷⁰ Forum Environment is politics, No 2 June 6 1972: <http://folkrorelser.org/Stockholm1972/dokument/forum-min.pdf>

As always, NGOs were in the corridors lobbying, often with “the help of” the presence of international media including the pressure from the many activities going on outside of the official conference. Unfortunately, the NGOs often showed little interest in collaborating on common statements, and Mead and Ward had to push the NGOs together at coffee and lunch tables to make joint statements.¹⁷¹ *“The atmosphere of the building where the Forum was held was charged with excitement and controversy. At some sessions, more than 700 people jammed into the space of 500, filling the balcony, flowing out into the corridors which were already crowded by exhibits.”*¹⁷²

Several observers were critical of how the Swedish organizers were allowed control over the Environment Forum. They intimated that control had come into the hands of a “pseudo-leftist elite” master-minded by Barry Commoner.¹⁷³ It was as if the only valid explanation to the change in favour of more third world perspectives could only be the result of outside pressure from an American leftist. It did not seem to occur to these critics that new ideas and expressions of politics emanated from the knowledge, understanding and solidarity of Swedish organizations or global organizations such as those from the Hamilton conference.¹⁷⁴ Still, even after the invitation of more

third world participants, American and British ideas dominated. 68 out of a total of 149 panelists and chairs were American or British with the majority from the US. The Africans present however challenged this dominance and doubled their presence among the panellists during the forum on the population and liberation themes.

The organisers had developed a democratic way of running the Environment Forum making sure that every group was heard and given space and every concern and issue were discussed. The big and well established NGOs felt that their concerns were not given enough attention and were pushing hard to have their normal privileges honoured. These organisations also used every occasion to promote their views, through papers, posters and books. The Swedish organizers felt pushed by such behaviour, which in most cases came from the Americans. That the planning for the Forum was late was not made any secret. Still the Swedish organizers with Margaret Mead and Barbara Ward managed through daily meetings to maintain decorum.

A closer look at the programme also reveals that the Forum was run on a platform of transparency and participation. The main emphasis was on issues that were eventually well-

171 For the most comprehensive description of the Environmental Forum see Aaranson 1972. For the planned and actual program see: <http://folkrorelser.org/Stockholm1972/miljoforum.html>

172 Gendlin 1972, p. 28.

173 Stone 1973, Rowlands 1973, Ehrlich 1972, Gendlin 1972 all quote ECO and their criticism against the Environment Forum for being captured by Commoner and ‘third worlders’. Rowlands talks about a leadership crisis among the Swedish organizers. The exception among Anglo-American observers is Aaranson. The dominant Anglo-American criticism till today survives in the literature, Brenton 1994, p. 43: “This mass of bodies [NGOs] pursued a debate in their own forum, which displayed an energy and enthusiasm often depressingly absent from the formal negotiations, but also taking on a heavily new left and ‘third worldist flavour’”.

174 Simon Avenell adds Japanese intervention as one further actor explicitly siding with the radical critique in *The Human Limits to Growth: Japanese Activists at UNCHE*: “... Commoner’s neo-Marxist, postcolonial environmental agenda contrasted starkly with the neo-Malthusian approach of those like Paul Ehrlich. Moreover, it resonated with other emancipatory environmentalisms emerging from the developing world and among antipollution campaigners like those from Japan.” in *Transnational Japan in the global environmental movement* / Simon Avenell. Honolulu : University of Hawai’i Press, 2017.



Barry Commoner speaking at a panel during Environment Forum.

defined environmental themes. Even the most politically controversial issues were discussed. The UNCHE was a first and issues relating to the environment were new.

It was obvious to many that in addition to the new issues on the agenda, there was also a clash of organisational cultures. The Swedish and Canadian governance systems were tolerant and allowed for conflicts to be discussed and different political views brought forward in open debates. Criticism levelled at governments, or at the UN or the business community was absolutely accepted, even encouraged. It was obvious that many were uncomfortable with such approaches. Authoritarian governments and organisations alike did not like what they experienced. Suspicions about ma-

nipulation grew and accusations were made. The more conservative groups, including people from business, accused the Swedish organisers to be dominated by leftist infiltrators. This idea was propagated by US based interests. Several others, including government people from the third world seemed to support these assertions. The strong and continued anti-Vietnam war demonstrations and the Dai Dong critical scientific approach seemed to further corroborate the accusations.

Inger Segerstedt-Wiberg¹⁷⁵, was one of the chief responsible persons from Sweden for the Environment Forum were often targeted and accused of left wing sympathies. As all the organisers were friendly to Barry Commoner, this seemed to have added insult to injury, especial-

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Ingrid Segerstedt-Wiberg 1997. Segerstedt-Wiberg was the daughter of a well-known anti-Nazi journalist, Torgny Segerstedt, and used to hard political conflicts all through her life. She started hiding refugees in the 1930s and when 85 she received a letter bomb from Nazis. In the conversation she stated that the task she was given in 1972 was the hardest she ever had in her whole life. She also stated that none ever since then had asked her about what took place at Stockholm 1972.

ly in the eyes of the Americans. The accusations against the Swedish organizers for being dominated by a pseudo-leftist take-over motivated some to demand an investigation.

In spite of these tensions the work at the two Fora proceeded. The programme and participation were such that it also by today's standard were surprisingly comprehensive, relevant, constructive and inclusive. And concerning issues, the discussions were often innovative.

As earlier noted, interest in environmental issues had exploded in the US in the 1960s and 1970s. This had also given birth to a number of environment organisations which by 1972 had become professional lobby and advocacy organisations. These had broad-based membership and solid knowledge of environmental issues and were relatively well resourced. It seemed that in Stockholm this US based approach tried to transform itself into a more coherent global ideology. It was however clear to many that was relevant to the US, was not necessarily relevant to countries in Africa. John McCormick in his assessment of the Stockholm conference reflects on this in his book *Reclaiming Paradise: The Global Environmental Movement*: "It [the UN conference] also marked a transition: from the emotional and occasionally naive New Environmentalism of the 1960s to the more rational, political, and global perspectives of the 1970s. Above all, it brought the debate between LDCs and MDCs - with their differing perceptions of environmental priorities - into open forum and caused a fundamental shift in the direction of global environmentalism."¹⁷⁶

This is actually more of a description of the change in how the US based organisations such as IIEA and Friends of the Earth, FOE,

came to view environmental issues rather than a description of the transformation of the global environmental movement. Friends of the Earth became the strongest international democratic popular movement organization after Stockholm. It also became increasingly more socially oriented as third world members joined. Today Friends of the Earth International have very similar positions as the third world delegates in the Oi Committee had in 1972.

The US media seemed uneasy of the conference and wrote that: "It will provide a conspicuous soapbox for demonstrators against the US role in Vietnam." For the joint Swedish and American anti-Vietnam war movement, the UN conference was a success. The FNL movement had strong influence at the two fora, the People's Forum and the Environment Forum. The many years of polarized relations with the Swedish Vietnam Committee ended with the joint mass demonstration one month before the UN conference and the many actions in cooperation taken during the conference. The critical voices against ecocide in Vietnam were welcomed everywhere except at the Hog Farm headquarters at Skarpnäck. Demonstrations, a special Swedish hearing on ecocidal warfare, interventions by NGOs and governments in the official proceedings and the Dai Dong effort jointly created a strong effect.

During the two weeks, leftist inspired groups would gradually increase its domination of the People's Forum. A polarized position was strengthened all through the conference by the interaction with Hog Farm. The political disloyalty towards the environmental positions espoused by the third world by many on the political left at the People's Forum was shown by their lack of interest in the Hamilton documents. Instead of systematically linking

¹⁷⁶ McCormick, 1989, p. 88. LDC and MDC used here are abbreviations for Less Developed Countries and More Developed Countries or third world countries and industrialized countries.

and building on the message that hitherto had defeated the mainstream focus on population and apolitical environmentalism, the People's Forum changed itself into a debating forum focussing narrowly on how capitalism was the main source for the problems in the world. Their disinterest in supporting the political momentum from Hamilton and lack of interest in contributing to building a third world oriented independent environmental movement delayed such a development for NGOs by years. The youth theosophists' attempt to get the third world perspective into the global environmental discourse also came to an end after UNCHE was over. The discussions about how to continue the Oi Committee became coloured by extensive demands for representation from different regions and sub-regions while there were no resources to support such initiatives and it all ended without building a third world dominated organisation. The Oi Committee manifesto that was developed, written edited and agreed to during the 12 days at Stockholm was distributed and then lost in the chaos and exhaustion that dominated the final days of the conference.¹⁷⁷ Jan Fjellander, one of the Swedish organisers, was stamped by left activists as a traitor to the Vietnamese and portrayed as being a tool in the hands of Maurice Strong.

What became an issue at Stockholm in spite of its low priority on the agenda, was energy. All non-state actors at Stockholm that had made early attempts to influence the UN conference, made energy their next focus on their environmental agenda - the youth theosophists, the Powwow group, the left-wing environmentalists in Sweden, Friends of the Earth, ECO and the Aspen Institute. Energy also became the

most controversial environmental issue during the coming decades in the industrialized countries. Furthermore, the activities at Stockholm radicalized the environmental movement on the energy issue. The peace movement was present with their long time experience of struggle against nuclear interests. They together with New Zealand raised the issue of nuclear bomb tests in the Pacific with some success. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, WILPF, also opposed nuclear energy before most environmental organizations had discovered the issue. WILPF made an exhibition in June 1972 showcasing the dangers of nuclear energy.



One of the main actors became Friends of the Earth. In 1971 one of the founding meeting of friends of the Earty International was held in Nacka in Roslagen. Already then, energy was of primary importance for the organisation. It became even more important, after the UNCHE had reduced the issue of population as a cause for environmental problems. Facsimile provided by Lennart Daleus.

¹⁷⁷ None of the organizers saw the third world manifesto made by the Oi Committee again until it was found by the author of this text 33 years later. It was handed over in a ceremony by Friends of the Earth Chairman in Sweden, Göran Folin, and Oi Committee activist Jan Fjellander to Friends of the Earth International Chairperson Meena Rahman in October 2005. For the full text, see <http://www.folkrorelser.org/rorelsemapp/dokument/oicommittee.html>

One important result from the Stockholm Conference at the governmental level was the growth of national environmental ministries¹⁷⁸. Inspired by the conference, countries began to establish such ministries and by 1985 more than 140 countries had environmental ministries.¹⁷⁹ Looking for solutions to acute pollution problems became a first target in rich countries while the environmental degradation was becoming more complex and dispersed over larger areas.¹⁸⁰ Change was needed and safeguarding the environment became an understood necessity – at least in theory. The euphoria everyone felt at the end of the Stockholm conference, had dissipated a few years after the UNCHE was over. “On virtually every front there has been a marked deterioration in the quality of our shared environment,” said Mostafa Tolba, the second Executive Director of UNEP when he summed up the situation ten years later.¹⁸¹

For the established NGOs, the follow-up to the Stockholm conference became a time of open doors. Conference after conference were held where they were invited to discuss how the cooperation between the UN and NGOs in the environmental field should continue. With roots in discussions at the Stockholm conference, the European Environmental Bureau was established in 1974. On the global level the NGO cooperation resulted in the creation of the Environment Liaison Centre (ELC, later ELCI, the I added for International). It established its headquarter in Nairobi, because UNEP also had been established in this city. Many felt however, that the NGO approach to the UN and to UNEP had mellowed. During the later years of the 1970s, the NGO world seemed to lose its

energy and commitment. In 1974 more than 150 NGOs had registered to attend the annual UNEP Governing Council and by 1980 it had fallen to less than 20.¹⁸² What had made Stockholm dynamic was gone. Now organising actions did not become part of programmes and because of strict organisational and formal demands of an accredited NGO, the popular movements disappeared from the scene. They may now in 2022 be coming back as CSOs, Community Based Organisations.

Popular movements had played a crucial role in establishing a new pattern for interaction at the global level between governments and non-governmental organizations. At every step in the process up to the opening of UNCHE, popular actors were ahead or at an equal level in their preparatory efforts. Through their sustained independent endeavour, the semi-official Environment Forum initiated by the UN, developed into an independent NGO forum with direct linkages to the official conference. This is of historic importance as it was the first time since the establishment of the modern inter-state system in the 17th century that such a parallel and independent process with direct links to an inter-state meeting had been established. This subsequently formed a system with all later UN and other intergovernmental conferences.

Peter Willets share the assessment that UNCHE was a historic achievement.¹⁸³

“NGOs and global environmental change: There has been a strand of environmental politics involving NGOs since the nineteenth century, but

178 Mostafa Tolba. *Opening address on the session of Special Character of the Governing Council of UNEP*, 1982.

179 McCormick 1989 p. 125.

180 For accounts of the problems facing the governmental agencies, see McCormick 1989 p. 125-127, Brenton 1994, chapter 4.

181 Tolba, opening address, *Uniterra* 2 1982.

182 McCormick 1989, p. 101.

183 The assessment that UNCHE was an important step forward in its innovative ways to involve the public is shared by many across

the language was of conservation and the approach was scientific. The hybrid international organizations, the World Conservation Union, and the International Council for Science were important in the development of the international law on conservation of habitats, birds, endangered species, biodiversity, and climate change. Apart from these two hybrids, environmental NGOs did not exercise any leadership role at the global level until the 1970s. This changed when they were recruited by Maurice Strong to attend the UN Conference on the Human Environment, in Stockholm in 1972. NGOs then produced one significant shift in the global agenda, by obtaining a resolution calling for a moratorium on commercial whaling.”¹⁸⁴

His assessment of a significant shift in the global agenda due to a resolution on whaling moratorium has been questioned and criticised by others.¹⁸⁵ Rather it is the turn from conservation issues to confront the issue of nuclear power which is seen as the important issue that galvanised the strength of popular movements, including NGOs, to fight for broader environmental issues.

The Powwow group assessed the UN Conference on June 13, shortly after the conference had ended. They were not happy. There had been a few positive results, but the list of shortcomings was longer. None of the following issues had made it into the final report from UNCHE: Ecocide in general and in particular in Vietnam, no mention of lack of economic growth in developed countries; the social issues connected to the working envi-

ronment; food, the environment and pollution; still dominance of the third world by developed countries; no mention of consumption of resources (advertising, television etc.)

Their conclusion was simply that what we must do, apart from exposing causes of environmental destruction, is to work together to create a more fulfilling and ecologically sound way of life. We would have to take control of our lives and the means of production.¹⁸⁶

What should be the focus after Stockholm 1972?

“We have to judge our success or failure here on what kind of a world we produce as a result of what we do or fail to do in the next decade or two. And this depends most of all on the public. Environment has a reason to become a deep interest at the grassroot of the public. The public attitude towards what happened here at Stockholm is going to be absolutely crucial in the decisions and in particular of the follow up of these decisions.” Said Maurice Strong in a UN video prior to the conference.

Looking back at what had happened during the two weeks in Stockholm in June 1972, there seemed to be a general feeling among the popular movements that the conference had ended in something like a stalemate. Neither business, governments nor established NGOs had been capable of creating an ideology and practice that had received hegemonial acceptance. Nor had the popular movements been

the board from the official level to radical activists as Pat Money: "The Main Structural innovation of the Stockholm Conference in 1972 was to facilitate the active participation of civil society." Regeringskansliet 2002. p62

184 Peter Willets, Non-Governmental Organizations in World Politics, The construction of global governance, p51 Routledge Global Institutions, 2011 [https://perpus.wildanfauzy.com/Global%20Governance/\(Global%20institutions%20series%2C%2049\)%20Peter%20Willets-Non-Governmental%20Organisations%20in%20World%20Politics%20-%20Routledge%20\(2011\).pdf](https://perpus.wildanfauzy.com/Global%20Governance/(Global%20institutions%20series%2C%2049)%20Peter%20Willets-Non-Governmental%20Organisations%20in%20World%20Politics%20-%20Routledge%20(2011).pdf)

185 Brenton 1994

186 <http://folkrorelser.org/Stockholm1972/dokument/powwow-flygblad-13.6.72.PDF>



Third World Network publications, to the left the declaration at the founding meeting in Penang, Malaysia 9-14 November 1984, to the right different editions of the The World Guide issued by Instituto del Tercer Mundo based in Montevideo, Uruguay © Tord Björk library

able to develop a sufficiently broad vision that would unite them. But one thing had actually happened, the popular movements had joined hands and had united over the issue of nuclear energy including the nuclear armaments. Issues were identified during UNHCE, connections were made with people and organisations representing other culture and their interests, and problems though set in different geographical spaces, had often similar origins. The atmospheric testing of nuclear devices united people in the far north and the far south, and the nuclear issues, at first associated only with peace, was given a strong environmental connection as well. This focus had become global during the Stockholm conference, and it would increase its momentum during the 1970s. A momentum had been created, a momentum that would soon give birth to nu-

merous organisations and activities in nearly every country in the world.

At the same time growing unemployment and economic hardships, especially in the third world, became the focus of development oriented organisations. In the Global South and in Eastern Europe new social movements struggled under conditions of state repression and economic stagnation which made it hard for popular movements to challenge the system¹⁸⁷.

Over time the third world showed their organizational strength and the environmental movements there would incorporate issues of social justice and change the environmental movements including their discourse in this direction. In this process people like Anil Agarwal from India, who participated with

¹⁸⁷ For Latin America, Escobar et al, 1992. For Eastern Europe, The Helsinki Watch Report 1987.

the other third world representatives at the Environment Forum played an important role.¹⁸⁸ Anil Aggarwal became a leading spokesperson for environment and social justice in India and established the Centre for Science and the Environment, now a leading environmental organisation in India.

The non-state actors united in new campaigns and began to challenge big businesses. The International Baby Food Action Network in late 1970s is a good example of new organisations with new working methods. This also shows how environment and health perspectives became mutually re-enforcing. It was shortly followed by a series of global single-issue action networks on pesticides, rivers and rain forests. In Malaysia a close cooperation between the consumer union, an environmental organisation that was part of Friends of the Earth developed. Similar to what took place when the Oi committee was formed, Third World Network, TWN was established in 1984 with Malaysia as its headquarter. TWN would soon develop networks on environment and social issues and combine this with a deep understanding and criticism of global trade. Social issues were no longer to be separated from environmental questions when popular movements began working globally.

The UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972 was a first

The UNCHE activities had managed to identify a large number of themes all related to the overarching issues of the environment. New perspectives had been opened with new approaches. People mattered, popular organisa-

tions mattered, NGOs mattered, and their combined influence was seen as important. And they had been invited to participate in the official intergovernmental conference, not only as a symbolic gesture, but on a daily basis. None of this had existed before UNCHE. In addition, content was no longer dominated by a northern, developed-country focus. Environmental issues had finally been identified as having global significance and relevance and the issues were of a multifaceted nature. Japanese activists had been present: "Most debates at UNCHE focused on the limited capacity of the natural environment to sustain humanity, the Japanese group stressed the human limits to growth. Japanese pollution victims offered their damaged bodies as living proof that unbridled economic development was having immediate human costs as grave as any long-term depletion of, or damage to, the environment. Industrial pollution in Japan, they argued, spoke to a different kind of limitation: not with respect to natural resources but with respect to balancing economic activity with concern for human health and dignity."¹⁸⁹ (see also the article on the Minamata convention in the People's Environment Narrative).

The dominant paradigm was however general development, which is a concept with at least three problems:

First, due to its separation in two geographically different notions separating the world in developed and developing nations. This had after all, permeated most discussions and papers. While the environmental movement maintained its ability to cause significant changes in understanding and broadening the environmental discourse during the first decade after

¹⁸⁸ He later established the influential magazine *Down to Earth* in India. Most of the other third world activists present at UNCHE disintegrated and lost contact with each other and the international environmental movement although continuing to play a role in environmentalism.

¹⁸⁹ Avenell, *Transnational Japan in the global environmental movement*. 2017.

1972, the opposite can be said about the following decades. Despite growing knowledge about global warming and species extinction and destruction in general of biotopes, development issues dominated the discourse. After the introduction of the concept of 'sustainable development' in 1987 in the Brundtland report, development took first seat, and relegated environment to a back seat.

Now the second problem became evident. This concept built at its core sustainable growth. The next big UN conference, the so-called Earth Summit in Rio in 1982, was also primarily about sustainable development and not environment. It was aptly named the UN Conference on Environment and Development. The domination of development issues and understanding was growing, if not even accelerating.

Once introduced, the third problem becomes evident: since the sustainable development negotiations on climate change and biological diversity began, the problems related to integrating these two issues have accelerated. More green-house gases have accumulated in the atmosphere since 1992 than during the entire human history on earth.

Growth was also a manifest paradigm at UNCHE. It has been so until today, and it continues. Today's degrowth debate seems not to have given any results - yet. The Powwow group in Stockholm in 1972 had actually focused on the growth paradigm and addressed the issue in its manifesto prior to the conference. But addressing the growth paradigm was seen as problematic and at times misleading. The concept is socially neutral thus lacking an understanding of who is the actor that can change society. Thus, the Swedish environment movement did not choose antigrowth as an ideology after 1972. Social change, development towards a low-energy and resource-saving society as a way forward including a strong commitment to Third world solidarity and opposition to short-term profit and corporate power became the

centrepieces of their positions. Thus environment, health and peace movements had after a few years real problems in finding ways to move forward. Professionalization however made the movements more efficient in influencing policies but at the same time they were losing their capacity to engage the common people in efforts to change society.

People together can change the world

The best inspiration for political discussion and understanding comes when those engaged in movements exchange experience with each other in person to person meetings. One more expression of growing interest for organizing such exchange is The International People Assembly which offers such opportunities. It was at the founding of a European branch of this initiative in Barcelona where I met Taghi Farvar. People from the Southern Balkans and different African countries had gathered around him and were engaged in intense debates. Taghi presented himself as a bare-foot representative for nomadic tribes in Iran. Popular discussions concerning re-establishing cooperatives in Zambia were soon replaced by insightful discussions of the limitations of Western formalistic models and the way patriarchy or indigenous cultures works.

One night Taghi and I had a chat about what happened after the Stockholm conference. This late night in Barcelona 2018 reminded me of an early morning in 1977 when I for the first time heard from Jan Fjellander a talk about what happened at the 1972 Stockholm conference. The story Farvar then told me made the already dramatic story about how Jan Fjellander and Segerstedt-Wiberg had been able to bring 60 third world activist successfully to Stockholm in 1972 look less dramatic. Farvar had assisted the Iranian delegation to the negotiations and also discussed how to organise the new organisation that would deal with the environment. Two controversial issues became hotly debat-



Taghi Farvar discussing with young people from the Balkans at the International Peoples Assembly meeting in Barcelona in January 2018 © Tord Björk

ed issues in the negotiations. One was where to place the new institution, which was to be called the UN Environment Programme. The other was setting up a fund to finance work on the environment. In both cases the industrialized countries were not in favour of the third world position. They were at first against placing a UN institution on the environment outside of the industrialised countries and against any fund for the environment financed by industrialized countries.

The negotiations were tense. How far were the industrialised nations willing to go? Amid tensions, a solution was found as to how funding the new institution and its work for the environment could be handled and what to do about the new institution's headquarters. Speaking as an independent adviser, but with knowledge and wisdom, and trusted by the Third World countries, Farvar managed to give the G-77 well founded advice. Farvar's advice were well taken and contributed immensely to the final

solution. Strong also consulted with Mustafa Tolba, who would succeed Strong as the ED of UNEP in a couple of years, who said that the two decisions saved the institution. Without them there would have been no UNEP.

In fact, several cities had been mentioned already at the Stockholm Conference as the site for the headquarter for the new environment organisation. Different delegations offered different views. The official report from the 1972 conference lists all cities: Nairobi, Kampala, Madrid, Mexico City, Valetta, Vienna, Geneva, New Delhi and New York. Kenya was the strongest candidate and had tacit support from G-77. The genesis of Kenya's position goes back to 1965 when the Kenyan government had proposed to house the headquarter of the UN Industrial Organisation. They did not get this back then. It went to Vienna. Kenya however, intensified its efforts for having a southern based UN headquarter and used the preparatory process leading up to UNCHE, to propose

that they should host the first UN headquarters in the Global South.

The matter was not resolved in Stockholm, and it was agreed that Maurice Strong, the Secretary General of UNCHE should prepare a comprehensive report about various sites and present the report to the General Assembly and that the UNGA would finally decide the location. On December 15 in 1972, the UNGA decided unanimously to place the UNEP headquarter in Nairobi, Kenya.

The UN Conference on the Human Environment was a first, a historical first. Its legacies still reverberate within intergovernmental processes. It was a radical first and it was a progressive first. Its outcomes inspired the UN and its member states to organise several more global conferences and they all contributed to a growing knowledge-base on interlinked issues, all of paramount importance to create precisely wellbeing for all. Change was – and is - needed, but to engender change one had to know what to do. The UN summits that followed allowed for new knowledge, it built consensus for new action oriented programmes, it inspired governments to do assessments on how to initiate progress. In 1973, the UN organised a conference on the New Economic World Order in New York; 1974 the UN organised two Summits, the first global conference on population in Bucharest, Romania, later the same year, the first World Food Summit was held in Rome Italy; 1975 Mexico City hosted the first UN conference which focussed on the situation of women in the world, and finally, in 1976 the city of Vancouver in Canada became the venue for the first global conference on social and urban issues.

Many have discarded the popular movements and their contributions to UNCHE as being anything but relevant. They claim that all they did was to deal with war and peace and nuclear issues. This is also correct, but it is only part of the picture. As has been stated time and

again in this article, the environmental movement was not strong in 1972. Environmental organisations were few and far between. The political order of the day had all the same created strong popular movements and NGOs were working everywhere against the war in Vietnam. People responding to the political atmosphere in the 1960s and 70s had also organised strong anti-nuclear energy and anti-nuclear armaments organisations. With such a large venue as the UNCHE, it was evident that these organisations would engage. And they did. They all went in with their clear original identities, and most came out with a much broader and changed understanding of global politics. The environment had been integrated, but the environment had also been given a wider perspective, and the issues of justice was perhaps among the most important addition to a traditional nature based approach.

Stockholm was a first, and its most important first, was perhaps that popular movements of the people and by the people and for the people, showed their competence, added their contributions and demonstrated that participatory democracy was key in safeguarding the environment and creating well-being for all.

Tord Björk

Huddinge, Sweden. 21 February 2023



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Demonstration at the Climate Summit in Copenhagen.



Reproduction of the official emblem for the **United Nations Conference on the Human Environment** (UNCHE). 1 May 1971 © UN / IISD

The early days of NGOs and UNEP

By **Cyril Ritchie**, First Vice President for the Committee on NGOs (CONGO) at the United Nations

Following the 1972 Stockholm Conference, I became Chair of the Environment Liaison Board in 1973 which later changed into the Environment Liaison Centre International (ELCI). I was its Chair from 1974-1978. ELCI was the first umbrella organization of NGOs that took an active interest in UNEP and followed its early years of work. The following are a few sketches, or some snapshots taken from “an old camera...”

Snapshot One: Those few readers as long in the tooth as I am, will recall that we in Civil Society felt in 1972 that Maurice Strong had achieved almost a transformation of NGO relations with the United Nations System in the way the NGO relations were handled at the UN Conference on the Human Environment, the UNCHE. First by creating the pre-Stockholm civil society advisory group chaired by Henrik Beer, then Secretary General of the League of Red Cross Societies (since renamed International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies). Second by saying loudly that he wanted NGOs present at Stockholm who genuinely knew environmental issues, whether or not they had the previously-required consultative relationship with ECOSOC. Maurice, who became a good friend, renewed and expanded his UNCHE mould-breaking initiatives at the 1992 UNCED.

Snapshot two: Maurice also gave us great hope by appointing his journalist friend and colleague Wayne Kines to liaise with NGOs at UNCHE. Wayne was also a no-nonsense Canadian and made sure that the UN rules were stretched to the limit, an attitude in which he persisted when he became UNEP's first Director of Communications. When I visited Nairobi in December 1973 as UNEP was getting its socks on (see next two paragraphs as to why it was I who made that early visit), Wayne was my first and essential port of call, even though according to UN bureaucracy he wasn't quite “properly” in post. Such minor administrative considerations never bothered the results-oriented Wayne Kines.

Snapshot three: The NGOs post-UNCHE were naturally determined to pursue both the inter-NGO collaboration initiated at Stockholm and to be active in making sure UNEP got off the ground. So, in June 1973 the “Stockholm NGOs” had a coordination meeting in Geneva - held incongruously, as Barbara Ward pointed out in her keynote address, in a windowless and airless basement room in the Palais des Nations, Geneva. The Geneva meeting decided to establish the Environment Liaison Board (ELB) and elected its members. I was elected Secretary of the Board.

Snapshot four: However, when the ELB held its first planning meeting in August 1973, the person who had been elected Chair had already resigned, so *faute-de-mieux* I was elected Chair and *nolens-volens* continued in that post until 1978.

The ELB's first tasks were to show our collective face at UNEP, and to give ourselves a real constituency. Thus, my visit to Nairobi in December 1973, and the organization in Nairobi in March 1974 of the International Assembly of the Environment, INASEN, which I chaired. INASEN gathered about 130 NGOs, representing a plethora of idealisms, structures, expectations, attitudes and scepticisms. One anecdote will suffice. At the welcoming reception the evening before INASEN opened, a large American NGO leader cornered innocent little me, saying "I suppose you're going to try to keep the lid on us tomorrow." Summoning up my most naïve expression, I responded that I couldn't imagine what he was talking about.

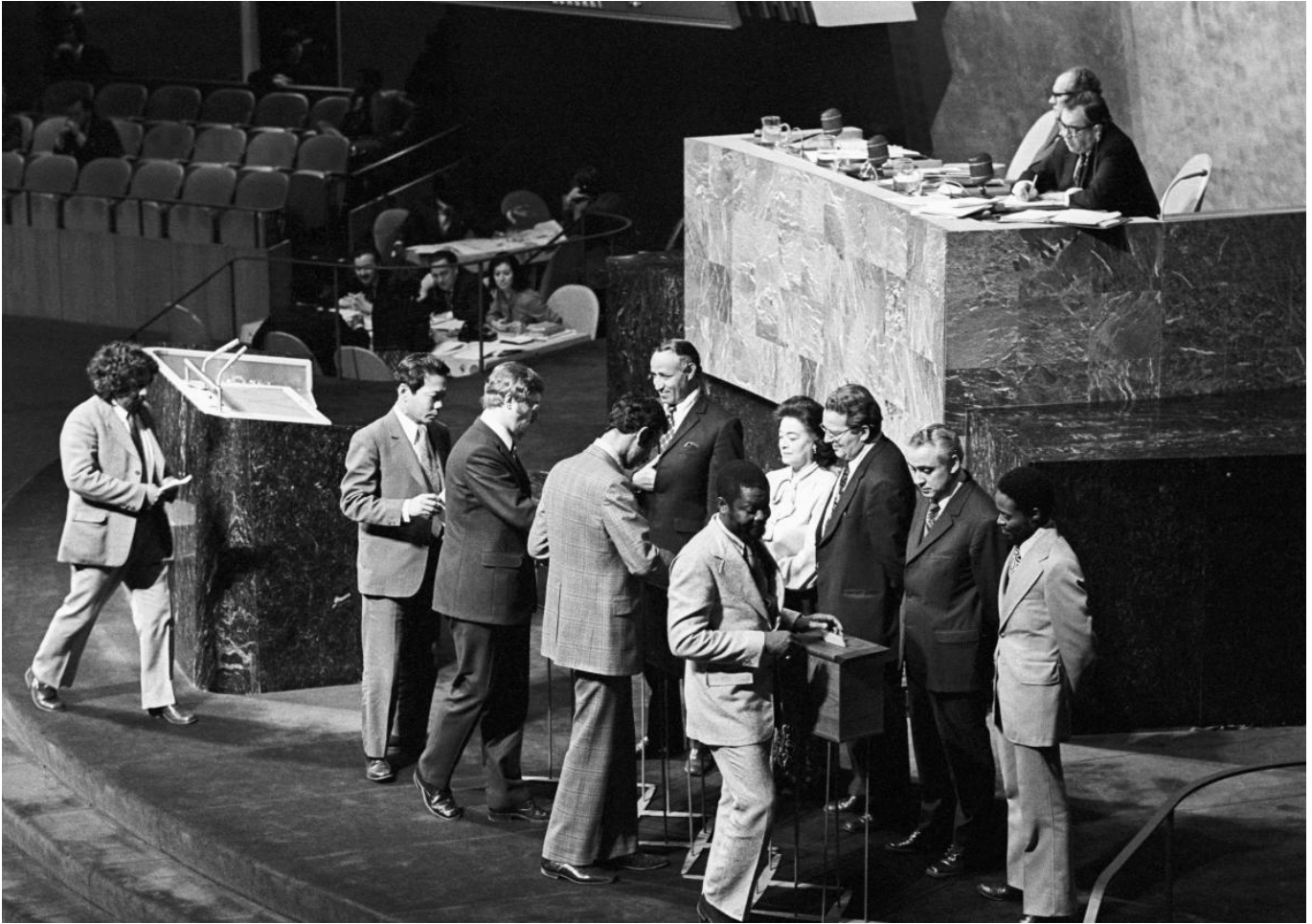
Snapshot five: Maurice Strong, in place as first Executive Director of UNEP, gave INASEN full backing, with a challenging keynote address and UNEP staff support. Continuing the initiative started in Stockholm, INASEN had an NGO Conference newspaper that included daily reports and memorable cartoons. All Conference newspapers are, by the way, archived at the City University, London.

Snapshot six: INASEN determined a work programme in parallel to UNEP's and confirmed the ELB as a permanent secretariat to be based in Nairobi (for many years situated down an alleyway just off Kenyatta Avenue). INASEN changed the name to Environment Liaison Centre (ELC) - to which "International" was later added. ELCI was boosted in many practical ways by UNEP, particularly when the punctilious Gary Herbertson¹ was responsible for UNEP-NGO Liaison. ELCI grew to be a 900-member NGO interface with UNEP, with open access to UNEP's various department heads. ELCI regularly designated the principal NGO speaker to intervene in annual UNEP Governing Council deliberations. I filled this role often in the early years, and on one unforgettable occasion we had Margaret Mead (herself unforgettable)² as our spokesperson. In those years, no member of government, not even the usual suspects, challenged the "right" of NGOs to make a collective statement on the broad range of issues before the Governing Council³. Another anecdote, however: When I found myself again Chair of ELCI in the new century, my right to speak at the UNEP Governing Council was questioned by the Chinese delegation. On that occasion, President of the Governing Council allowed me to explain publicly that the precedents dated back more than 30 years! No further challenge was made.

1 Chairman of the United Methodist Church Ecology Commission, Dr. Gary Herbertson was selected by Margaret Mead to help organize citizen participation the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. At the conference he led the Religious Task Force and Young Adult Task Force on Global Environment. He later served as an NGO coordinator with UNEP in Nairobi. <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/latimes/name/gary-herbertson-obituary?id=18756450>

2 <https://www.history.com/topics/womens-history/margaret-mead>

3 The Governing Council was the highest authority of UNEP from 1972 until 2014 when it was replaced by the UN Environment Assembly, the UNEA with universal membership. The Governing Council was established in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) (Institutional and financial arrangements for international environmental co-operation) of 15 December 1972. Governing Council reports to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council. 58 members of the Council are elected by the General Assembly, for four-year terms, taking into account the principle of equitable regional representation.



15 December 1972. The UN General Assembly establishes a new environment secretariat, to be located in Nairobi, Kenya, with **Maurice F. Strong** as its Executive Director © UN / Yutaka Nagata)

Snapshot seven: Concerning the relationship between UNEP and NGOs, in particular ELCI, one other anecdote may be of interest. ELCI undertook an investigation into the deleterious effects on the environment of the construction by Sudan of the Jonglei Canal (NB Jonglei is now in South Sudan)⁴. UNEP channelled a notable grant to ELCI to pay for the costs of the study. Surprise, surprise, the Sudanese government made their displeasure known to Maurice Strong, with the habitual mantra of “an affront to our sovereignty”. While I was not present when Maurice received the Sudanese Ambassador, I can imagine Maurice putting on

his own most naïve expression when he told the Ambassador that UNEP was not, and could not be, responsible for the content of the study, as it was done by an independent NGO democratically accountable only to its members. Remembering this incident now, it is only fair to state, in memory of Maurice Strong, that we have always needed more “bureaucrats” like him in the UN.

Snapshot eight: Were there difficulties? How could there not have been? We’re NGOs after all.... As with so many NGOs, ELCI received earmarked grants for specific outputs (e.g.

⁴ An ill fated canal and irrigation project that might possibly have caused grave environmental damage to the area in which it was proposed to be built. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonglei_Canal

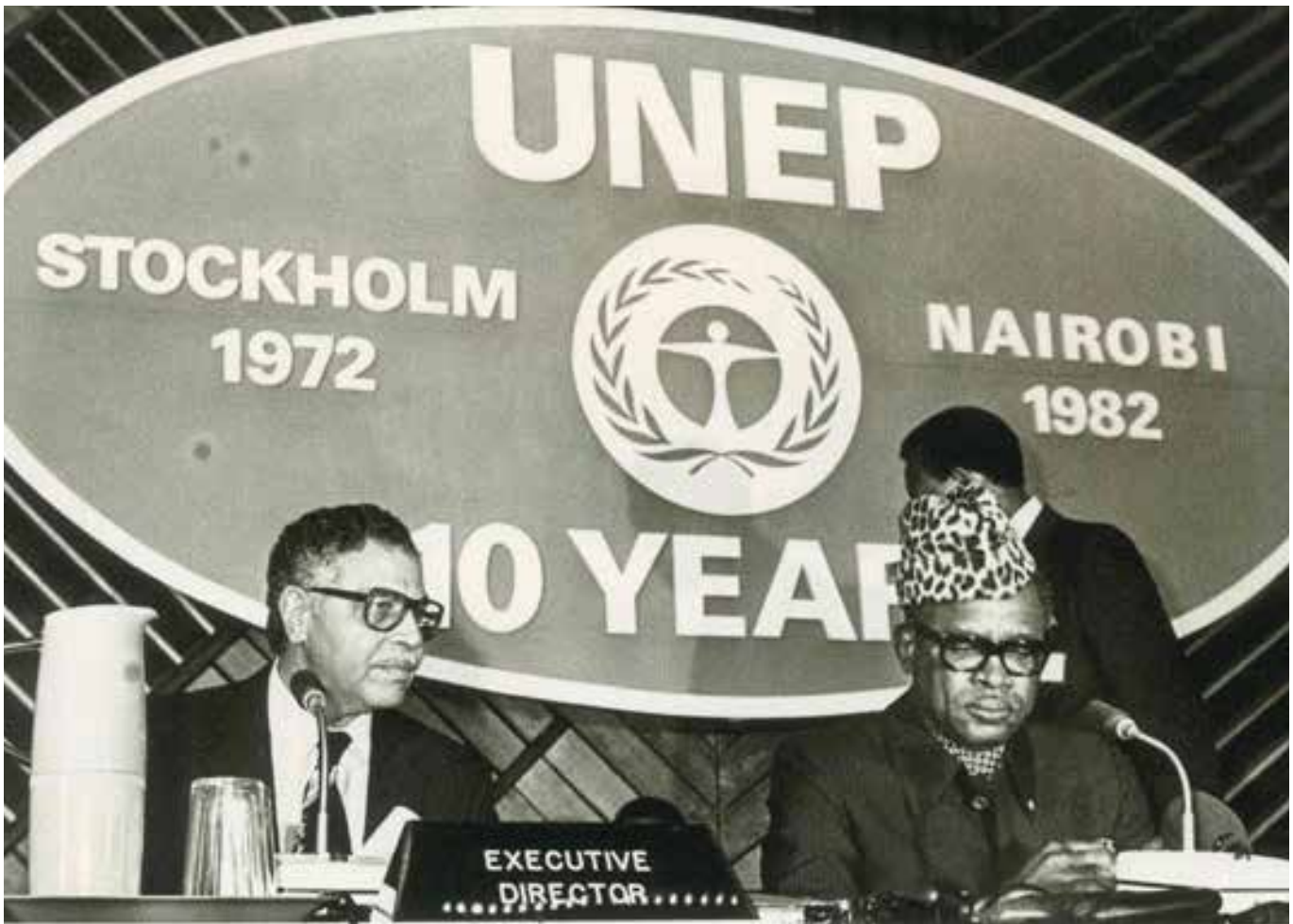


1 January 1978. A view of the headquarters of the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** located in Nairobi, Kenya © UN

Jonglei above). One particularly successful activity was the launch and promotion of World Environment Day, WED, as a planetary celebration, and as a wake-up call to people and governments. Delmar Blasco⁵ of Argentina was hired by ELCI to travel widely to promote and implant WED campaigns. Subsequently, Delmar became ELCI Executive Director. But on funding, also as with so many NGOs, regular membership dues were nowhere near enough to guarantee the necessary manage-

rial and programmatic structures. The consequences of this situation go well beyond the mandated topic of this article, namely the early days. In that period, we had many highly competent and devoted staff. On the Board we had persons, though not all, who knew intimately the nature and extent of the threats the world's environment was facing and would increasingly face if governments maintained a general attitude of postponing until tomorrow the decisions that should have been made yesterday.

⁵ Delmar Blasco is another of these unsung heroes of civil society fighting for the environment. Escaping the brutal terror of the military junta in Argentina, he moved to Europe where he continued working for the rights of peoples from the global south and the environment. He held key positions at the Geneva-based International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), in IUCN – The World Conservation Union. Blasco then served as Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention, the Convention on Wetlands from 1995 to 2003. <https://www.wetlands.org/profile/delmar-blasco/>



Stockholm+10 Conference, in Nairobi. Dr. Mostafa Tolba (left), Executive Director of UNEP, with H.E. Mobutu Sese Seko, President of Zaïre (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo). 1982 © UNEP

Snapshot nine: A particular mention must be made that ELCI had an outstanding Chair in the early 1980s in the person of Wangari Maathai⁶, whose inspirational leadership in political and environmental affairs still resounds today.

Snapshot ten: The ground-breaking work that the global NGO community, coordinated by ELCI did during the first 20 years after 1972, influenced heavily the inclusion of civil society in the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and

Development, UNCED, which gave the world Agenda 21 and the Rio Principles. Maurice brought with him his experience with the NGOs from UNEP in 1972 and was heavily influential in integrating civil society in the Earth Summit which also gave birth to the nine Major Groups.⁷ But that is another story, covered elsewhere in this report, the PEN.”

⁶ Wangari Maathai, Kenyan environmental crusader and Nobel Peace Laureate, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2004/maathai/biographical/>

⁷ The nine are; Women, Children and Youth, Farmers, NGOs, Indigenous Peoples, Trade Unions, Local Authorities, Science and Technology, Business and Industry. The concept of the Nine Major Groups was an effort by the UN to expand the understanding and conceptualisation of the NGO/stakeholder factor as an element of civil society. See also Section 1 of the PEN.

Tribute to Women Human Rights and Environmental Defenders,
UNEA 3. Nairobi, Kenya. 2017 © UNEP / Natalia Mroz



The institutionalisation of CSOs at UNEP

Reflections on the past, present and future

by **Anantha Krishnan**¹, Chief Civil Society and Stakeholder Unit at UNEP from 1999 to 2002, adviser on urban affairs

50 years have gone by since UNEP's formation in 1972. Civil society has been a key player with UNEP during all these years. This cooperation has faced challenges of multiple characters, from inside UNEP, from governments as well as from civil society itself. To understand the complexity of these collaborative efforts, we must bear in mind that UNEP's own definition of civil society is used in the broadest sense possible. However, UNEP quickly absorbed the concept of the Nine Major Groups which was agreed to in Rio in 1992 as a wider understanding of what the NGO-civil society-stakeholder was meant to include. A formal decision to use the concept of the nine major groups was made by the Governing Council in 1996. The nine groups are:

Farmers, NGOs, Indigenous peoples, Local authorities, Women, Science and Technology, Business and industry, Children and youth, Trade Unions.²

The interaction between the UNEP and civil society has grown substantially since a unit dedicated for CSOs was established in 1999, and over 500 NGOs now have/had formal consultative status³.

1 The author is grateful to Jan Gustav Strandenæs for providing the opportunity to write this paper and for the support from Iqbal Basant, Consultant, Nairobi. Advice and support from Yusuf Bagha, former UNEP staff is also acknowledged with thanks.

2 <https://www.unep.org/civil-society-engagement/major-groups-modalities/major-group-categories>

3 <https://www.unep.org/civil-society-engagement/why-civil-society-matters>

History

Historically, as explained by Tony Hill⁴, since the UN's creation in 1945, one may speak of two generations, and the emergence of a third generation, of UN-Civil Society relations. The first, lasting up to the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, involved mostly International NGOs (INGOs) of different varieties, including professional and business associations that were granted formal consultative relations with the UN (ECOSOC) in recognition of their international standing. Just as the Cold War shaped the inter-governmental deliberative processes of the UN, so too did it impact strongly on the dynamics and role of INGOs at the UN.

The second generation made its presence felt at the 1992 Rio conference, the Earth Summit, where nearly 30,000 people participated. With the 'fall of the wall' in 1989⁵ came a dramatic change in global politics, and democracy appeared to have won over all other political systems. The change manifested itself in many ways, not the least in the explosive growth of civil society organisations in almost every country in the world. Preparing for the Rio 1992 summit, the UN organised five large preparatory conferences where civil society was allowed a strong presence. These regional conferences obviously stimulated the interest in participating in the 1992 conference. However, the great number of civil society organisations present in Rio in 1992 was undoubtedly also a result of the global wave of democratization felt at the time. Civil society had, by then, built up its capacity and legitimacy, and had grown to become a

prominent voice in policy discussions⁶. Agenda 21, the outcome of the Rio Earth Summit, calls on UNEP to raise "general awareness and action in the area of environmental protection through collaboration with the general public, non-governmental entities and intergovernmental institutions" (Chapter 28).

Several observers have pointed to the third generation of organisations as being the one coming alive during the first decades of this century. This generation involves associations between governments and civil society around issue areas to form coalitions which also raise questions over the role of the UN in civil society relations. These new coalitions work with the UN and are represented at this level taking on traditional advocacy and policy roles – indeed it may be a boon for UNEP that these groups aggregate and articulate civil society interests. However, there is a danger that many organisations fuelled by specific corporations or interest groups may begin to use such coalitions and social media within the UN system as they have in politics, and it is sometimes impossible to verify the authenticity of such actors. As noted by the former head of UNEP,

“Civil society is everything from the worst to the best. Civil society is those driving the green change, but civil society frankly is also those groups that supported the ISIS terrorism in Europe, those groups propagating for that, for wars in many parts of the world. So civil society is everything from the worst to the best”⁷

4 Hill Tony (2014) Three generations of UN Civil society relations United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service Available at <https://archive.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/177-un/31824-three-generations-of-un-civil-society-relations.html>

5 BBC(2019) Fall of Berlin Wall: How 1989 reshaped the modern world 5 Nov 2019 Available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50013048> https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fall_of_the_Berlin_Wall

6 Enhancing civil society engagement in the work of the United Nations Environment Programme Implementation of GCSS.VII/5, Revised Strategy Paper Can be found at https://unece.org/DAM/env/pp/ppif/UNEPvisedstrategy_paper.doc

7 REDD (2017) UNEP's Erik Solheim links civil society with groups supporting ISIS terrorism in Europe 2 Dec 2017 Available at <https://>



Youth gather in Karura forest, Nairobi, in solidarity with the global climate youth marches © UNEP

While this trend is not a dominating one, the UN should be vigilant and note that there are NGOs used to promote the interests of states in autocratic settings, and for UNEP then the anti-climate change movement has thus far remained outside its civil society engagement space. Reports indicate that major oil companies have spent nearly 200m USD per year and target social media and lobby politicians against climate change.⁸ UNEP also suffers from a lack of funding for national-level programme implementation, and this is in con-

trast to other multilateral finance organisations such as the IMF and the World Bank. The World Bank, as an Implementing Agency, is accountable to Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Council for its GEF-financed activities.

Civil society-managed alternative forums such as the World Social Forum are not actively engaged with the UN system while being a 'civil society space for the convergence of "people organizing to influence their world,"⁹ arguing that

redd-monitor.org/2017/12/02/uneps-erik-solheim-links-civil-society-with-groups-supporting-isis-terrorism-in-europe/

8 Laville Sandra (2019) Top oil firms spending millions lobbying to block climate change policies says report 22 mar 2019 Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/mar/22/top-oil-firms-spending-millions-lobbying-to-block-climate-change-policies-says-report>

9 World Social Forum at <https://participedia.net/method/174>

the new phenomenon of Social Forums holds significant potential for global democracy.

Many in the NGO/CSO community especially from the Global South, while valuing the enhanced access to and participation in the UN system including UNEP, are not encouraged by the fact that this proximity has not really resulted in substantial changes on the ground. Access to promised climate financing for adaptation is one example.

The end of the cold war, symbolically dated to the fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989, did not result in a “peace dividend” and more resources have not been made available for poverty reduction and addressing environmental disasters. While more than 110 armed conflicts, new and old ones, the UN has been focusing on peacekeeping missions,¹⁰ civil society now also plays a visible role in conflict-affected and fragile states. When state institutions become weak or non-existent, CSOs tend to substitute them. They become even providers of basic social services. It is also interesting to note that the international donor community as well as the UN, seek partnerships with CSOs for recovery and reconstruction. Involvement of civil society and communities have proved to be essential in solving the problems generated by landmines, unexploded ordnance or small arms/ light weapons. For example, Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA), a Norway-based NGO has been involved in 20 Mine Action Programmes ongoing in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Balkans and the Middle East. NPA has also been involved in getting international treaties such as Antipersonnel Mine Ban Treaty (MBT), and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM).¹¹

As has been noted by scholars and practitioners, civil society has always played and plays an active role in the implementation of a host of projects. Civil society organisations are also invited by intergovernmental organisations, such as the UN family, to partake in this implementation. However, this willingness to include non-state organisations in the field is not met with equal reciprocity in policy-making contexts. Civil society has had to fight to be heard in plenaries. This reluctance is often reflected in the lack of institutional support by the intergovernmental community. The UN family is unfortunately not an exception. Few UN bodies today have an office for civil society, major groups and the global NGO community. UNEP is still an exception, but this office is constantly facing political and budgetary challenges. It is also well worth remembering that even if the Stockholm 1972 Conference was the first to allow civil society to speak regularly in the official plenaries, it took 27 years before the civil society unit in UNEP was established in 1999.

The power of civil society manifested itself at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, where global environmental issues first came to the fore. UNEP owes a lot to civil society and especially to the Western NGOs that were behind the pressure for the creation of UNEP and its mandate; while the governments, as well as the private sector, were suspicious, (as they are now) of any government or multilateral/regulatory entity, that may restrict the free market mechanisms. UNEP has also relied, to some extent, on the lobbying power of environmental NGOs to lobby the US Congress and the European Union, albeit discreetly.

¹⁰ World Bank. 2005. Engaging Civil Society Organizations in Conflict-Affected and Fragile States: Three African Country Case Studies. See <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/8680>

¹¹ <https://www.npaid.org/mine-action-and-disarmament>



University of Costa Rica Celebrates WED / **Actuarte** raise awareness about the importance of protecting the planet © UNEP / Alberto Font / The Tico Times

Stockholm UN Conference on the Human Environment

Since the 1972 Stockholm UN Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE), civil society has played a significant role in addressing challenges relating to the environment, development, and governance, globally and nationally. This world conference clarified and explained the linkages between environmental, economic, and social issues for the first time. The event's emphasis on environmental concerns was a notable and lasting shift in post-war conversations on international gov-

ernance. From this conference not only was UNEP formed but an emphasis was placed on civil society engagement. From its inception, UNEP was seen as promoting a policy to invite wide NGO input and collaboration. An NGO office was set up in 1973 under its Information Services Division. This office was charged with coordinating UNEP's programmatic activities with parallel efforts of NGOs. In 1974 an independent coalition of environmental NGOs was established as the Environment Liaison Centre to connect groups around the world with the work of UNEP¹²

¹² UNEP (2002) Enhancing civil society engagement in the work of the United Nations Environment programme Implementation of GCSS.VII/5 UNEP Revised Strategy Paper

The relationship of UNEP with the CSOs / NGOs is as old as UNEP itself, like the observation that the relationship between the UN and NGOs is as old as the UN Charter itself. However, for many years since the formation of UNEP, civil society organisations, mainly from the Global South have campaigned for strengthening this interaction as well as for an easy and transparent system for facilitating this interaction.

One of the results of the Stockholm conference was the creation of an International Assembly of UN-accredited Non-Governmental Organizations (INASEN) to follow up UNCHE from a civil society perspective. INASEN later gave way to an NGO Environment Service Centre in Nairobi in 1974. The centre went on to become a formal non-profit organization in 1976 and, in 1987, was renamed the Environment Liaison Centre International (ELCI), a Global Coalition [of NGOs] for Environment and Development.¹³

The Environmental Liaison Centre International (ELCI) was in place to be concerned with civil society relations with UNEP and sought to specifically focus on more engagement with the Global South¹⁴. In the five decades since Stockholm, civil society has been a significant actor contributing to sustainability transitions. Until the mid-1990s there was no spelt out strategy or policy for UNEP's engagement with civil society -

It is interesting to note that only in 1995 the Governing Council of UNEP by its decision GC 18/4 called for a policy framework and relevant mechanisms for engagement with non-gov-

ernmental organizations. Subsequently, in 1996, a policy statement on NGO participation in the agency's activities was incorporated in UNEP's project manual.¹⁵

For some time, until 1999, the work with civil society groups was placed under the Public Information and Communications Section, but this did not specifically engage CSOs in policy-making avenues.

Before the structural reform of UNEP in 1999 CSO/NGO work as well as other awareness activities were under components of UNEP's subprogramme component 5.3.1 "Public Awareness, Education, including Environmental Citizenship and Outreach to major groups and non-governmental organizations"¹⁶. At an internal level and outside UNEP there were questions over the logic of transferring civil society relations from the DCPI (Division of Communication and Public Information) "away" to the DPDL (Division of Policy Development and Law). Children and Youth and Sports programmes continued under DCPI also after 1999. Until 1999, UNEP did not have an accreditation mechanism to accept or invite NGOs as observers to policy-making bodies (Governing Council, Global Environmental Agreement negotiations etc.); Instead, it relied on the UN Economic and Social Council accreditation mechanism, which then met in Geneva each year during the month of July. Later the regional offices also started organising their own convening of CSO events. The Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, which precedes each UNEA meeting is also built upon Regional Consultative Meetings

¹³ Environment Liaison Centre International (ELCI), <https://ngojobsinafrica.com/non-profit-organization/environment-liaison-centre-international-elci/>

¹⁴ <http://www.elci.org/about-us/who-we-are>

¹⁵ UNEP (2002) Enhancing civil society engagement in the work of the United Nations Environment programme, Op cit

¹⁶ Division of Communications and Public Information (DCPI) EVALUATION REPORT by Mr. Terry Collins April 2002 Evaluation and Oversight Unit, UNEP



Beach Clean up in Bahama, 2018 © UNEP

(RCMs) in all UNEP regions, including North America. Major Group and Stakeholder representatives are invited to one- to three-day multi-stakeholder consultation meetings (in person and virtual) in each region prior to United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA).¹⁷

The second UNEP Executive Director, Dr Mostafa Tolba (1975-1992) was concerned by the fact that there were too many NGOs/CSOs from rich countries, compared to NGOs from developing countries; he issued a request to those NGOs from richer countries to sponsor the participation of some NGOs from the developing countries. These recommendations were heeded, particularly by the Scandinavian

countries. But the inequality was and is still very wide.

Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992

The 1992 earth summit was a turning point not just for the global environmental movement but significantly for the CSO movement as not only was their attendance and participation substantial at the conference, but the outcomes cemented the place of the major groups in sustainable development.

UNEP puts forward that this success led to the Vienna Human Rights Summit (1993), the Cairo Population Summit (1994), the

¹⁷ <https://www.unep.org/civil-society-engagement/participation-and-engagement/engaging-regions>

Beijing Women's Summit (1995), the Istanbul Summit on Human Settlement (1996), and the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002). The 1992 Rio Conference, the Earth Summit, also led to the establishment of the Commission for Sustainable Development, the UN CSD.¹⁸ CSD came to be a significant arena for the Major Groups and in many ways strengthened their presence in various intergovernmental units. UNEP's Governing Council adopted the concept of the nine Major Groups in 1996. Many of the most exciting and promising post-Rio developments have taken place in the sphere outside governments, also to influence them. There has been a virtual explosion of activities and initiatives on the part of grassroots organizations, citizen groups and other key sectors of civil society.

Also, professional associations of engineers and architects, through their international bodies, committed their professions to sustainable development as a central professional issue, and to cooperative programs designed to support the implementation of Agenda 21 in their sectors.

The influence of the Seoul NGO Conference

Under the theme of "The Role of NGOs in the 21st Century: Inspire, Empower, Act!", the 1999 Seoul International Conference of NGOs was held in Seoul, Korea from October 11th to October 15th with some 5,000 delegates and more than 1,000 NGOs from every corner of the world. This conference of NGOs was the first independent global NGO meeting. It was the first such major meeting dedicated primarily to the question of how NGOs themselves might become better organized and empowered

on a global level to address the broad range of challenges confronting humanity. The organizing partners were: the associations of NGOs with consultative status by the United Nations - the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO) and the Executive Committee of NGOs associated with the Department of Public Information of the United Nations (the NGO/DPI Executive Committee) - along with a Korean partner, the Global Cooperation Society International (GCS), a Seoul-based NGO with chapters in 35 countries. The conference was hosted by Kyung Hee University of Seoul¹⁹

The stated goals of the meeting were to "explore and monitor" the implementation of the global action plans produced by the major UN conferences of the decade, to "strengthen NGO partnerships with the UN," and to "enhance communication and collaboration" among NGOs worldwide.²⁰

Initially, a successful UNEP-African NGO partnership meeting was organized in September 1999, in preparation for the International Conference of NGOs, held in October 1999 in Seoul, South Korea.

The establishment of the Civil Society and NGO unit at UNEP

In 1999 UNEP created a Civil Society and NGO Unit to help civil society participation in environmental decision-making. The unit was set up under the Division of Policy Development and Law and was financed by special grants for NGO/CSO participation from the government of Norway. Norway also supported the division

¹⁸ Natural Allies. Engaging Civil Society in UNEP's Work, 2009

¹⁹ Park Sungho (1999) Report on the Seoul NGOs Conference IVU Available at <https://ivu.org/congress/seoul-ngo/>

²⁰ One Country (2002) In Seoul, a global conference of NGOs focuses on forging deeper partnerships Available at <https://www.onecountry.org/story/seoul-global-conference-ngos-focuses-forging-deeper-partnerships>



Children help the Conservation via the education releasing sea turtle in the ocean. Watamu, Kenya. 2017. © UNEP / Cyril Villemain

with funding for the poverty and environment programme. The location of the CSO unit in DPDL as mentioned in an earlier section did raise some questions from other divisions, and regional offices regarding the nature of the relationship with the unit since many of them had links and partnerships with the civil society. A number of convention secretariats and regional and out-posted offices had already been fostering strong CSO constituencies that they worked with on a regular basis. The Regional Office for Europe, for example, was successful in promoting activities with CSOs, including a significant number of UNEP national committees in the region²¹. Civil society organizations

in Kenya also had links if not structured ones with various programmes of the agency.

The establishment of the CSO unit led to increased expectations from CSOs. These were unfortunately not always met. Travel subsidies for civil society to important policy meetings at UNEP Headquarters were and still remain difficult to obtain. Policy meetings often include outreach projects and ideas on how to engage people in environmental issues. In such instances, CSOs' hopes were not matched by budgetary allocations for the unit to support enhanced engagement with civil society and major group partners. Enhancing civil society

²¹ UNEP (2002) Enhancing civil society engagement in the work of the United Nations Environment programme Implementation of GCSS.VII/5 UNEP Revised Strategy Paper OP cit

engagement in the work of UNEP indeed can enhance UNEP's capacity to respond to environmental problems at all levels, from local to worldwide. However, while agreements were reached in meetings and on paper for funding partnership projects with CSOs, such decisions were also supported with adequate means for effective implementation, in terms of institutional modalities and financial resources. This was in contrast to funding participation in policy meetings, which was negligent. Again, we see funding priorities reflect the conflict between participation in policy meetings and work in the field. At policy meetings, governments could feel exposed to critical analysis from civil society. Work in the field where civil society would implement projects in a practical manner would not necessarily imply critical policy.

In 2000 the first Global Ministerial Environment Forum was held in Malmö pursuant to UNGA Resolution 53/242, at which a Ministerial Declaration was adopted, which foreshadowed an increased focus on the role of the private sector in influencing the course of sustainable development through its investment and technology decisions, a theme that would resonate through the Johannesburg Conference two years later. The Declaration also reaffirmed the role of civil society "at all levels."

An NGO Forum had been held prior to UNEP's first Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF) in May 2000 in Malmö, Sweden. An NGO statement from this forum was presented during the ministerial session. The Malmö Ministerial Declaration²² stresses the importance of civil society in addressing environmental issues and bringing these issues to the attention of policymakers. Thus, it emphasizes the need to strengthen the presence of civil society organizations through broad participation

in environmental decision-making, as well as with access to justice on environmental issues.

During the 21st session of the Governing Council (GC) in February 2001 in Nairobi the decision on International Environmental Governance, IEG, GC 21/21 was adopted, establishing an open-ended Intergovernmental Group of ministers or their representatives to undertake a comprehensive policy-oriented assessment for strengthened International Environmental Governance (IEG). Whereas civil society had so far been given cursory attention by the Committee of Permanent Representatives, after the establishment of the Civil Society NGO unit, the CPR was made aware of the importance and contribution of civil society in matters related to environmental governance. This process also included the contributions of CPR to UNEP as well as to other United Nations entities, international financial institutions, expert institutions, major groups, and individuals outside the United Nations system.

During this session, the decision CG21/19 was also adopted, which called on UNEP to submit "a draft strategy for the active engagement of the civil society, private sector and other major groups in the work of UNEP" considering the recommendations and contributions from civil society organizations meeting with the United Nations Environment Programme.

The discussion about the strategy was initiated through a global consultation with CSOs in Nairobi in May 2001. This was the first CSO Global Forum and was held in Nairobi to discuss IEG. In July 2001, five CSO representatives from around the world and experts met with governments in Bonn to present the CSO's position paper to them. In October and November 2001, regional consultations were held in the five UN regions (Europe & North America, Latin

22 UNEP (2000) Malmö Ministerial Declaration Available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/666264?ln=en>



Youth gather in Karura forest, Nairobi, in solidarity with the global climate youth marches © UNEP

America & Caribbean, West Asia, Asia & Pacific and Africa). Again, the coordination of the process came from the CSO, NGO unit in UNEP.

The Civil Society unit continued to push for the inclusion of civil society in UNEP processes related to governance. Already in 2001 preparations were underway for the upcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development, the WSSD, to take place in September 2002 in Johannesburg. This venue had to focus on IEG-related issues. The upcoming Special Session of the GC/GMEF in February 2002 in Cartagena, Colombia offered an opportunity. The Civil Society unit organised the Global Civil Society Forum held during the 7th GC/GMEF in Cartagena, Colombia. Negotiations between the nine major groups proved difficult. With fresh memories from the violent WTO protests in 1999 in Seattle, where free, unregulated trade had been in focus, the NGO communi-

ty was sceptical of the interests of the Business and Industry Major Group. As the business major group refused to accept any criticism of market forces and private sector activities causing harm to the environment. The civil society groups reached a stalemate. The Indigenous Peoples group managed a compromise text focussing on Gaya principles and safeguarding ecosystem preservation rather than criticising international trade relations. A somewhat watered-down compromise text, but with a clear focus on the environment was accepted. A common statement on IEG was finalised and agreed to by the Nine Major Groups and subsequently presented to the governments at the GC/GMEF. The governments took into consideration their views, which were then included in the draft paper on UNEP's administrative measures for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002.

After active discussions with the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR), a draft strategy was finalized and presented to the Global Civil Society Forum held during the 7th Special Session of the GC/GMEF in February 2002 in Cartagena, Colombia. The civil society recommendations on the strategy were read to the governments, which took their views into consideration when formulating decision GC/SSVII.5. This new decision called on UNEP to “further develop and revise as necessary the strategy on engaging civil society in the programme of activities of UNEP”²³.

For want of greater understanding, the participation of the private sector as part of Civil Society Forums was seen as necessary by UNEP. At the Cartagena meeting, CSO participants pointed out that civil society serves as a mediating function, reconciling social needs and environmental exigencies as opposed to profit-minded corporations and governments that support these. This notion implies that business associations belong to the economic and for-profit sphere, whereas NGOs, labour unions and environmental action groups are part of civil society. Civil society's gadfly and agenda-setting functions cannot be overlooked either.

In response to the Cartagena ministerial decisions, the UNEP Secretariat prepared an implementation plan and set up an interdivisional task group to coordinate the implementation of GCSSVII/5. The first activities undertaken were: The review, in conjunction with the CPR, of the accreditation rule (Rule 69) for CSOs to be observers at the Governing Council. Also, an inventory of the status of civil society engage-

ment, including that of the private sector, in UNEP's Divisions and Regions was undertaken.

A new “Strategy on Engaging Civil Society in the Programme of Activities in UNEP” was developed and was presented in July to the Committee of Permanent Representatives for general comments. In August 2002, the NGO Environmental Liaison Centre International (ELCI) facilitated a worldwide web CSO consultation on the strategy. This “Strategy on Engaging Civil Society in the Programme of Activities in UNEP” is based on the following pillars:

- i. strengthening institutional management, to facilitate transparent and meaningful communication between civil society and UNEP.
- ii. engagement at the policy level, to consider civil society expertise and views at the inter-governmental level; and
- iii. engagement at the programmatic level, to involve civil society in UNEP's implementation of its work programme. Sought to deepen civil society engagement.

According to certain views from major groups and stakeholders, while this format has indeed shown the recognition that a wide number of stakeholders are required to participate in what is a global cross-cutting problem, changes are needed. They propose that this needs revamping because by nature only those organisations able to deal on a global level are those interacting with the UNEP substantively, but this does not encompass the majority of the world.²⁴

²³ Report of the Governing Council on the work of its seventh special session/Global Ministerial Environment Forum 13-15 February 2002, UNEP/GCSS.VII/6

²⁴ Halle Mark and Dodds Felix (2016) UNEP and Civil Society: An exchange A new landscape for stakeholder engagement in UNEP? UNEP Perspectives Issue No 20 March 2016 Available at https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/10007/PERSPECTIVE%2020_5.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

The sensitivity of environmental policies and their effect on UNEP

There was also at times an apparent reluctance by some of the top-level staff to accept the recommendations of the CSO unit's staff who had a long track record of working with CSOs. Speakers and CSO partners who were seen as critical of governments and the agency did not get much support and were discouraged from participating in various fora.

In 1999, because of its physical position in Nairobi, UNEP was tangentially involved in an environmental dispute which involved people from the government of Kenya, local politicians, Kenyan and international NGOs. The issue was how to use a forest area named Karura, which is adjacent to Gigiri, where UNEP is situated. Karura was a particularly environmentally sensitive matter because the Karura Forest was a bio-reserve and a water catchment area. Despite the pressure exerted by local and international NGOs and despite the recommendations of some CSO staff in UNEP, the leadership of UNEP took at first an ambivalent approach to the Karura Forest issue. That Karura Forest is next door to UNEP made it all the more unfortunate²⁵. Because of UNEP's initial ambivalent position in the matter, its approach was viewed as surrender to an action that was environmentally disastrous. It was considered especially by local CSOs as a somewhat shameful record of the leadership of UNEP. Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan politician, environmental advocate and leader of the Green Belt Movement became the principal advocate of, "Save the Karura Forest". She was threatened physically for her engagement and seriously injured at a rally. This led to a direct response from the UN. Klaus Töpfer, the Executive Director of UNEP as well as Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General of

the UN spoke in favour of Ms. Maathai and the environment. Wangari Maathai was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 in recognition of her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace.

The Karura forest incident can illustrate how sensitive an environmental issue is, and how such an issue can involve UN staff people at various levels. Being an intergovernmental institution, it would be 'normal' for staff to lean towards a governmental view. However, this conflict, as with environmental defenders today (2022), will also illustrate how necessary and important it is for a UN body to have a competent and comprehensive understanding based on a representative view from civil society. A civil society unit in the different UN bodies will serve more than one purpose. After all, as the UN is an organisation for "we, the peoples of the world" civil society presence should be more than a symbolic presence.

In many respects, CSOs and NGOs have been more proactive and progressive in their approach than civil servants and delegates. Not responding to people's concerns can easily create an environment of suspicion and mistrust between governments and the civil society sector.

UNEP's administrative measures to integrate CSO engagement

In 2004 UNEP created the Major Groups and Stakeholder Branch, adopted the above-mentioned strategy based on the three pillars.

25 Kenya's Karura Forest, symbol of GreenBelt Movement, suffering death by 1,000 cuts, <https://news.mongabay.com/2015/04/kenyas-karura-forest-symbol-of-greenbelt-movement-suffering-death-by-1000-cuts/>

With a strengthened mandate coming from the strategy, the Civil Society unit continued its work making sure that its existence was important. By being present in Nairobi and integrated in the overall UNEP administrative structure, the unit could follow up initiatives taken by the administration of UNEP or by the governing units of UNEP or simply implement initiatives originated in the recently held 2002 Summit. One such theme was the focus on gender issues highlighted by the 2002 WSSD Summit.

In October 2004, UNEP hosted the “Global Women’s Assembly on Environment” in Nairobi. In her keynote address, Wangari Maathai, Kenya’s then Assistant Minister of Environment and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, expressed her pride and gratitude for having received the Nobel Peace Prize. She stressed the need to make women’s voices heard and to engage decision-makers at all levels. Mathaai stated that by implementing strategies that ensure sustainable development and incorporate democratic values, it is possible to promote respect for rights and responsibilities, justice, and equity. She thanked participants for their support over the long walk and urged all participants to celebrate their collective victory and carry the torch forward. Mathaai was a symbol of fearless civil society activism with a long-term vision despite death threats and persecution from the authorities. She emphasised the need to galvanize civil society and grassroots movements to catalyse change.

UNEP created a Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) in 2008 whose objectives included, catalysing and promoting international cooperation and action drawing on the principles of the

Rio 1992 declaration to place an emphasis on an increased focus on the role of civil society and the private sector, on being responsive to country-level priorities, and on results-based management and calls for deeper CSO engagement.²⁶ As CSOs wanted engagement, capacity building was necessary and in 2009, UNEP published the civil society guidebook “Natural Allies: UNEP and Civil Society.” A paper was also developed relating UNEP strategy and civil society called “Strategic Paper on Enhancing Civil Society Engagement in the Work of UNEP”²⁷

The Rio+20 outcomes pose new challenges

The outcome document from the Rio+20, called “The Future We Want” has since its adoption in 2012 influenced to a great deal the structures that have been set up to engage with civil society within the UN family, including for UNEP. This engagement is tiered - working at the regional level, the Global level and then finally using these to submit input at the United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA). These structures and the way they seek to interact provide examples of how these levels can be achieved. Structurally, the UNEA which was adopted at Rio in 2012, and which replaced the 58-member Governing Council has been called the ‘most significant governance reform that was approved and implemented.’²⁸ The UNEA allows for all major groups and civil society to participate and make submissions to policy issues and institutional processes at UNEP, and which are decided by UNEA.

Furthermore, UNEP has through the work of the Civil Society Unit performed a facilitation

26 UNEP (2009) Natural Allies Engaging Civil Society in UNEP’s Work pg9

27 UNEP (2002) Enhancing civil society engagement in the work of the United Nations Environment programme Implementation of GCSS.VII/5 Revised Strategy Paper

28 Ivanova, Urho Dubrova et al (2019) International Environmental Governance - Accomplishments and Way Forward Nordic Council of Ministers



The 4th United Nations Environment Assembly UNEA 4. Nairobi, Kenya. 2019© UNEP / Natalia Mroz

tive and organisational role to enhance civil society participation through the Regional Cooperation Meetings (RCM) which are organised in conjunction with the regional offices.²⁹ These meetings further offer a chance for civil society to be involved in implementation at the regional level working with the regional offices. At a higher level, the Major Groups Facilitating Committee (MGFC) builds on the work of the RCM which can also offer expert advice and input into strategic documents such as UNEP strategies and also participate in implementation.

UNEP Civil Society Unit, as well as other parts of the institutional structure, as necessary, have roles to facilitate and coordinate enhanced stakeholder input into policy while also working with civil society on implementation. Examples are the UNEP partnership on Principle 10 (access to information), the Civil Society Advisory Body of the Principles for Responsible Banking and indigenous groups. Partnerships with Business and Industry, and The Scientific and Technological Community are other examples^{30,31}.

29 UNEP (2018) Stakeholder Engagement Handbook

30 Partnerships, <https://www.unep.org/civil-society-engagement/partnerships>

31 <https://www.unepfi.org/banking/governance/civil-society-advisory-body/>

Critics have argued that while these have certainly led to increased participation this has come with politicisation and questions of impact and implementation.

And now, where do we go?

More than 20 years have elapsed (2022) since UNEP established the CSOs and NGO unit. The consistent and systematic engagement between UNEP and civil society has been remarkable, even though there is room for more commitment from UNEP's side. The CSOs and Major Groups meetings preceding the UN Environment Assemblies are and have been held, and new institutional vehicles including the coordination of CSO work with MEAS and UNEP are being talked about.

NGOs that participated in a CSO consultation in 2020 called for the following:

- Formulate standard protocols for stakeholder engagement.
- Budget allocations should also include Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) coordination
- Establish an MGS liaison office in Nairobi, and MGS coordination units/focal points at each MEA.

An important recommendation called for is a real political will to remove stakeholders from the current role of "spectator" to that of "actor", by offering them, following the model of the International Labour Organization (ILO), "a deliberative voice" within UNEP and all international environmental institutions.

There was also a demand for measures that should include the strengthening of the coordination of environmental networks at national and sub-national levels and work on

producing a national environmental forum with environmental CSOs, government and private sectors. This long-lasting demand for a whole-of-society approach was endorsed in 2021 by the Executive Director of UNEP³².

With increased interaction UNEP staff in Nairobi and its regional offices have learned to understand and accommodate CSOs/ NGO participation, also with the encouragement from countries like Norway to make the interaction substantive. With the universal membership system of UNEP governance expressed through the UNEA, many member states have also recognized the importance of integrating civil society at different levels.

In this regard, it is also necessary to reform and revitalize the Global Major groups and Multistakeholder Forum (GMGSF) with adequate funding, with the participation of key stakeholders, adequate preparation and "a well-briefed strategic drive"³³

Especially during the decade leading up to the turn of the millennium, including the first few years of this millennium, the UNEP bureaucracy unfortunately often shied away from the enhanced engagement with civil society in its work. Civil servants at UNEP insisted that UNEP is and will remain an intergovernmental organization where decisions are taken by its Member States. Over the past few years, this has been challenged and several have understood the importance and added value of CSO engagement as a necessity for fulfilling the agency's mandate.

Likewise, member states have also come to the realisation that CSOs provide legitimacy to in-

32 Statement by Inger Andersen Executive Director, UNEP see <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/speech/whole-society-approach-planet-crisis>

33 Strandenaes et al. in The UNEP We Want Report of the Major Groups and other Stakeholders for UNEP@50 FINAL DRAFT (March 3, 2022) page 69

tergovernmental negotiations and thus will mitigate the “democratic deficit” in global policymaking, which takes place far away from domestic political arenas.

In view of the way environmental governance has changed worldwide in the past two decades, further actions are needed by the CSO actors to enhance their standing on how representative they are and if their demands and ideas are indeed a reflection of public demands. It has been often said that Civil Society lacks legitimacy and accountability.

UNEP’s relationship with stakeholders is not always straightforward as UNEP is, and UNEP feels strongly that it is an intergovernmental organisation. This sentiment may have been further strengthened by the establishment of the UN Environment Assembly which now has universal membership, meaning all governments are represented at UNEA. The feeling towards civil society generally continues the line adopted in the 2002 GMEF in Cartagena: “ While it was generally agreed that partnerships with civil society and the private sector were important to the achievement of sustainable development, the view was also expressed that the fundamental nature of the Governing Council/ Global Ministerial Environment Forum, namely, its intergovernmental structure, should be maintained.”³⁴

In many advocacy organizations, decisions are taken by a small number of people who may or may not be elected based on representativity. The general public is often not even members of civil society organizations—and usually has no possibility to hold the leadership of civil society groups accountable for their actions. Hence there is a need for enhanced civil soci-

ety participation in close communication with the public in order to promote public support for global environmental policies.

In light of the multiple crises that we face, with uneven recovery from the pandemic, the climate crisis, new and ongoing wars and conflicts, the global food crisis, and problems with energy and financial markets, civil society clearly has more than ever a greater role to play in global governance and environmental governance, and by all means not an unimportant role in either for that matter.

The establishment of the Civil Society unit dates back to 1999. While stating officially that the collaboration between UNEP and civil society continues to grow significantly, UNEP continues to state that: “The Civil Society Unit is part of the Secretariat of the Governing Bodies at UNEP and is committed to partnering with Major Groups and Stakeholders in order to ensure transparency and inclusiveness in the intergovernmental decision-making process at UNEP. The Unit’s mandate is to engage with accredited civil society organizations such as not-for-profit organizations, networks and associations, that contribute valuable expertise and knowledge, play key advocacy functions and support the implementation of UNEP’s mandate. They also channel the voices of those most likely to be directly affected by environmental problems and related policies, and call needed attention to emerging issues as they reach out to their respective communities and the public at large.”³⁵

Looking at organograms displaying the organizational structure of different UN entities more than ten years ago, and comparing them with today’s organograms, there is a striking differ-

34 Seventh special session Cartagena, 13-15 February 2002 Report of the Governing Council on the work of its seventh special session/Global Ministerial Environment Forum 13-15 February 2002, UNEP/GCSS.VII/6

35 UNEP (2022) Civil Society Unit. Available at <https://www.unep.org/ar/node/21536>

ence – the number of units dealing exclusively with civil society have been dramatically reduced. UNEP is one of the few that still has a dedicated office for civil society. Does this development reflect a general trend today, that an increasing number of governments are uncomfortable with the voice of civil society, which is supposed to be a critical corrigendum to what governments are doing – or not doing?³⁶

The interaction between different social, economic and political variables – as well as environmental factors, are beyond borders and not limited to nation-states. Wars and armed conflicts in vulnerable countries though local in nature, the impacts are not confined to the countries involved. The nature of civil society engagement in these cases is of the third generation in nature. As Tony Hill observed, “the dialectic at play will hinge upon the degree to which governments invest political capital (and financial resources) in the UN system as it moves forward as the existing backbone of the global governance system; and the degree to which civil society continues to invest its ‘public opinion’ power in UN fora both to influence and empower governments and counter the power and influence of the private sector³⁷.”

Civil society participation has evolved over the years into a necessary condition for effective and legitimate global environmental governance including that of UNEP’s governance. However, we know that civil society’s commitment and fight for democracy, for human rights and justice, and for environmental protection and people’s well-being is under pressure from right-wing politics and repressive governments everywhere. One of UNEP’s future challenges will also be the protection and

expansion of environmental governance in which civil society organisations must be integrated at all levels of participation and decision-making. And even if UNEP’s administration is willing to make this happen, are UNEP’s members, the states of the world also willing to safeguard the role of civil society? Enhancing the efforts of national governments and the UN/UNEP to achieve the SDGs will bear fruit only with the strengthening the civil society. Only then civil society can act with determination and strength to facilitate checks and balances. As we have seen during the three generations of UN- CSO relationships, CSOs can offer alternative policy options, demand accountability, question existing policies, and articulate demands from different political, social, economic and cultural actors for the world we want.



36 CIVICUS (2021) State of Civil Society Report Overview Available <https://civicus.org/state-of-civil-society-report-2021/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/CIVICUS-State-of-Civil-Society-Report-ENG-OVERVIEW.pdf>

37 Tony Hill, *Opcit.*



Delegates arriving at UNEA 3. Nairobi, Kenya © UNEP / Natalia Mroz



Minamata Convention COP 4 © IISD/ENB Kiara Worth

Supporting National & Global Efforts Towards a Zero Mercury Future

by **Elena Lymberidi-Settimo**, Policy Manager Zero Mercury Campaign at the European Environmental Bureau and Zero Mercury Working Group International Co-coordinator
& **Michael Bender**, Director of the Mercury Policy Project and Zero Mercury Working Group International Co-coordinator

World governments awakening to the global mercury crisis

The Minamata Disease initially brought the mercury issue to the global forefront, eventually resulting in the development of a new legally binding treaty on mercury. Starting at the turn of the century and after nearly a decade of deliberations and then negotiations, the Minamata Convention on Mercury entered into force in 2017.

It is now 70 years since the most horrific mercury poisoning disaster the world has ever seen, took place in Minamata, Japan - now known as Minamata disease.

The toxic effects of mercury on the human nervous systems were seen in the 1950s in the fishing village of Minamata, Japan. One of the most toxic of mercury compounds, methylmercury, was in the waste product dumped into the Minamata Bay on a massive scale by a chemical plant that had used a mercury catalyst in the production of acetaldehyde. The mercury worked its way up the food chain and contaminated seafood in Minamata Bay. People ate the fish, were themselves contaminated, and became ill. They suffered from very high fever, convulsions, psychosis, loss of consciousness, coma, and finally death. The resulting illnesses, called Minamata disease, sickened residents, including pregnant women and led to severe deformities in their new-borns.

All told, thousands of people contracted Minamata disease and more than 1,700 died, according to the Japanese Government.¹

Since then, additional large scale mercury poisoning incidents occurred throughout the world and scientists as well as governments began to pay attention.

In the 1970's, the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) had long shown interest in the human health risks of chemicals, including mercury in fish. Among these countries, Sweden observed that many of its lakes had elevated levels of mercury due to trans-boundary movements of atmospheric mercury, and later the tendency of atmospheric mercury to move northward under certain climatic conditions was also demonstrated. A group

of Japanese people visibly suffering from the Minamata disease, was present in Stockholm in 1972, making a strong statement.

Fast forward to the 21st Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), (February 2001)ⁱⁱ the EU, supported by the US and the Arctic Council, called for an investigation of the global impacts of mercury. Subsequently, a decision was made to undertake a global assessment of mercury, involving a vast array of experts from around the world including the civil society contingent organized by the Mercury Policy Project (MPP), the Basel Action Network and other NGOs.

How civil society engagement started

Following up on the request from the Governing Council (GC), UNEP invited governments and other stakeholders to submit information relevant to mercury and mercury compounds in order to assess the need for future controls on global mercury uses and releases. In response to UNEP's invitation, the Mercury Policy Project, MPP, was asked to help organise civil society input. Yet the need for tighter regulations on mercury had been on the civil society agenda for a long time prior to this request.

Initially, a small international NGO coalition was organised to attend the 2002 Global Mercury Assessment (GMA) meeting in Geneva and provided input into the development of the GMA report. Given the multi-dimensional aspects of the global mercury crisis and the fact that different types of expertise would be necessary, the need for the development of a more formalised global NGO network became evident.

The GC considered the Global Mercury Assessment report (GMA)ⁱⁱⁱ at its 22nd session in February 2003^{iv} and agreed that "there is sufficient evidence of significant global adverse impacts from mercury and its compounds to warrant further international action to reduce the

risks to human health and the environment." The report clearly demonstrated that anthropogenic mercury uses, and releases present a significant exposure risk to human health, wildlife, fish and the environment. It also underlined the need for globally coordinated solutions since, due to long-distance intercontinental transport, all countries, including those with little or no mercury releases were adversely affected by mercury's global reach.

In response, in collaboration with key NGO partners, MPP and the European Environmental Bureau (EEB)^v decided to formalize the international NGO coalition working on mercury issues naming the global coalition the Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG)^{vi}. The purpose of the ZMWG was to undertake research, plan and promote mercury reductions and support a multi-faceted collaboration internationally. MPP and EEB have co-coordinated the work since 2005. ZMWG's mission is to support voluntary initiatives along with the adoption and implementation of a legally binding instrument to eliminate where feasible, and otherwise minimise, the global demand, supply, and trade of mercury, as well as anthropogenic releases of and exposures to mercury.

To reach this objective the ZMWG network initiated a two-pronged strategy. First, ZMWG contributed to any significant mercury reduction policy development at the global level as well as at the regional and national levels via its network; and second, it engaged and supported work of NGOs from the Global South. ZMWG is still (2023) working in this way.

As discussions within the UN community were beginning to understand the likely need for a legally binding treaty, this also propelled our work to a higher level. It also gave extra context to national work which would eventually feed into the global developments and elevated our evolving multidimensional global mercury reduction work, as discussed further below.

In parallel, since 2005 several projects have been funded every year (via the EEB, the ZMWG secretariat) in over 30 countries. At the same time, there have been numerous other NGO initiatives all over the world, contributing to our overall objectives. The work in the EU and global South was initially jump-started by one main funder, which enabled the development of a robust ZMWG network. Several other funders have continued supporting this work even today, although overall support is waning, as mercury and chemicals focused work appears to be a lower priority among funders.

Mercury and health - Key facts (World Health Organization)

- Mercury is a naturally occurring element that is found in air, water and soil.
- Exposure to mercury – even small amounts – may cause serious health problems, and is a threat to the development of the child in utero and early in life.
- Mercury may have toxic effects on the nervous, digestive and immune systems, and on lungs, kidneys, skin and eyes.
- Mercury is considered by WHO as one of the top ten chemicals or groups of chemicals of major public health concern.
- People are mainly exposed to methylmercury, an organic compound, when they eat fish and shellfish that contain the compound.

Mercury's global reach and detrimental impacts

Mercury is a persistent, bioaccumulative toxicant (PBT) that knows no boundaries and is now omnipresent in the global environment due to centuries of haphazard use, trade and



Figure 1: ZMWG strategy meeting October 2012, Brussels © ZMWG

releases. Mercury emissions have risen three-to-five-fold over the past two centuries due to anthropogenic releases.

Mercury is released via both natural causes (i.e., volcanoes) and human activities, including primary mercury mining, secondary mining operations, artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM), cement kilns, cultural and religious uses, industrial processes (e.g. coal fired power plants, chlorine production, waste incineration), oil and natural gas production, mercury added products (e.g. measuring devices, lamps, thermostats, skin lightening creams, dental amalgam) and many other sources.

When airborne, mercury becomes a transcontinental pollutant that, once deposited, bioaccumulates and biomagnifies as it makes its way up the aquatic food chain into humans. Because of this, governments across the world increasingly warn people—and especially sensitive populations—to restrict their intake of certain types of fish to avoid excess exposure to mercury, which interferes with brain functions and the nervous system.

The populations most vulnerable to mercury's toxic effects are pregnant women (because it affects the developing fetus) and children.



Figure 2: ZMWG background poster used in our booth since 2017 © ZMWG

Even in low doses, mercury exposure may affect a child's neurological development, impacting attention span, fine-motor function, language, visual-spatial abilities (such as drawing), and verbal memory. In adults, acute and chronic mercury poisoning can cause memory loss, tremors, vision loss, numbness of the fingers and toes, and can contribute to heart disease in adults, and in severe cases can lead to death.^{vii}

The World Health Organisation has concluded that there are no safe limits when it comes to exposure to mercury and its organic compounds. It is classified among the ten most toxic substances^{viii}, and the impacts of mercury on human health have been known for centuries. Figure 2 above further describes why global actions are needed to curtail mercury's global reach.



Figure 3: Examples of ZMWG funded projects around the world © ZMWG

The ZMWG strategy

When the ZMWG was created there was no other global NGO coalition following global mercury work. Through organising and fund raising, the network evolved and formed a coordination team, representing all global regions, to develop its mission, goals and objectives, and annual work plan. Led by its coordination team, the network implemented activities guided by strategic policy discussions and regular consultation with other NGO networks, indigenous peoples, scientists, academia and oftentimes, interested governments.

From the start, the ZMWG sought partner NGO representatives from all regions, but also representatives of vulnerable populations, indigenous peoples and women's organisations, and others potentially affected and interested in working on mercury exposure reduction activities, supported by awareness raising. This included regular engagement by NGOs from strategically important countries like the EU, US, Japan, South Africa, the Philippines, Brazil, India and China, among others, many of whom

had already or were beginning to recognise their own country's mercury pollution and exposure issues. Step by step the network grew to include health, environmental, women's and indigenous NGOs, currently totalling more than 110 NGOs from over 55 countries.

Particularly after the treaty negotiations started, our network has collaborated with many other NGO networks, such as the International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN), HealthCare Without Harm (HCWH), the Global Alliance for Incineration Alternatives (GAIA), Greenpeace, the World Alliance for Mercury Free Dentistry (WAMFD) and the Clean Lighting Coalition (CLiC).

The importance of bringing the latest sound scientific evidence, along with the need for successful demonstration projects, to the table was also identified as a critical need. To that end, the ZMWG identified for funding, key projects and NGOs with the necessary expertise, from around the globe, whose objectives were designed to bring forth targeted mercury re-



Figure 4: ZMWG Action raising awareness on mercury added skin lightening products, INC4, Punta del Este, Uruguay, June 2012 © ZMWG



Figure 5: The ZMWG co-coordinators at the booth at INC5, Geneva, Switzerland, January 2013 © ZMWG

duction initiatives. Our partner NGOs subsequently shared information, including promising examples of the ground demonstration projects that could be replicated by others, particularly in the Global South.

For example (figure 3), early ZMWG projects examined the use of mercury in cultural uses in India; the use and exposure from measuring devices in China; mercury in skin lightening creams in Armenia, Georgia and Belarus; mercury-added lamps in the Philippines, as well as the economics associated with technology to shift away from mercury in the chlor-alkali industry in India and Brazil, and measuring mercury pollution in Jordan, Morocco, and Kenya. Funded projects also successfully promoted mercury-free processes in artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) and reduction in mercury releases from small-scale gold refinery facilities in Tanzania as well as supporting bans on the export of mercury in the EU, US, and Japan.

The ZMWG has often been invited by UNEP to assist in presenting updates on various mercury reduction activities at multiple awareness raising events hosted by UNEP around the world. Over the years, the ZMWG has often brought its network members with various areas of expertise to share this expertise in different UNEP and WHO expert committees and meetings, along with engagement in the Global Mercury Partnerships.

At the same time, NGOs from the Global South brought the voice of their country's civil society to the table, as the network fostered both national level engagement as well as participation of these NGOs in international meetings. UNEP also recognised such need for NGO presence and input, and financially supported NGO participation at various meetings, which also provided the support needed to build our network. In short, it was a win-win collaboration.

From nearly the start of the global mercury deliberations, the ZMWG participated in all relevant meetings – including the UNEP GC, Open Ended Working Groups (OEWGs), all Intergovernmental Negotiating Committees and the Diplomatic Conference (which led to the development and adoption of the Minamata Convention on Mercury) as well as all Conference of the Parties (COPs) of the Convention.

Our advocacy included development of position papers (“ZMWG views” - before each major international meeting), fact sheets, published scientific overviews and studies, testing fish, hair and skin lightening products for mercury world-wide, and most recently engaging in consultations with the CNN “White Lies” campaign.^{ix} With the assistance of our network, ZMWG organized exhibitions, webinars and side-events bringing well-known scientists to the negotiations, as well as awareness raising events and actions, and had an exhibition booth in all meetings. To their credit, UNEP always supported such participation and input and often encouraged it in the respective meetings.

We always sought to contribute constructively to the process and, upon request, assisted governments that needed more support in understanding technical issues as well as advice on negotiating strategy matters. The ZMWG played a catalytic role in bringing together parties/governments to understand various positions, identify areas of common ground and build coalitions across the regions, typically resulting in more robust results.

As a direct result of the NGO expert input, governments often offered proposals based on research or policy views provided by ZMWG as the starting point for deliberations. This often resulted in a final GC decision or negotiated texts that aligned with ZMWG objectives, although

often the outcomes were not as far-reaching as we would have liked.

UNEP often acknowledged the wealth of information and contributions our NGO network could provide, and asked MPP for assistance in creating a critical resource document – the “*Mercury Awareness Raising Toolkit*” – for developing countries and countries with economies in transition. These and other collaborations contributed toward building overwhelming support, leading to international consensus at UNEP’s GC 25, which decided to start the process aimed at developing a legally binding instrument.

In parallel, the ZMWG has been an active member of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership^x since it was launched in 2005 and helped initiate and lead certain partnerships. The network has been cooperating with UNEP ever since, to elevate different matters and bring new evidence to the table. This collaboration has often helped UNEP to inform governments and stakeholders and allows ZMWG to bring its expertise to a higher level.

At the same time, the ZMWG followed early and important legislative initiatives at the EU level and in the US, along with many other proactive country measures around the globe. For example, the work of European NGOs with the support of the ZMWG contributed to the adoption of the EU Mercury Strategy (2005, 2010); EU instruments banning the use of mercury in measuring devices (2007); a mercury export ban and storage requirements for mercury waste (2008), as well as reducing the mercury content in fluorescent lamps (2010), leading to a ban (2023). These and other pieces of legislation played an important role in the later negotiations and reflect the elements now included in the Minamata Convention. Again, their relevance was acknowledged by UNEP officials at the time.

As recognition of the global mercury crisis was starting to gain more traction, the ZMWG continued raising funds, channelled to relevant NGO projects. These funds helped sustain the network’s ongoing strategy of following the key issues and the evolving national and regional positions by governments, and subsequently contributed to influencing global mercury reduction policies.

The funds from UNEP in the early years of the UNEP GC deliberations and negotiations played a crucial role in facilitating NGO participation at the meetings, mainly for travel and lodging. Furthermore, UNEP facilitated procedural access to meetings through its GC structures, via the Major Groups but also via its Civil Society and stakeholders’ office.

UNEP Governing Council Deliberations Ultimately Led Toward Negotiations

Only after three consecutive meetings in 2003, 2005 and 2007 did the UNEP Governing Council in 2009 finally move beyond voluntary “partnership” initiatives. The critical decision that a legally binding instrument was needed to address the global mercury crisis was most welcomed by NGOs.

Leading up to that decision, ZMWG helped facilitate numerous mercury reduction demonstration projects and/or awareness raising, plus promoting information, actions and policies.

Figure 6 presents some NGOs of the first ZMWG team engaging at GC 23 from the EU, US, South Africa, Brazil, China and India; indigenous peoples were also represented at that meeting.

The UNEP GC decision paved the way for an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to be established, to negotiate and agree on the text for a legally binding instrument on mercury. Five INCs took place – one in 2010, two

in 2011, INC 4 in 2012 and INC 5 in 2013, which led to the adoption of the treaty text.

The ZMWG work continued. Preparation before each INC required extensive background research into potential approaches and texts in areas such as supply, trade, phasing out mercury added products, processes, emissions control, artisanal and small-scale gold mining, interim storage and environmentally sound management of waste, financial support, and enforcement; and drafting of proposed views. It also included ongoing outreach and consultations with UNEP and governments; global NGO coordination; and participation in the INC deliberations themselves.

The ZMWG continued its robust attendance and strong presence throughout the many, many meetings, with widespread NGO delegate participation. This included, providing fact-based evidence, raising awareness, building the capacity of NGOs in developing countries, all the while pushing leading countries and regions to go further towards instituting global mercury reductions.

Treaty Breakthrough in 2013

After the last multilateral environmental agreement was adopted, the text of the Minamata Convention on Mercury was finalised on 19 January 2013, in Geneva, by governments, NGOs, UNEP, WHO, other IGOs and stakeholders. For the first time, the treaty includes a health article, and its focus is to reduce pollution and exposure to this dangerous neurotoxin. The treaty is a mixture of mandatory and voluntary elements intended to control the burgeoning global mercury crisis.

While the treaty is a major accomplishment, it does not move fast enough to address the global mercury crisis. Through various time extended provisions, the treaty increases the time required to reduce mercury pollution over the next decade. The treaty allows existing primary



Figure 6: The ZMWG co-coordinators at the booth at INC5, Geneva, Switzerland, January 2013 © ZMWG

mercury mining to continue for some years; it lacks near-term regulatory controls on mercury emissions from major sources like coal-fired power plants, as well as those from the continued allowance of mercury use in artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM), nor does it address mercury emissions from oil and gas production.

However, there are many bright spots in the treaty. These include provisions to reduce mercury trade, prohibit 'new' primary mining of mercury, and phase out mercury in most products, including in measuring devices (i.e. thermometers), batteries, pesticides, and cosmetics. Maximum mercury levels were also set for energy efficient lamps and phase down measures are required to reduce mercury use in dentistry. Additionally, the meetings of the Conference of Parties are geared toward ratcheting down remaining mercury uses and releases over time.

Some of these steps were almost unthinkable at the turn of the century. Now, alternatives exist for most all industrial processes and products containing mercury and the treaty sends the right market signal on phasing out all mercury uses globally. Clearly, there are proven mercury-free technologies available to phase out mercury use in artisanal and small-

scale gold mining (ASGM), the largest of the remaining users of mercury. However, the political will is still not there to end mercury use in ASGM or the continued primary mining in several countries.

Treaty ratification

After the adoption of the treaty text, UNEP organised workshops to support and prepare countries for swift ratification. UNEP again invited and financially supported ZMWG NGOs to participate and present their extensive experiences during these workshops. Through this fruitful collaboration, not only did governments benefit from the NGO on-the-ground experiences, but our NGO partners also built their expertise, capacities and networks in order to further serve their own countries. This expertise was acknowledged nationally as many NGOs within our network were invited to integrate the multi-stakeholder national mercury working groups that started to be formed to support the process.

Finally, four years after its adoption, the Convention entered into force in August 2017, after 50 countries had ratified the Convention. Four Conference of the Parties¹ (COPs) have taken place since then.

Since the Convention's adoption, countries' efforts have been increasing, many Minamata Initial Assessments (MIA) have been carried out and 139 countries have now ratified. Awareness raising and support has been provided through different means including the recently released "Minamata" movie, bringing once more in light the historical events in Minamata. The movie further reinforces the need for global action in

preventing toxic chemicals from spreading to our environment.^{xi}

In recent years the ZMWG work has focused primarily on strengthening new Convention provisions at the COPs as well as supporting governments in developing countries, via their NGOs or directly, to implement the provisions of the Minamata Convention, (e.g., phasing out mercury added products and mercury use from artisanal and small-scale goldmining.)

Many useful tools have been developed, including guides to phase out mercury added products, phase down dental amalgam and for governmental enforcement policies to reduce exposure to skin lightening products. Pilot studies and work continue to take place in different countries. Governments have welcomed this assistance and the opportunity to collaborate in order to streamline their work and make better use of limited resources. As presented below, many of these tools have been developed, amongst others, thanks to UNEP's continuing support to the EEB, MPP and ZMWG, via the African Caribbean Pacific Multilateral Environmental Agreements programme.^{xii}

Looking towards the future

Many successes have been achieved and procedures and guidance documents^{xiii} have been adopted to facilitate treaty implementation. The treaty has been strengthened by phasing out additional mercury added products and processes while promoting harmonization of customs codes to allow countries to distinguish mercury added from mercury free products. These processes have been supported by intersessional^{xiv} expert groups' work to which ZMWG has been contributing.

¹ At most all of the conventions that have been ratified organise annual conferences for the signatory countries to discuss how to further proceed with the conventions, monitor progress, identify obstacles etc. These meetings are known as Conference of the Parties, or COPs. The best known COPs are the one on Climate Change and the one on biodiversity



Enforcement measures to restrict high mercury cosmetic products under the Minamata Convention



Mercury
Policy Project



Swedish Society
for Nature Conservation



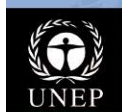
Guide and Checklist for Phasing Out Mercury-added Products Under the Minamata Convention on Mercury



ACP MEAs 2



Lessons from Countries Phasing Down Dental Amalgam Use



March 2016

© ZMWG

On the ground, among others, resources from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) have been supporting Minamata Initial Assessments and work towards controlling and where feasible eliminating mercury use in ASGM. The Specific International Programme (SIP) has also been supporting national capacity building and technical assistance of Parties.

While the rate of reporting from Parties is very high, further analysis is needed to better understand how implementation of the Treaty provisions has advanced. The process for evaluating the effectiveness of the Treaty has started, and only when completed, will we have a clearer picture on overall achievements in terms of reducing mercury emissions and exposure.

In summary, in order to create a healthy and equitable living environment for future generations, we must stop the circle of poison that mercury use, and trade, and pollution perpetuate. Voluntary and aspirational international targets are insufficient; no single country or region can resolve the mercury problem on its own, therefore strengthening, implementing and enforcing the Minamata Convention on Mercury is key. There are alternatives to mercury, but there is no alternative to international determination, cooperation, and action and the NGOs can play an important role in all that.

To that end we are looking forward to continuing a fruitful collaboration with the Minamata Secretariat and UNEP, to make mercury history!

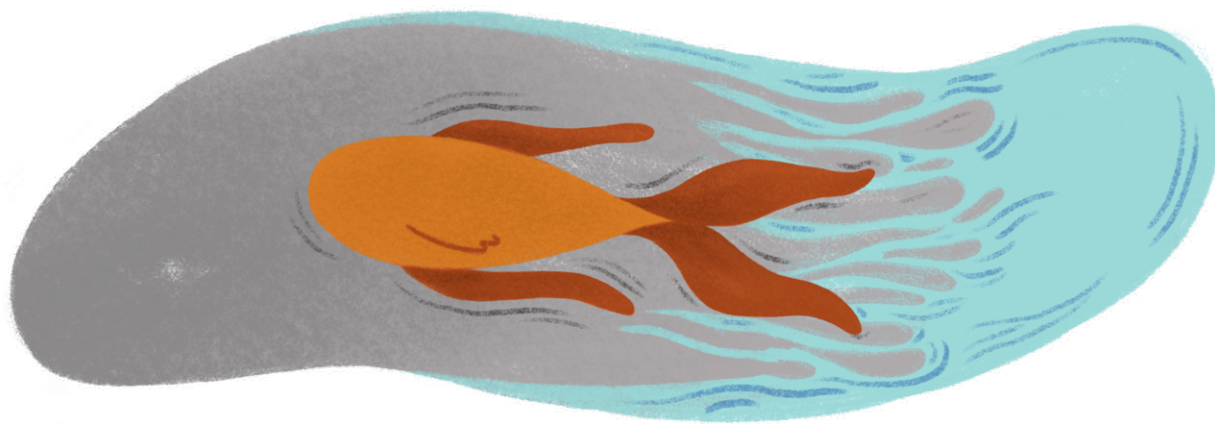




Figure 7: ZMWG at COP4, Bali, Indonesia, March 2022 © ZMWG



Participants at the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention in 2019 stand and chant “Make Mercury History” during the closing plenary session © IISD / ENB / Sean Wu

ⁱ <http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=2702&ArticleID=9374&l=en>

ⁱⁱ <https://enb.iisd.org/events/21st-session-unep-governing-council-and-2nd-global-ministerial-environment-forum-gc21gmef-6>

ⁱⁱⁱ UNEP (2002) Report of the Global Mercury Assessment Working Group on the Work of Its First Meeting. Geneva, Switzerland.

^{iv} <https://enb.iisd.org/events/22nd-session-unep-governing-council/global-ministerial-environment-forum-gc22gmef/summary>

^v www.eeb.org

^{vi} www.zeromercury.org

^{vii} Health effects from exposure during development as well as during adulthood listed by NAS/NRC, op. cit. note 4; additional heart-related effects from Jyrki K. Virtanen et al., “Mercury, Fish Oils, and Risk of Acute Coronary Events and Cardiovascular Disease, Coronary Heart Disease, and All-Cause Mortality in Men in Eastern Finland,” *Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis, and Vascular Biology*, vol. 25, no. (2005), pp. 228–33.

^{viii} <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mercury-and-health#:~:text=Mercury%20is%20considered%20by%20WHO,shellfish%20that%20contain%20the%20compound>

^{ix} <https://www.cnn.com/specials/world/white-lies-skin-whitening>

^x <https://www.unep.org/globalmercurypartnership/>

^{xi} [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minamata_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minamata_(film))

^{xii} The ACP MEAs programme is a joint partnership between the European Union, the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, UN Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. <https://www.zeromercury.org/devco-unep-project/>

^{xiii} <https://www.mercuryconvention.org/en/about/forms-guidance>

^{xiv} <https://www.mercuryconvention.org/en/intersessional-work-and-submissions-cop-5>



The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) launched its #BeatPollution campaign in 2017
© IISD/ENB/Mike Muzarakis

Sustainable Consumption and Production – not only a challenge for UNEP

by **Victoria W. Thoresen**, Professor

BROKEN LINKS AND HARMFUL CONSEQUENCES

Since the Second World War many individuals and groups have tried to gain insight into the consequences of peoples' lifestyle choices. Already in 1998, The United Nations Development Program's Human Development Report highlighted the following:

“Consumption clearly contributes to human development when it enlarges the capabilities and enriches the lives of people without adversely affecting the well-being of others. It clearly contributes when it is as fair to future generations as it is to the present ones. And it clearly contributes when it encourages lively, creative individuals and communities. But the links are often broken, and when they are, consumption patterns and trends are inimical to human development...The real issue is not consumption itself but its patterns and effects. Consumption patterns today must be changed to advance human development tomorrow.”

Agenda 2030's SDG12 states categorically that “unsustainable patterns of production and consumption are root causes of the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.” According to existing research, unsustainable patterns of production and consumption also contribute to poverty, crime, social disorder and mental illness. A philosophy of consumerism dominates much of the planet, based on the conviction that increasingly more makes things increasingly better. Producers claim they merely react to the market and the demands of the consumer. Consumers maintain that they deserve the right to purchase whatever they want as long as they have the means to do so. Governments explain unbalanced financial flows as being due to their country's inherent superiority, historical background or national boundaries. Media asserts that marketing “luxury” is their main means of survival. Shopping has even been hailed as a “patriotic duty” by a past American president. Excessive consumption continues to be a force shaping societies while, in many countries, families struggle to meet their basic needs

and millions experience the ravages of climate change and environmental degradation.

There is a dawning recognition amongst the public at large of the imperative necessity to change existing consumption and production patterns that have negative impacts on the environment and life quality. This is due in part to the work of civil society (including academia, science, and the media); in part to the work of UNEP; and in part to collaboration between civil society and UNEP. However, despite information, guidelines, agreements and regulations, significant changes in consumption and production patterns have yet to occur. This testifies to the crucial and urgent need to adjust and intensify the work of UNEP, civil society, governments, and the private sector, individually and together, in relation to just, sustainable consumption and production (SCP).

Historically speaking

Several processes have influenced how consumption and production have been regarded over the last fifty years by both UNEP and civil society. These could be briefly referred to as: the blame-game, the development-switch, the technological take-over, and the solidarity-clamour.

The “blame game” emerged as scientific evidence grew confirming the destructive impact of human activity on the climate. Debates ensued as to who was primarily responsible for causing the environmental damage: individuals (e.g. consumers), industries or governments. When finger-pointing was aimed at the individual consumer, the concept of consumer responsibility gained momentum. When acknowledgement of the systemic dynamics behind consumer behaviour became more evident, manufacturers began to be expected to “green” both their production processes and products. When it became clear that voluntary codes were insufficient to steer produc-

tion towards more sustainable practices, governments were accused of merely standing by and eventually more national and international legislation began to appear on the horizon. Parallel to the above mentioned events was the “development-switch”. For decades, economic development was regarded as the primus motor of social development. It was the end-all goal of governments around the globe, be they rich or poor. Increased consumption was the key. Evidence provided by, among others, the UNDP Human Development Index clearly indicated that economic growth did not guarantee social development. Human development involved a wider range of interconnected efforts which included such elements as the reduction of inequalities, improved access to education and more all-encompassing global solidarity. Economic development remains at the core of Agenda 2030; however, emphasis on the interdependency of all the goals is an obvious attempt to integrate the diverse dimensions of human development into the ultimate goal of moving towards more just, sustainable development for all.

Technological innovation has long been deemed the backbone of progress. It has even been considered by some to be the source of salvation from the present crises affecting the world. As opposed to behaviour change and altered patterns of consumption, new technology is often viewed as being a means of maintaining the status quo (e.g. unfettered consumption and production) by simply modifying either production processes, products or both. With the advent of the concept of circular economy, maintaining existing levels of production gained legitimization as long as products could be reused or recycled. The fact that even reused and recycled items have end dates to their existence has not significantly reduced the enthusiasm many environmentalists have to this approach.

The “solidarity clamour” refers to the growing call for more equitable use and distribution of



Images captured during a video shoot at Gikomba Market for the European Commission on circular economy
© UNEP / Ahmed Nayim Yussuf

resources. Biased availability, unjust policies (such as tax evasion and favouritism), and psychological brainwashing (via messages such as “you deserve it” or “the good life is having this or that luxury item”) have reinforced accepted norms supporting excessive consumption in parts of the world and “under-consumption” in others. Demands for greater transparency and accountability as regards production and marketing have begun to be heard. Appeals are being made for new definitions of “prosperity” and greater focus on what constitutes a healthy balance between the material and the non-material aspects of life. Conscientious consumption, collaborative consumption, sufficiency and degrowth initiatives have surfaced. These efforts seemingly materializing from empathy-based visions of social responsibility. New perspectives on knowledge creation intro-

duced the idea that individuals and communities (including indigenous cultures and youth) could cooperatively identify and find solutions to environmental problems in their locality.

Intermittent feedback loops

Collaboration is ideally a process of dialectical interaction in which one part of a system is dependent upon the feedback of another. It can best be illustrated with the figure of the infinity loop ∞ . The continuous exchange of information, thoughts, feelings, needs and desires lie at the core of the majority of human activities be they consumption, governance, or even friendship and love. In many parts of the world, as well as within some international agencies, autocracy and top-down governance has gradually opened for greater collabo-

ration with stakeholders. This has also been the case with UNEP. Collaboration between UNEP and civil society in relation to SCP can be categorized as follows:

1. Civil society actors have provided UNEP with relevant research and scientific data. In some instances UNEP has sought input to the Global Environment Outlook Reports, in others they have funded projects to investigate specific aspects of SCP.
2. Civil society organizations have functioned as informal liaisons between UNEP and government ministries (particularly where environmental issues were a part of different ministries).
3. A selection of willing civil society organizations have acted as consultants providing advice to UNEP and consulting on matters related to SCP. The One Planet Programme (originally referred to as the Ten Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production) and its predecessor The Marrakech Task Force Ten-year Programme are examples of this.
4. Civil society organizations have collaborated by creating awareness amongst public, spreading information, resources, and guidance about themes and actions which UNEP has focused upon.
5. Sometimes civil society has served as advocates for UNEP's approach to certain SCP themes.

As a relatively small international agency, UNEP has been dependent upon collaboration with civil society. Unfortunately, this collaboration has, over the last fifty years, been characterized by interruptions, misunderstandings and disagreements. A thorough analysis of the causes of difficulties between UNEP and civil soci-

ety organizations is beyond the scope of this short article. Nonetheless, certain ones can be identified.

A number of these impediments have been the result of ideological disagreements. An example of this is the role of the precautionary principle as it relates to SCP. Once a fundamental doctrine of environmental stewardship, it has faded into the background in political discussions led by UNEP, while many civil society organizations continue to call for its implementation. Another example is that of the significance of education in connection to changing patterns of consumption and production. Although UNEP has supported international environmental programs in the past and cooperated with UNESCO on a number of initiatives, as well as having education for SCP as a theme in a few earlier programs, focus on the role of learning as a key factor in achieving SCP has progressively become weaker. Information spreading and "nudging" have received far greater attention. That innovative technology and circular economy will solve the conundrums of SCP has also emerged as a conviction strongly supported by UNEP. This has fostered concern from civil society representatives who seriously question continued over-consumption.

As with many organizations, some collaboration problems have come from administrative procedures. Communication between UNEP leadership and the civil society organizations it tries to collaborate with has not always been clear, concise or consistent. Civil society organizations that have been requested to contribute to SCP work have also seen their collective efforts ignored or shelved without explanation in favour of approaches created by UNEP staff.



Jairam Ramesh, Minister of Environment and Forests, India and **Mrs. Sheila Dikshit**, Chief Minister of Delhi on a Tree Planting Ceremony at Jaunapur. June 2011 © UNEP

Unravelling greater understanding

UNEP's mandate is to function as the main international agency contributing to the identification of important environmental challenges, promoting the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development and advocating relevant changes. The enigma buried within this mandate is the fact that no one yet has a clear definition of what constitutes sustainable development. This makes identifying what SCP is a highly convoluted

undertaking that UNEP cannot do on its own. Neither can it succeed by creating alliances solely with governments and the private sector.

In addition to partnerships with governments and the private sector, improved collaboration with civil society is essential. It is a process that requires greater respect of and responsiveness to civil society by UNEP.



Fatoumata Keita-Ouane from the UNEP Chemicals Branch opens the panel speaking at the *Interactive Panel Discussion on Detoxifying Development - How strengthened sound management of chemicals and waste contributes to sustainable development*. Jointly organised by the Government of Uruguay, UNEP, the Chemicals Branch, including the Interim Secretariat for the Minamata Convention on Mercury, the SAICM Secretariat, and the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. Held at UNEP Headquarters © UNEP

Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) shows the importance of Civil Society engagement

by **Yuyun Ismawati Drwiega**, Senior Advisor at Nexus3
& **Sara Brosché**, PhD Science Advisor Global Lead
Paint Elimination Campaign Manager at IPEN

The International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN) is a global network of over 600 public interest NGOs in more than 120 countries, largely low- and middle-income nations, that has actively engaged in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) since its development. IPEN represents public interest, civil society organizations in the SAICM Bureau.

The history of SAICM

In February 2006, more than one hundred governments came together in Dubai and adopted the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM).¹ It is a non-legally binding instrument with the overall objective of achieving the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle so that by the year 2020, chemicals are produced and used in ways that minimize significant adverse impacts on the environment and human health.

The adoption of SAICM was the culmination of a process that started in 1992 with Agenda 21² and that was further strengthened in 2002 by the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development.³ While SAICM is not legally binding, the commitment of so many governments around the world sets the stage for an international movement to reform chemicals policies

1 <https://www.saicm.org/Home/tabid/5410/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

2 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>

3 <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/environment/johannesburg2002>

and practices in every country. It also provides a space for all relevant stakeholders to discuss issues related to chemicals and waste and agree on actions that need to be taken.

SAICM is unique since it builds on a multi-stakeholder approach in pursuing the sound management of chemicals and asserts the need to “promote and support meaningful and active participation by all sectors of civil society, particularly women, workers and indigenous communities, in regulatory and other decision-making processes that relate to chemical safety.”⁴ Civil society has consistently played a key role throughout the history of SAICM, including active participation in the multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral Preparatory Committee developing SAICM.

The need for sound management of chemicals and waste

Since World War II, more than 80,000 new synthetic chemicals have been manufactured and released into the environment, with an estimated 1,500 new chemicals being introduced every year.⁵ The growth of the production of synthetic chemicals is parallel with the growing concerns over their toxic impacts on humans and the environment. Scientific evidence shows that we have broken through the “planetary boundaries” for chemical and plastics pollution, meaning that production and emissions may be threatening the stability of the entire global ecosystem.⁶

The deadly impacts of toxic chemicals can be acutely evident. During the night of December 2nd, 1984, more than 40 tons of toxic methyl isocyanate gas was released from a pesticide plant in Bhopal, India, exposing half a million people peacefully sleeping in the surrounding city. Almost 4,000 people were killed immediately, and 15,000 – 20,000 premature deaths in the subsequent two decades have been attributed to the exposure.⁷

However, the chemical crisis that humanity is facing today has also a multitude of more insidious impacts both in individuals and whole societies. For example, over the past 50 years, scientific evidence shows that sperm counts have decreased in men in virtually all countries around the world and that the decline is accelerating. This decline has been associated with multiple environmental influences, including exposure to endocrine disrupting chemicals and pesticides.⁸ A conservative estimate is that there are at least a thousand chemicals with known endocrine disrupting properties today,⁹ but that is likely a severe underestimate since safety assessments have only been conducted for a fraction of all chemicals.

The extensive group of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), the so-called “forever chemicals”, is another example of why action is urgently needed to prevent further harm of toxic chemicals. In 1947, 3M Corporation invented the now infamous Teflon chemical Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). While evidence of its severe health impacts became increas

4 <https://www.saicm.org/Portals/12/documents/saicmtxts/SAICM-publication-EN.pdf>

5 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/18991917/>

6 <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.1c04158#>

7 Broughton, Edward. “The Bhopal Disaster and Its Aftermath: A Review.” *Environmental Health* 4, no. 1 (2005/05/10 2005): 6. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1476-069X-4-6>

8 <https://academic.oup.com/humupd/article/23/6/646/4035689?login=false>

9 <https://www.endocrine.org/topics/edc/what-edcs-are/common-edcs>



Clean-up of Varsova beach on August 6, 2016 in Mumbai, India © UNEP

ingly evident by the early 1960s, the production and use of PFOA continued in a wide range of products such as non-stick cookware, food wrapping, microwave popcorn bags, waterproof clothing, firefighting foam, cosmetics, ski wax, and many more for fifty years. Once PFOA started to be phased out, it was replaced by other PFAS chemicals instead of safe alternatives.

abolic, endocrine, and nervous systems as well as reproductive and development harm.¹⁰ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has estimated that over 4,500 PFAS chemicals are likely to be in use today¹¹, and environmental monitoring shows extensive contamination of soil, ground water and drinking water around the world from their use.

Scientific studies have associated exposure to PFAS with a wide range of health impacts including effects on the immune, digestive, met-

A recent study showed that levels detected in rainwater exceeds thresholds for drinking water safety set e.g., by the US.¹² It is estimated

¹⁰ <https://pfastoxdatabase.org/>

¹¹ <https://www.oecd.org/chemicalsafety/risk-management/synthesis-paper-on-per-and-polyfluorinated-chemicals.htm>

¹² <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.2c02765>

that most people in the world today are contaminated by PFAS today, although biomonitoring studies are sparse from some low- and middle-income countries.¹³

In addition to the harm caused to individuals, exposure to toxic chemicals comes with huge financial costs to the society. Several studies have shown that exposure to chemicals that disturbs normal functioning of the human hormonal system, so-called endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs), have health effects that causes losses of 1% (in the EU) – 2% (in the US) of annual GDP.¹⁴

A report released under SAICM in 2013 provided examples of the cost of the inaction on chemicals. Estimates were provided that accumulated health costs only in sub-Saharan Africa would increase to approximately USD 97 billion by 2020.¹⁵

Civil Society plays a key role in advancing SAICM

Today, for most of the multitude of concerns related to chemicals and waste, the only multilateral environmental agreement in place where these can be addressed is SAICM. So far governments in SAICM have adopted eight areas of action, so-called Emerging Policy Issues (EPI) and other issues of concern (IoC): [Lead in paint](#), [Chemicals in products](#), [Hazardous substance within the life cycle of electrical and electronic products](#), [Nanotechnology and manufactured nanomaterials](#), [Endocrine-disrupting chemi-](#)

[cals](#), [Environmentally persistent pharmaceutical pollutants](#), [Perfluorinated chemicals and the transition to safer alternatives](#), and [Highly Hazardous Pesticides \(HHPs\)](#).

Public interest non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) have contributed greatly to implementation and advancing work on these issues both locally and globally. The independent evaluation of SAICM concludes that “a particular strength has been the participation of non-government actors in the SAICM process, allowing for their perspectives and priorities to be heard and considered as resolutions were framed and agreed.”¹⁶

In 2009, IPEN launched its SAICM Global Outreach Campaign, aiming to raise awareness about the harms of toxic chemicals and to engage and broaden the base of civil society groups working on issues related to the implementation SAICM. Since then, several thousand activities have been conducted by NGOs in the IPEN network to promote implementation of SAICM and the need to address the harms caused by toxic chemicals and waste.¹⁷

In the same year, IPEN also launched its global campaign to eliminate lead paint and has worked with NGO partners in more than 50 countries to show the presence of lead paint on the market in these countries, and to conduct follow-up activities supporting adoption of national regulations. The successful strategy developed during this campaign is modelled after the SAICM multistakeholder approach, build-

13 <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/pdf/10.1021/acs.est.1c08669>

14 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27765541/>

15 https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/8412/-Costs%20of%20inaction%20on%20the%20sound%20management%20of%20chemicals-2013Report_Cost_of_Inaction_Feb2013.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

16 https://www.saicm.org/Portals/12/Documents/reporting/FinalReport_Independent-Evaluation-SAICM-2006-2015.pdf

17 <https://ipen.org/resources>



UN Patron of the Oceans, **Lewis Pugh**, joins **Afroz Shah** and Versova Resident Volunteers (VRV) in Mumbai, India for the largest beach clean-up in history. August 6, 2016, Mumbai, India © UNEP

ing on collaboration between all relevant national stakeholders to address the issue.

To date, at least 40 countries where IPEN-affiliated NGOs have advocated for lead paint elimination have now adopted national regulations to ban the use of lead paint or are in the final stages of doing so. The campaign is conducted as a contribution to the work of the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint, co-hosted by WHO and UNEP, where IPEN represents civil society organizations in its Advisory Council. The results achieved on lead in paint elimination globally were highlighted as one of SAICM's greatest successes in its evaluation.¹⁸

Another area identified in the SAICM evaluation as a program where some success has been achieved is the Chemicals in Products (CiP) program, where civil society has played a key role. The aim of this work is to increase the transparency of information about chemicals in global supply chains, the consumers' right to know, and the need to prohibit the use of toxic chemicals in consumer products. By conducting chemicals analyses of products such as toys and children's products in countries around the world, and making these results publicly available, IPEN has helped raise awareness and spur action in several countries to remove products containing toxic chemicals.

¹⁸ https://www.saicm.org/Portals/12/Documents/reporting/FinalReport_Independent-Evaluation-SAICM-2006-2015.pdf

In 2017, a joint Guidance to the Chemicals in Products (CiP) Program for non-governmental organizations representing the public interest (NGOs) was published by representatives from the public interest, health, and labor sectors.¹⁹ Ongoing work to promote measures on transparency for hazardous chemicals in products is currently conducted by a group of NGOs that includes HEJ Support, The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), and groundWork South Africa.²⁰

Civil society is also playing a key role in addressing many of the other issues identified under SAICM. The Pesticide Action Network (PAN) is working to replace the use of hazardous pesticides with ecologically sound and socially just alternatives. Further, PAN's International List of Highly Hazardous Pesticides²¹ provides key guidance of priority pesticides to be banned.

Over the past five years, awareness of the gender inequalities associated chemicals and waste has increased thanks to work by civil society in collaboration with UNEP under SAICM.²² IPEN and UNEP have together highlighted women as an impacted group when it comes to the SAICM Issues of Concern,²³ as well as leaders and key agents of change.²⁴

The future of SAICM

When governments met in Geneva in December 2014 to prepare for the fourth session of the International Conference on

Chemicals Management (ICCM4), it was clear that the 2020 goals were far from being met. Steps were then taken to initiate the ongoing negotiations of a new instrument that will follow in the footsteps of SAICM.²⁵ Once again, civil society took the lead. Leading up to the first meeting of this process, IPEN and Pesticide Action Network collaborated to produce a [series of documents](#) highlighting civil society views on key topics.

The joint papers describe SAICM's importance, how chemical safety can contribute to sustainable development, and how actions should be financed. In addition, the papers deal with the relationship between women and chemical safety, how the industry should reduce and eliminate hazard through design improvement, and the connection between human rights and chemical safety.²⁶

After an initially slow start of deliberations, the global crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic hit just when momentum was building towards adoption of the new instrument in 2020. However, the fourth meeting of the intersessional process could finally be held (IP4) in August 2022. The outcome of this meeting was one consolidated document that will be further discussed in Nairobi in February 2023.

In reviewing this document and reflecting on the discussions at IP4, there are strong concerns that the proposed provisions of the new instrument are far from enough to meet the

19 <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/27811>

20 <https://hej-support.org/global-minimum-transparency-standard-gmts-for-hazardous-chemicals-in-products-a-tool-for-the-protection-of-human-health-and-the-environment-from-toxic-exposure/>

21 https://pan-international.org/wp-content/uploads/PAN_HHP_List.pdf

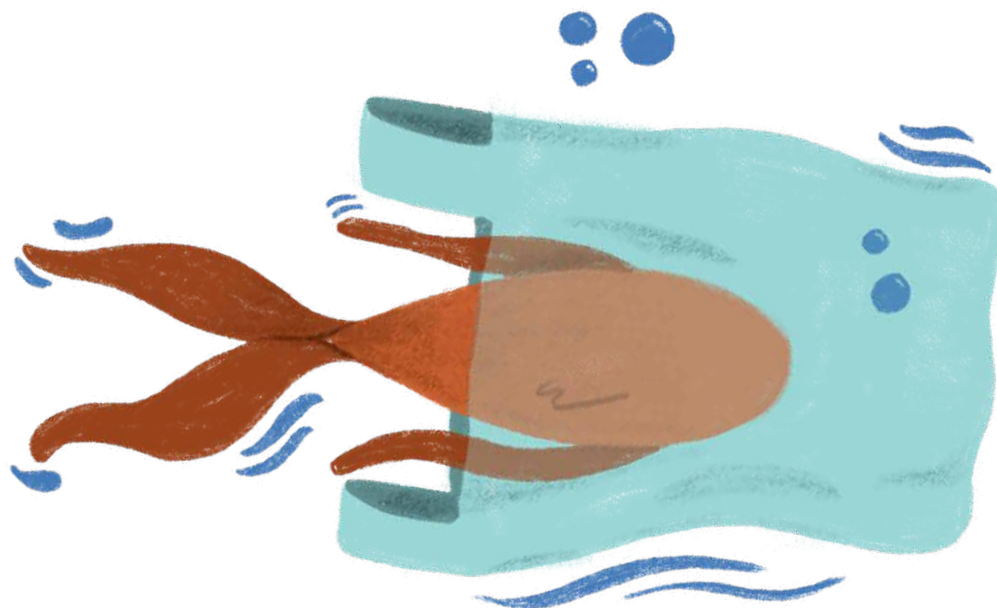
22 <https://saicmknowledge.org/topic/gender-mainstreaming>

23 https://saicmknowledge.org/sites/default/files/resources/ipen-gender-chemicals-report-v1_6dw-en.pdf

24 https://saicmknowledge.org/sites/default/files/resources/gender-case-studies-v1_6w-en.pdf

25 <https://www.saicm.org/Beyond2020/IntersessionalProcess/tabid/5500/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

26 <https://ipen.org/documents/ipen-beyond-2020-perspectives>



chemical crisis we are facing. While the chemicals industry has grown substantially since the adoption of SAICM in 2006, the ambition to prevent harm from chemicals and waste has not followed suit but seems to have decreased. As a result, civil society is again raising their voices to call for an ambitious new instrument, building on a precautionary approach, that holds the chemical producers responsible for the harm from their products.

One of the critical lessons learned expressed in the SAICM evaluation is that sufficient financing and resources must be provided for the objectives and goals of SAICM to be realized. One source of funding identified is the introduction of appropriate economic instruments based on the polluter pays principles. This is one of the central conversations in the deliberations for the new SAICM instrument.

In a joint paper by the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) and IPEN, a proposal is laid out for a coordinated tax on basic chemicals. National governments would levy this tax

in all countries producing this subset of chemicals. The revenues would be directed to a new or existing international fund to support chemicals and waste management in developing and transition countries. A minimal tax could yield significantly more annual funding than has ever been allocated for sound chemicals and wastes management—on the order of billions of US dollars per year.²⁷

In conclusion, a SAICM-like instrument is also needed moving forward. It should include provisions for continued successful civil society engagement and facilitate a more effective multisectoral engagement and ownership supported by all relevant UN Agencies. New, predictable, sustainable, and adequate sources of financial support accessible by both governments and civil society organizations must also support it. Committed governments to an ambitious instrument can make this vision a reality and be adopted at the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM5) in 2023.

27 https://ipen.org/sites/default/files/documents/ipen-ciel-producer-responsibility-vf1_9e-web-en.pdf

Coral nursery at Discovery bay, the young coral is being re-planted on the reefs. Jamaica
© U N E P /
Kadir van Lohuizen / NOOR



Oceans and UNEP

by **Dr. Arthur Lyon Dahl**, President of the International Environment Forum,
Retired Deputy Assistant Executive Director of UNEP,
and Deputy Director of Oceans and Coastal Areas in Nairobi,
and Coordinator of the UN System-wide Earthwatch in Geneva

Before the founding of UNEP, ocean pollution was already making headlines. The *Torrey Canyon* oil tanker sinking had fouled the English coast in 1967 and the Santa Barbara oil spill from offshore drilling in 1969 tarred tourist beaches in California, as I experienced personally as a budding marine scientist. The Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Pollution (later Environmental Protection - GESAMP) was created in 1969 in preparation for the Stockholm Conference. The oceans were also an issue where international cooperation was obvious, since the water connects multiple countries and includes high seas beyond national jurisdictions. It was natural that UNEP would give an early priority to the ocean, which covers 70% of the planet.

Civil society sounded the alarm on the oceans in 1972

As with so many issues, civil society raised the alarm first, and governments are often slow to respond, caught as they are between many conflicting responsibilities and vested interests. At the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, there was a considerable civil society presence in the streets and in separate activities. But when I represented the Bahá'í International Community as one of the civil society organizations accredited for the first time to a UN meeting, the chair of one session refused to give us the floor, saying this was a meeting of governments and we had our own non-governmental events outside. Fortunately, later another chairperson allowed us to speak, and I called for the Stockholm Action Plan to include collaboration with non-governmental organizations, which we succeeded with the cooperation of the Swedish government in inserting into the text.

Another important role of civil society at that time was to sound the alarm on the larger challenges of the sustainability of human material civilization on this planet. The 1972 report to the Club of Rome on *The Limits to Growth* showed computer-generated scenarios of the evolution over two centuries of major parameters in the Earth system: population, food, industrial output, pollution and resources, with respect to the boundaries of the planet, with business as usual leading to overshooting those limits and predicting a possible collapse of civilization in the mid-21st century. I published a book review of this at the time and later collaborated with one of the scientists involved. While derided by economists, those projections have proven remarkably accurate, and the Club of Rome has again raised the alarm 50 years later (in 2022). The rapid decline in the oceans today is one symptom of what was projected then.

UNEP initiates programmes on oceans

UNEP was fortunate to recruit an excellent marine scientist, Dr. Stjepan Keckes, to launch its oceans programme. Since most ocean environmental problems at the time were due to the

actions of coastal states, it made sense to start with a regional approach to each sea area through the Regional Seas Programme, building intergovernmental cooperation around each sea, starting with the Mediterranean in 1974. By emphasizing the ocean science of a sea area as a unifying factor where shared responsibility and action were essential, the regional approach provided the justification for intergovernmental cooperation. Stjepan managed to get all the Mediterranean states, even Greece and Turkey, Israel and Libya, to cooperate in a Mediterranean Action Plan (1975) and its legal underpinning the Barcelona Convention (1976) for the safeguarding of their shared marine environment. These provided a framework for legally-binding action, often including protocols on specific issues such as oil spills, land-based sources of pollution, hazardous wastes, and protected areas. The Mediterranean served as a model for what could be achieved in other regions.

From the beginning, UNEP action in this area reached beyond governments to include relevant elements of civil society, in particular the scientific and academic communities with the expertise necessary to research problems and define solutions. On certain ocean issues, more radical environmental organizations also played an important role, as with the Greenpeace campaign against whaling that begun in 1973, leading to UNEP's own Marine Mammal Action Plan and the International Whaling Commission agreement to a moratorium in 1982. There were also key partners such as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) with both governmental and non-governmental members.

The Regional Seas Programme – an early success

UNEP, as a small organization with limited resources, was able to leverage wider action in its catalytic and coordinating role in the UN system as defined in the 1972 Stockholm Action Plan.

It has since produced many technical assessments and reports, including its flagship *Global Environment Outlook*. On oceans, it worked closely with UNESCO and its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on fisheries, with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) on climate, and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) on shipping, among others. There were regular interagency working parties to coordinate and collaborate on issues of common concern. This extended to the International Science Council and others in the scientific community.

The Regional Seas Programme gradually expanded to cover most of the ocean areas of the world, with now 18 Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans involving 146 countries. Seven are directly administered by UNEP: Caribbean, East Asian Seas, Eastern Africa, Mediterranean, North-West Pacific, Western Africa and Caspian Sea. Others are under the responsibility of other regional intergovernmental bodies: Black Sea, North-East Pacific, Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, ROPME Sea Area (Persian/Arabian Gulf), South Asia, South-East Pacific, and Pacific. Four other programmes were not established by UNEP but collaborate: Arctic, Antarctic, Baltic Sea and North-East Atlantic regions. Some have advanced and been quite effective; others where governments have different priorities have struggled to have the necessary impact. With so many partners involved and with limited means of its own, UNEP does not always get the credit it deserves for initiating and encouraging these efforts to protect the world's oceans.

UNEP unites Small Island States

My own experience illustrates the catalytic role that UNEP played in building these programmes. In 1974 I joined a regional intergovernmental organization, the South Pacific Commission (now the Pacific Community) to become the Regional Ecological Adviser



Mangroves from the nursery at the University of the West Indies at Port Royal are being planted at the bay opposite Kingston © UNEP / Kadir van Lohuizen / NOOR

to 22 island countries and territories in the Pacific Ocean. I established contact immediately with UNEP, and its Executive Director Maurice Strong visited me in New Caledonia in December 1974 to discuss cooperation. He then issued a call at the Pacific Science Congress in 1975 for environmental collaboration in the Pacific. IUCN and UNEP supported my efforts to build what became the Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). It was subsequently accepted by UNEP as a Regional Seas Programme, although it covered both marine and terrestrial environments and was reasonable on small islands. The SPREP Action Plan was adopted at the 1982 Rarotonga Conference on the Human Environment in the South Pacific, and given a legal basis in the 1986 Noumea Convention and the 1993 SPREP Treaty. This regional collabo-

ration across many island countries was also the embryo of what became the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) movement where island countries around the world recognized their uniqueness and special challenges.

On small islands in particular, it is not easy to make a distinction between governments and civil society. You draw on whatever experience is available, from the indigenous knowledge of local fishermen and tribal leaders through community groups, academic institutions, research centres and government agencies. The more you can build a common understanding across all the components of society, drawing on both the science and what is socially and culturally relevant, the greater the success in resolving environmental problems and achieving sustainability.

Agenda 21 in 1992 continues with Oceans

When UNEP moved the Regional Seas Programme from Geneva to Nairobi, Stjepan Keckes asked me to come help him rebuild what was then called the Oceans and Coastal Areas Programme Activity Centre (OCA/PAC). I eventually became his Deputy. With preparations under way for the UN Conference on Environment and Development, the Earth Summit, in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, Maurice Strong as its Secretary-General asked for my secondment from UNEP to his secretariat to bring in island expertise, and I ended up working on the final drafting of Chapter 17 of Agenda 21 on Oceans, Coastal Areas and Small Islands. This acknowledged the distinct reality of SIDS and called for a conference of SIDS at the global level. This led to the Barbados, Mauritius and Samoa conferences of SIDS. In preparation for Rio, we had a series of oceans working parties to prepare content, including government experts, scientists and representatives of civil society. It is easier to make progress in these more informal groupings bringing together many different perspectives than in formal intergovernmental negotiations where consensus is the rule and national interests often win out.

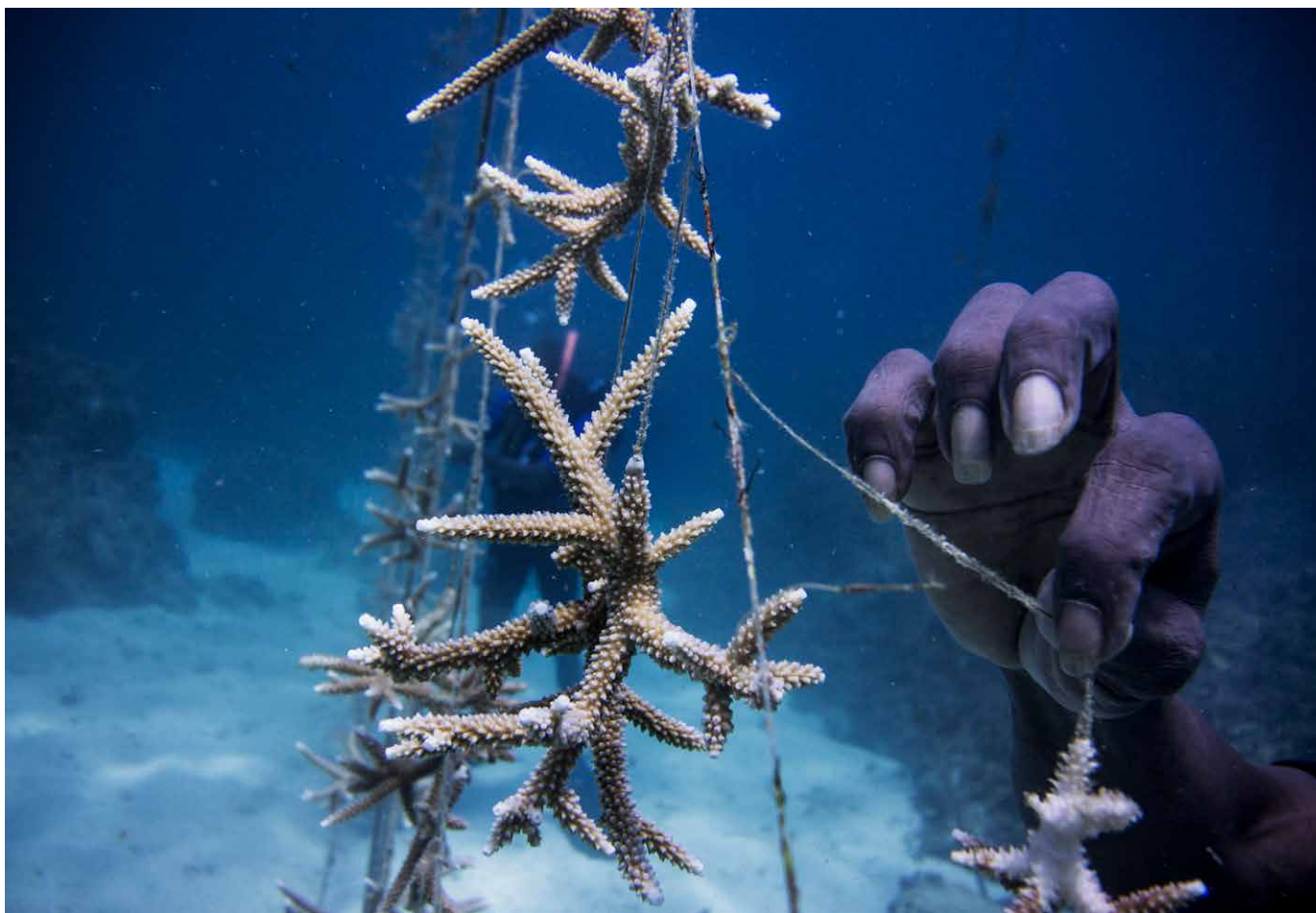
After Rio, UNEP named me as Coordinator of the UN System-Wide Earthwatch, to implement Chapter 40 of Agenda 21 on Information for Decision-making. This meant collaborating with 50 different parts of the UN system on data collection, scientific assessments, and such outputs as indicators of sustainable development. On indicators, we had extensive collaboration with civil society as well as government experts. We worked closely with the world's space agencies to coordinate satellite missions for Earth observations, obviously including the ocean environment. As part of a series of integrated global observing strategies, I led a report on coral reef observations as part of a larger strategy on observations of the coastal zone at the complex interface between ocean data collection and land observations. This re-

sulted in the creation of the intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations (GEO) between UNEP and WMO. My last function in UNEP as a coral reef scientist was to create a Coral Reef Unit to address the challenges facing this most endangered marine ecosystem.

The Coral Reefs – a possible global casualty

UNEP has collaborated with the global scientific community in the International Coral Reef Initiative and a Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network to follow what is happening to this vulnerable ecosystem that provides services to over 1 billion people. Their most recent report in 2020 on *The Status of Coral Reefs of the World* showed that between 2009 and 2018 there was a progressive loss of about 14 per cent of the coral from the world's coral reefs primarily caused by recurring, large-scale bleaching events, amounting to about 11,700 square kilometres of hard coral, and continuing forty years of decline. Climate change not only heats the oceans to temperatures above what corals can support, but carbon dioxide dissolving in the oceans becomes carbonic acid, increasing ocean acidity and making it harder for corals and other marine organisms to form their carbonate skeletons. On present trends, most coral reefs of the world will be degraded by mid-century.

One other significant ocean challenge from climate change is due to a law of physics that says that liquids expand in volume as they warm. The rising temperature of the planet inevitably means that sea levels will also rise, and because of time lags in the system, much of this is now inevitable. Present estimates suggest a 1 to 2 metre rise in this century and continuing, with even more if tipping points destabilize the Greenland ice sheet and Antarctica. Coastlines will become more dynamic with storms and flooding, atoll states will disappear, over a hundred coastal cities of more than a million inhabitants will be drowned, and hundreds of millions of people living less than 1 meter above



Coral nursery at Oracabessa bay, the young coral is being re-planted on the reefs. Jamaica © UNEP / Kadir van Lohuizen / NOOR

sea level will be displaced, creating enormous migration pressures. While there is little that UNEP or other mechanisms of global governance can do now to prevent this, managing these challenges will be an inevitable responsibility that should already be anticipated and planned for.

UNEP and UNEA in 2022 – a possible end to plastic pollution

Marine pollution, of course, affects all the oceans. Since 80% of marine pollution comes from the land, UNEP led the adoption in 1995 of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) covering sewage, persistent organic pollutants, radioactive substances, heavy metals, hydrocarbons, nutrients, sediment, litter and destruction of habitat, with

priority now to marine litter (plastics), excess nutrients and wastewater.

A recent oceans priority of UNEP is dealing with plastic pollution, much of which ends up in the oceans where it persists for years, slowly breaking down into smaller and smaller particles that enter the food chain and contaminate most organisms. Larger plastic items can be eaten and block digestive tracts. A floating plastic bag looks very much like a jellyfish to a hungry turtle. Discarded plastic fishing nets can continue to catch and kill many fish. Ocean currents with giant eddies concentrate plastic pollution into continent-sized masses. Remote islands find large quantities of plastic washed up on their beaches, with no way to get rid of such resistant materials. The UN Environment Assembly decided in March 2022 to end plastic pollution and to negotiate a legally-binding in-



Mangroves from the nursery at the University of the West Indies at Port Royal are being planted at the bay opposite Kingston © UNEP / Kadir van Lohuizen / NOOR

ternational treaty on plastic pollution by 2024. It will address the full life cycle of plastic from production at source to the sea. This will at least be a start in addressing this significant ocean challenge, although there will also be an important role for civil society in public education and changing consumer behaviour about single use plastics.

Externalising the environment and implementation disappears

UNEP has always been challenged by ambitious mandates and limited human and financial resources. It has been instrumental in

the preparation and adoption of many multi-lateral environmental agreements (MEAs), of which there are more than a thousand today. Some suspect that this fragmentation of international environmental law was intentional on the part of governments and other vested interests to prevent environmental issues from interfering with the economy. Even the concept of the environment as something outside us may have been conceived as a way to define environmental issues as externalities to be easily ignored. In most indigenous world views, people and nature are inseparable and totally interdependent.



The challenge has always been implementation, and that depends more on governments and on non-state actors like businesses rather than UN agencies. Looking ahead, with the urgency of a total transformation of our material civilization to avoid a climate catastrophe, biodiversity collapse, and spreading ocean dead zones, we need mechanisms to adopt binding global legislation to protect planetary boundaries and common resources like the oceans. Such legislation should apply not only to states but to multinational corporations and even individuals, who are now often wealthier and more powerful than governments. That function could be given to an

empowered UN Environment Assembly, with UNEP assigned an orchestrating role to bring coherence to the many actors involved in the transition to sustainability. Only then can we hope for a better future for the oceans and all those who depend on them in both present and future generations.



Cover of the publication *21 Issues for the 21st Century; Results of the UNEP Foresight Process on Emerging Environmental Issues* © UNEP



21 Issues for the 21st Century

Results of the
UNEP Foresight Process on
Emerging Environmental Issues

Scanning the Horizon from the Ivory Tower: Science-Policy Interface Processes at UNEP and Civil Society – the case for nanotechnology and geoengineering

by **Neth Daño**, Researcher and Coordinator of ETC Group, Phillipines

One of the most forward-looking reports UNEP has published in the past decade is the pioneering “*21 Issues for the 21st Century; Results of the UNEP Foresight Process on Emerging Environmental Issues*”. Published amid the 20th anniversary of the UN Conference for Environment and Development more popularly known as Rio+20 in 2012,¹ it did not receive the attention it should have. The report was strategically useful, both for understanding and engaging in emerging issues and new technologies that would shape or have impacts on the global environment. It boldly challenged UNEP itself and the UN as a whole, asking audaciously if they would remain reactive in view of these new technologies or take a proactive stance. Among others, the report identified the urgency of governance of geoengineering and acknowledged the risks and unintended consequences involved in this suite of untested technologies. It pointed particularly to such approaches as albedo enhancement², and recognized the reality that there is a huge vacuum in the governance of these risky technologies. This early warning interestingly recognized these risks a full decade before geoengineering began to creep into UN negotiations.³ On new technologies and chemicals, the report puts forward action points for

1 UNEP (February, 2012), *21 Issues for the 21st Century: Result of the UNEP Foresight Process on Emerging Environmental Issues*, UNEP, Nairobi, <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/8056;jsessionid=818EA688E77238E033F7F04E7C783321>

2 Albedo enhancement involves increasing the reflectivity of Earth's surface through cloud brightening or whitening of land or water surface to reduce solar radiation absorption. See also: <https://psci.princeton.edu/tips/2020/9/26/what-is-geoengineering>

3 ETC Group and Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung-New York Office, November 2022, “False solutions alert: Geoengineering in climate negotiations”, see: https://www.etcgroup.org/sites/www.etcgroup.org/files/files/geoengineering_in_climate_negotiations_final.pdf

comprehensive and anticipatory governance shaped by policy makers working with broad societal actors.

The horizon scanning process⁴ behind the report notably only involved academics, think-tank researchers and experts from formal institutions in the North and the South. Civil society, indigenous peoples or local communities whose lives are potentially impacted by emerging issues and new technologies that would affect the global environment in the 21st century, were not represented at all in the process. They might have offered alternative scenarios based on their lived experiences. Science-policy interfaces by definition involve relations between scientists and other societal actors in the policy-making process through engagement, deliberations and co-creation of knowledge. By not involving civil society, indigenous peoples and marginalized communities, the 2012 strategic foresight process – an important tool in science-policy interface – conveyed a message that this is an exclusive domain of scientists, experts and think-tanks that UNEP works with.

UNEP seems to have acknowledged this lapse a decade later when the Executive Director, Inger Andresen, remarked *“that science-policy interface should not be only about scientists sitting in their academic spires and delivering wisdom to politicians, who decide what is best for the people. It should not be the preserve of*

*the Western world, or wealthy elites...This must change.”*⁵ And it must change across UNEP's mandate, not just in the context of ozone, toxic chemicals and pollution where UNEP has been patting itself on the back for having achieved strides in partnerships with civil society and with the private sector especially.

Scanning the environmental horizon from the Ivory Tower

While UNEP has raised attention on emerging environmental issues during the past 50 years, it has not been as agile in taking on cutting-edge technologies in the horizon that may have profound implications on the environment. A case in point is nanotechnology. Civil society has been sounding alarm bells on the environment and health impacts of nanotechnology and nano-materials since 2000⁶. Civil society organisations even launched a global campaign calling for a strong oversight of nanotechnology already in 2007⁷. UNEP only started paying attention to toxic chemicals in nanomaterials in 2017⁸ when hundreds of products of nanotechnology were already out in the market without having been subjected to some form of independent evaluation of their impacts on human health and the environment. Civil society was dismayed by the lackadaisical responses from UNEP to all their early warning efforts. It signalled that UNEP had been scanning the horizon from the ivory tow-

4 Horizon scanning is “a technique for detecting early signs of potentially important developments through a systematic examination of potential threats and opportunities, with emphasis on new technology and its effects on the issue at hand” – OECD:

[https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK556423/#:~:text=Development%20\(OECD\)%3A-,Horizon%20scanning%20is%20%E2%80%9Ca%20technique%20for%20detecting%20early%20signs%20of,%E2%80%9D%20\(OECD%2C%20n.d.a\).](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK556423/#:~:text=Development%20(OECD)%3A-,Horizon%20scanning%20is%20%E2%80%9Ca%20technique%20for%20detecting%20early%20signs%20of,%E2%80%9D%20(OECD%2C%20n.d.a).)

5 UNEP, 3 March 2022, Statement of the Executive Director at the presentation of the UNEP at 50 Report on science-policy interface, “A New Science-Policy for UNEP at 50”, see: <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/speech/new-science-policy-interface-unep-50>

6 ETC Group (January 2003), “The Big Down: from Genomes to Atoms; Technologies Converging at the Nano-scale”, See: <https://www.etcgroup.org/sites/www.etcgroup.org/files/thebigdown.pdf>

7 ETC Group (30 July 2007) Press Release. “Broad International Coalition Issues Urgent Call for Strong Oversight of Nanotechnology”, See: <https://www.etcgroup.org/content/press-release-broad-international-coalition-issues-urgent-call-strong-oversight-0>

8 UNEP, 2017, “Frontiers 2017; Emerging Issues of Environmental Concern”



The conservation in Watamu, nursery of mangroves. Watamu, Kenya. 2017 © UNEP / Cyril Villemain



Coral nursery at Oracabessa bay, the young coral is being re-planted on the reefs. Jamaica © UNEP / Kadir van Lohuizen / NOOR

er with academics and scientists, ignoring voices from civil society and communities who are affected in their daily lives, but not considered as “experts”.

Another interesting case is geoengineering, the intentional large-scale manipulation of earth systems to address symptoms of climate change. Civil society started identifying the potential impacts of geoengineering on the environment and communities in 2010⁹ and brought the issues to UNEP through the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF) in the years that followed. Civil society and stakeholders have since over the years continued to raise this issue in side-events. A near decade elapsed before a Member-State brought the need for research on and governance of geoengineering to UNEP. A draft resolution on the issue was introduced at the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-4) in March 2019.¹⁰ While its 2012 foresight process had identified geoengineering as an issue that could shape and impact the global environment in the 21st century, it took another 10 years for UNEP to take a closer look at geoengineering. Tampering with nature and the environment without thoroughly understanding the consequences has brought this world into the precarious environmental situation in which it exists today. Yet, resources and political attention are being vetted on false promises. We know that these are highly risky geo-engineering techniques, and experiments and unregulated deployment in terrestrial and marine

ecosystems and the atmosphere are taking place. These are mere distractions from real climate actions that build on proven knowledge and tested technologies that already exist and are practiced by communities which should be supported and promoted.

It is quite baffling that despite the commitment of UNEP as expressed by the Executive Director in her speech in March 2022 that science-policy interface should not be limited to academics and should instead involve other societal actors, including local communities and indigenous peoples who are bringing wisdom from traditional and indigenous knowledge systems¹¹, UNEP recently came out with an independent expert review of solar radiation modification (SRM) produced exclusively by academics mainly from the North.¹²

Off-limits to civil society, welcoming to business?

Science-policy interfaces could provide opportunities for tackling concerns on environmental implications of new technologies, underlining the need for offering spaces for exchanging views, sharing information and enabling co-creation of knowledge among a broad range of societal actors. Contrary to this wisdom, on the side-lines of UNEA-3 in 2017, UNEP launched the Science Policy Business Forum (SPFB). Initially, this was a cooperation between UNEP and the World Economic Forum (WEF) to strengthen the *interface between science,*

9 ETC Group (October 2010), “Geopiracy: The Case against Geoengineering”, see: <https://www.etcgroup.org/content/geopiracy-case-against-geoengineering>

10 Climate Change News (26 February 2019), “Switzerland puts geoengineering governance on UN environment agenda”, see: <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2019/02/26/swiss-push-talk-geoengineering-goes-sci-fi-reality/>

11 UNEP, 3 March 2022, Statement of the Executive Director at the presentation of the UNEP at 50 Report on science-policy interface, “A New Science-Policy for UNEP at 50”, see: <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/speech/new-science-policy-interface-unep-50>

12 UNEP (February 2023) *One Atmosphere Report on SRM: An independent expert review on Solar Radiation Management research and deployment*, see: https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/41903/one_atmosphere.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y



Science Policy Forum, Closed Session: Meeting of the Science-Policy-Business Forum Governing Consortium. Nairobi, Kenya. 2017 © UNEP / Natalia Mroz

*policy, business, and society by building consensus around key issues.*¹³ SPBF unobtrusively eased out the Science-Policy Forum that UNEP itself launched in May 2016, at UNEA-2.¹⁴ The SPBF is primarily a platform for the business sector to showcase their green technologies and innovations and their partnerships with the scientific community and governments around technological solutions. It later mutated into the *UN Science Policy Business Forum* involving other UN agencies and continues to be held on the side-lines of other UN processes

such as Conference of the Parties of UNFCCC, i.e., at the climate COP27 in Sharm-el-Sheik in November 2022.¹⁵

Since its launch in 2017, the Science-Policy Business Forum has since been held around global and regional UNEA processes. It has drawn strong criticisms from civil society for its very narrow framing that focuses on business interests in science-policy interface and marginalizes other societal actors. The roundtables, consultations and thematic discussions

¹³ UNEP (7 December 2017) Press Release, "UN Environment kicks off new agreement on Science-Policy-Business Interface with World Economic Forum, Philips", see: <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/un-environment-kicks-new-agreement-science-policy-business-interface>

¹⁴ IISD, May 2016, "No Scientific Voice Left Behind; Concludes UNEA Science Policy Forum; See: <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/no-scientific-voice-left-behind-concludes-unea-science-policy-forum/>

¹⁵ UN Science-Policy-Business Forum website: <https://un-spbf.org/about-us/>

in the Forum have participation from policy-makers, scientists, business sector groups, and citizen science groups which are also led by academics. A few civil society representatives are invited to some panels to give the impression of a multistakeholder nature. Civil society, however, feel that they are merely used as window-dressing for the Forum, needed to be a part of the democratic veneer but marginalised by the agenda, as the focus is explicitly to catalyse a more dynamic interface between the science, policy and business sectors.^{16 17}

It was during the term of the former Executive Director of UNEP, Erik Solheim, when the involvement of business increased above and beyond what had earlier been the practice. This also changed the *modus operandi* for the Science Policy interface to become the Science Policy Business Forum. Civil society was not included in this equation. This upset what until then had been a respected equilibrium among all the 9 Major Groups at UNEP and gave the private sector a path into the UN system which if not politically unethical, at least exists in a grey zone of what is politically acceptable for an intergovernmental organisation¹⁸. The new Forum boasts of being “100% self-funded” - thus, not burdening the UN with additional expenses. However, to an outsider this looks as if business is buying a platform from which it can influence science and research as well as the priorities of policy development in an inter-

governmental organisation. How does this affect the integrity of an intergovernmental policy process? The Forum which has a prominent place at the UNEAs, is in theory open to everyone. However, the access to the planning of these events is not open to everyone, and civil society and the other Major Groups are effectively excluded from the planning process. Whereas few delegates find their way to the Green Tent at the UNEA, which is the venue for civil society, the Science Policy Business Forum site is well-attended, being well-funded outside of the UN – by business interests, who else?

As an official initiative of UNEP, SPBF is held as part of the UNEA package of activities, and its outcomes are officially presented to the UNEA. The science-policy-business framing in the SPBF leaves no doubt as to whose perspectives are valued by UNEP in its science-policy interface work by leaving people, communities and civil society out of the equation. The principles of good environmental governance, which has been a quality hallmark of UNEP since 1972, have clearly been seriously eroded by this Forum.

Lessons from UNEP's work on new technologies

Foresight and horizon scanning processes at UNEP must, by design, involve indigenous and local communities and civil society, and not as

¹⁶ See: <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/22205/Science-Policy-Business-Forum%20Programme%202017.pdf?sequence=86&isAllowed=y>

¹⁷ As a background, UNEP applies the Major Groups system where NGOs, Science and Technology and Business and Industry are identified as proper legal entities. The nine major groups¹ are organised as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to comply with Article 71 of the Charter of the UN. With mandate from the Charter, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has further elaborated the qualifications of an NGO² that can be granted accreditation by the UN. It is clear from this resolution and also from practice throughout the UN's 75 year history, that a for-profit organisation which all business and companies are, have no legal or formal standing in UN bodies under the auspices of the General Assembly, such as UNEP.

¹⁸ According to Article 71 of the UN Charter, and ECOSOC resolution 1996/31, for profit organisations, such as business, cannot by themselves be accredited to UN bodies which functions under the auspices of the General Assembly, UNGA. UNEP is a programme under the UNGA.



Science Policy Business Forum, Day 1, Session 5 - Press Centre. Nairobi, Kenya. 2017 © UNEP / Natalia Mroz

an accommodation to marginalised groups or for the sake of ticking boxes on multistakeholder participation. Effective foresight and horizon scanning processes are informed by diverse views that provide alternative scenarios which require wide knowledge and experiences.

Consistent with UNEP's commitment to tear down the ivory tower science-policy interface, the Science-Policy-Business Forum must be replaced by a genuine Science-Policy Forum that recognizes the equal rights of stakeholders to shape and contribute to global policy-making, not based on capacity to pay for big forums in collaboration with the UN.

Comprehensive and anticipatory governance of new technologies must include participa-

tory technology assessment as a key component. The rapid pace of deployment of new technologies requires a new approach that allows systematic and comprehensive evaluation before they reach the production phase in order to minimize their risks to society and the environment.

Participation for all and independent science for the environment are two of the legacies from the UN Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 and which has served people, the environment and UNEP well for 50 years. Strengthening this must be a prerogative for the quest to safeguarding the environment with well-being for all for the future.



UNEP and Civil Society's collaborative efforts towards Environmental Defenders

by **Carmen Capriles** Co-Chair at Major Group and other Stakeholders Facilitating Committee (MGFC) for UNEP/UNEA

Defining a person who defends Human Rights and the environment is not an easy task. Although we can find a number of examples in history fighting for rights, we have to admit that history has been very ungrateful to those who fought for centuries to guarantee social equality and the common good. At the same time, history has kept people hidden in anonymity in the shadow of their oppressors, tragically underestimated and misjudged by the limitations of their times, customs and their cultures.

It was during the 20th century that human rights took shape, thanks to several efforts by people fighting for a fair historical principle, that all humans are equal. Unequivocally, we can say that the Age of Human Rights begins precisely when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948. Human Rights as a universal concept is maybe one of the most important steps that humanity has taken to become a true global society. As a globally agreed concept, the Declaration connects all humanity by giving rights to all. Since 1948, the fight for these rights has also been recognized and given importance. On the other hand, identifying and giving recognition to those who fight for the environment has not been done until recently.

The most important reference to environmental concerns in the 20th century is Rachel Carson, writer of the book "Silent Spring" which was published in 1962. Rachel Carson, marine biologist, conservationist and writer challenged the pesticide industry, which at the time was already worth more than 300 billion dollars. Carson would become the mother of the environmental movement. The growing environmental concerns that her research revealed, was a key contributor to the Environmental Protection Act in 1969, which led to the establishment of the US Environmental Protection Agency in 1972. Rachel Carson did not live to see this happen as

she passed away from cancer in 1964 at only 57 years old, though her legacy as an environmental defender still remains to this day.¹

During this time, the growing concerns of countries and their people around environmental problems led to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment that took place in Stockholm in June of 1972. Governments and civil society participating in this conference recognized that the planet was already facing several environmental challenges. They also recognized that countries alone could not solve these issues, and thus, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) was born. Its mandate was to monitor the state of the environment, inform policy making with science and coordinate responses to the world's environmental challenges.

Since then, countless activists, women and men, youth, indigenous leaders, and many others, have taken a step forward to challenge a system thirsty for natural resources and energy that knows no boundaries when talking about production and profit. The results have been fatal to many of them, nevertheless, a few stories with small victories have become inspirational fuel for those on the frontlines working to shake up the current status quo and help shift policies towards nature protection.

An official recognition of the role of civil society in protecting the environment would come in 1987 in the Brundtland Report which defined and positioned the concept of 'sustainable development' on the global agenda. The outcome document from the 1992 United Nations 'Conference on Environment and Development' (UNCED), or the Earth Summit, which contained Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development

(aka the Rio Declaration), further strengthened the position of civil society.

The Rio Declaration consists of 27 principles intended to guide countries in future sustainable development. It was signed by 175 countries which recognized the key role of youth, women and indigenous people in sustainable development. Principle 10 of the Declaration established the need to have stakeholders involved in decision-making around environmental issues with due access to information, access to participation and access to justice. This was considered a major step forward by recognizing the work of concerned citizens allowing them to take part in shaping the policies around natural resources and people's livelihoods.

In March 2022, the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) identified the Triple Planetary Crises (climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and waste). In June the same year, the world gathered again in Sweden to celebrate progress in multilateralism and in tackling environmental problems, and to commemorate the 50th anniversary of UNEP, a gathering known as Stockholm+50. The same year, the Human Rights Council with the resolution 48/13 recognized the human right to 'a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment for all people', inviting governments to further consider the matter as a global right. Although over 100 countries have already recognized the right to a healthy environment either in their Constitutions or in their legal frameworks, this measure will encourage other countries to adopt similar schemes, especially those countries that until today are still reluctant to recognize human rights as universal. In addition, the UN General Assembly adopted a historic resolution on Thursday, July 28th, 2022, declaring access to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, a universal human right.

¹ <https://www.rachelcarson.org/>



University of Costa Rica Celebrates WED / **Actuarte** raise awareness about the importance of protecting the planet © UNEP / Alberto Font / The Tico Times

The price of our future are the lives of defenders

However, in the case of human rights, even though considerable progress has been made, we must point out that human rights violations continue until today and extractive industrial policies have stunted progress, especially in peri-urban and rural areas; that is to say, that universal fulfilment of rights has not been achieved, especially in relation to the rights of women and the rights of minorities, whether of ethnic, religious, racial or another nature.

The activities that in recent decades have been called extractive are precisely those that most affect the so-called “minorities”. They bear the brunt of the negative consequences of extractive policies when it comes to human rights and the environment because the task of safeguarding the environment falls on their shoulders.

As globalization advances and biodiversity is irretrievably lost, the fight becomes theirs. This development not only leaves thousands of human beings homeless, but little by little also decimates entire populations.

Whether it is a dam, a nuclear plant, genetic modification or the climate crisis, the pattern is the same: a series of vested economic interests compromise the future of a group of people, without offering alternatives or remedies. Faced with this scenario, the struggle to achieve justice is essential. Therefore, every day we see different expressions, forms, and manifestations of the struggles making often desperate efforts to see that these rights are fulfilled.

As genes, species and ecosystems become commodities, it is the market that will determine their survival, or their extinction. In reality,

ty, the market is constantly exposing the most precious thing on this planet at risk: its biodiversity. And often, without yet understanding the roles that these “commodities” fulfill with respect to the complex web of life.

Environmental Defenders

The UN defines “environmental human rights defenders” as “individuals and groups who, in their personal or professional capacity and in a peaceful manner, strive to protect and promote human rights relating to the environment, including water, air, land, flora and fauna”². This definition was agreed to in 2016 as a response to a growing number of persons killed and murdered while trying to protect the environment. The United Nations has now recognized the threats to environmental defenders and has called for their protection.

UNEP has identified a number of key issues in the efforts to support environmental defenders through its Defenders Policy³:

- Denounce the attacks, torture, intimidation, and murders of environmental defenders.
- Advocate with states and non-state actors, including business, for better protection of environmental rights and the people standing up for these rights.
- Support the responsible management of natural resources.
- Request government and companies’ accountability for the different events where environmental defenders have been affected / murdered.

‘Women Environment and Human Rights Defenders’

‘Women Environment and Human Rights Defenders’ is a joint effort in the fight against all forms of discrimination and inequality. It is also an example of individuals joining hands in the constant struggle to defend nature, natural resources, and the future. Above and beyond protecting the environment, such contribution also contributes to making more just and egalitarian societies.

The work of the defenders has finally been recognized. The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders was adopted by consensus by the General Assembly in 1998, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, after 14 years of negotiations⁴. The International Day of Human Rights Defenders was declared in 2005 and is celebrated on December 9th. On December 18th, 2013, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution on the work of human rights defenders to recognize their work, and finally on November 29th, 2016 the International Women Human Rights Defenders Day was established.

The idea behind all these decisions was to raise awareness of the Human Rights challenges faced by women defenders, such as discrimination, harassment, sexual aggressions, violence, social stigma, femicides, gender stereotypes and deprivation of their liberty.

Some of the threats and challenges that women defenders still face and that should be acknowledged are:

² In “A/71/281 Situation of human rights defenders” Note by the UN Secretary-General

³ <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/environmental-rights-and-governance/what-we-do/advancing-environmentalrights/uneps#:~:text=UNEP's%20Defenders%20Policy%20promotes%20greater,many%20parts%20of%20the%20world.>

⁴ A/RES/53/144

- Misogynistic attacks
- Gender-based violence
- Lack of protection and access to justice
- Lack of resources for women's organizations and support to women defenders' participation in political and public life:

The challenges that Women Defenders face must not be underestimated. Their struggles are proof of the gender gap caused by social and economic inequalities that keep women in general and indigenous and rural women in particular, in poverty and making them more vulnerable to threats of all kinds.

The Escazú Agreement

Principle 10 which was adopted 1992 as a part of the Rio Declaration, states that:

"Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, everyone shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided"

On March 4th, 2018, under the auspices of UNECLAC⁵, states of the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region gathered in Escazú, Costa Rica, for the 9th Meeting of the Negotiation Committee for Principle 10. The 24 States in the region reached an agreement to approve the "Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters"⁶. After consensus was reached, during the adoption of the agreement, a tribute was organized by the representatives of civil society in memory of the struggle of Berta Cáceres⁷, whose activism had resulted in her assassination two years earlier. Fearlessly working to protect the environment, she was murdered in her home on March 2nd, 2016. The people that organized the tribute expressed the hope that the agreement would carry on her legacy: "The Escazú agreement is intended to be a key tool for environmental activists so that they can access environmental information to assess the situation and how the population is being affected by the negative impacts of certain activities, especially megaprojects many times linked with extractive industries, carrying the spirit of those who have gave their lives to protect land, water and other resources, like Berta Cáceres."⁸



5 The UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, one of the UN's five economic commissions

6 <https://www.cepal.org/en/escazuagreement>

7 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berta_C%C3%A1ceres <https://www.unep.org/championsofearth/laureates/2016/berta-caceres>

8 <https://accessinitiative.org/blog/escaz%C3%BA-convention-agreement-women%C2%B4s-spirit-defend-land-rivers-and-our-resources>

Berta Cáceres was a Lenca indigenous woman and human rights defender. For the last 20 years, she was on the front lines defending the territory and the rights of the indigenous Lenca people. She was the general co-ordinator of Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Indígenas Populares – COPINH (Civic Council of Popular Indigenous Organisations). COPINH successfully led a campaign for the defence of the Gualcarque river, which is the site of a proposed dam.

On March 2nd, 2016, unidentified assailants broke into the home of Berta Cáceres and murdered her in her bedroom. In the previous days, Berta and other members of her organisation (COPINH) had been receiving threats. Two months later, on May 2nd, 2016, four men were arrested in connection with the murder. Two of the people arrested are tied to Desarrollos Energéticos SA (DESA), the Honduran company which was building the Agua Zarca dam, a project Berta and COPINH had strongly opposed and campaigned against.

On November 30th, 2018, the Honduran National Criminal Court convicted seven men for the murder of woman human rights defender Berta Cáceres. The Court found that the men had been hired by executives within DESA, a company constructing a dam in indigenous Lenca territory, to carry out her killing on 3 March 2016.⁹

taken at the Rio+20 Conference in 2012. With the adoption of the “Declaration on the application of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean”, the negotiating process was initiated and began in earnest in 2014¹⁰. The purpose was to enforce the environmental rule of law, including new instruments and tools to help civil society to be an effective actor working for environmental governance.

The Escazú Convention based on Principle 10 is the first Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) for the Latin American and Caribbean region, where two dozen states had participated and negotiated to develop this MEA. Its importance lies in its binding nature and the fact that it does not allow reservations which gives it a practically mandatory character. The agreement aims to guarantee access rights for the entire population without discrimination, access to environmental information, access to public participation in decision-making and access to justice and remediation within the framework of environmental matters.

Furthermore, it includes two issues that are crucial to the regional context: environmental defenders and vulnerable groups. It is of huge importance that these two elements were included in the Escazú Agreement. Whatever happens to environmental defenders and to indigenous people, illustrates their relevance. Environmental defenders live and work under constant death threats in this region, with alarming figures; according to research by the NGO ‘Global Witness’, alarming figures are revealed: over the course of the past decade, 1,733 lives have been lost which means that one environmental defender has been killed every

This process of negotiations leading up to the Escazú Agreement, began with a decision

9 <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/case-history-bera-c%C3%A1ceres>

10 <https://www.cepal.org/en/subsidiary-bodies/acuerdo-regional-acceso-la-informacion-la-participacion-publica-acceso-la-justicia/history-regional-agreement>



The Stockholm Conference opened up UN processes to non-state stakeholders. Members of civil society fully engage at UN meetings, sometimes through protests, like this one at the 2022 Geneva Biodiversity Conference © IISD/ENB / Mike Muzurakis

two days. The countries where most murders have been committed are Brazil and Colombia.¹¹

We hope that the Escazú Agreement will contribute to drastically reduce the killings of environmental defenders in the region. By ratifying the Escazú Agreement and making it part of national laws, nation states commit to recognize the work of defenders and guarantee their protection as well as their human rights. As the Agreement allows access to environmental information for all, it will function as an important tool for environmental activists. With such information it will be possible to determine how a population is being affected negatively by certain activities, especially megaprojects that are often linked to extractive industries.

The Agreement recognizes people or groups in vulnerable situations in the context of long-term environmental sustainability. Therefore, it is necessary to identify these groups at the local level. Furthermore, these groups also have to be identified by the communities themselves in order to define and understand the impacts that a project or an activity may have on their livelihoods. A number of mega projects in Latin America have the potential to provoke the extinction of entire communities because the consequences of these projects also alter communities' ways of life. Eventually, communities are forced to migrate, and such forced migration generates more poverty alienating people from their cultural heritage.

¹¹ <https://www.unep.org/championsofearth/laureates/2016/berta-caceres>



Tribute to Women Human Rights and Environmental Defenders at UNEA 3. Nairobi, Kenya. 2017
© UNEP / Natalia Mroz

Likewise, the treaty also guarantees participation of individuals, of civil society and of actors involved in the different processes related to environmental issues, as well as ensuring the participation of these groups in decision-making processes. But perhaps the most important element is the expressed commitment to provide environmental justice to the population in the region, especially those populations that have suffered critical damages due to a series of unregulated activities.

Matters related to environmental issues and managing natural resources are key for the Latin American and Caribbean region. Finding convergence points among the 24 countries participating in the negotiations was, all the same, often difficult. However, there is a clear vision expressed by the countries in the region to move forward and guarantee access rights for the population. The main difficulty lies in the political will of the Parties (States) of the Agreement to elaborate or adapt regulatory frameworks that allow for the full implementation of the Agreement, while responding to national and regional interests.

The struggle to protect the environment goes on and will continue, especially in countries with high biodiversity which are often found in

developing countries, but also in the so-called “first world” where citizens have seen their lives flooded with toxic chemicals on everyday items and even food. During the past few years, (by 2022), substantial progress has been made in guaranteeing environmental and human rights. Still we have to acknowledge that none of this would have happened without the efforts, sacrifices and lives of those who are fighting for nature. Their struggles are shown in diverse ways to guarantee that the beauty of birds and bees, trees and rivers can be inherited by the next generation.

“For their tireless work in empowering communities and protecting ecosystems, environmental defenders are killed in startling numbers. Murder is not the only way environmental defenders are persecuted; for every 1 killed, there are 20 to 100 others harassed, unlawfully and lawfully arrested, and sued for defamation, amongst other intimidations” – John Knox, former UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment.

Annex 1

Table 1. Countries that have signed and ratified the Escazú Agreement until Dec. 2022.

No.	Country	Sign	Ratify (by law)
1	 Antigua and Barbuda	27 September 2018	4 March 2020
2	 Argentina	27 September 2018	22 January 2021
3	 Belize	24 September 2020	
4	 Bolivia	2 November 2018	26 September 2019
5	 Brazil	27 September 2018	
6	 Chile	18 March 2022	13 June 2022
7	 Colombia	11 December 2019	26 July 2022
8	 Costa Rica	27 September 2018	
9	 Dominica	26 September 2020	
10	 Ecuador	27 September 2018	21 May 2020
11	 Grenada	26 September 2019	
12	 Guatemala	27 September 2018	
13	 Guyana	27 September 2018	18 April 2019
14	 Haiti	27 September 2018	
15	 Jamaica	26 September 2019	
16	 Mexico	27 September 2018	22 January 2021
17	 Nicaragua	27 September 2019	9 March 2020
18	 Panama	27 September 2018	10 March 2020
19	 Paraguay	28 September 2018	
20	 Peru	27 September 2018	
21	 Dominican Republic	27 September 2018	
22	 Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	12 July 2019	26 September 2019
23	 Saint Kitts and Nevis	26 September 2019	26 September 2019
24	 Saint Lucia	27 September 2018	1 December 2020
25	 Uruguay	27 September 2018	26 September 2019



Ahmed Abdi Ibrahim is the watchman assigned to the Afwein water dam that is meant to provide a water source to the area and community of Maalimin, Kenya © UNEP / Miranda Grant

UNEP & Lead in Gasoline – One Less Thing to Worry About!

by Professor **Daniel Magraw**¹ & **Mingyue Luna Xue**²

Humans have known since at least 200 BCE, when the Roman engineer Vitruvius warned against using lead in water pipes,³ that lead is dangerous to human health. Lead's effects include slowed growth and development, learning problems, lower IQ, amnesia, weakness, kidney and brain damage, and problems with behavior, speech and hearing.⁴ High levels of exposure can lead to seizures, coma and death.⁵ Moreover, because lead can cross the placental barrier, lead can damage a fetus' nervous system.⁶ No safe blood lead level in children has been identified.⁷ Nevertheless, lead continued to be used, including to boost performance in gasoline, thus exposing billions of people to its risks.

Starting in the 1970s, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) advocated to eliminate the use of lead in gasoline in the United States and some other countries.⁸ These NGOs included the Alliance to End Childhood Lead Poisoning and the Natural Resources Defense Council, among others. The eventual elimination of the use of lead in gasoline is an example of UNEP successfully working with a host of partners to catalyze action, garner resources and achieve a major global environmental breakthrough.

Although country-specific efforts had been undertaken in connection with the World Bank and others before 1994, the effort to reach international agreement to eliminate the use of lead in gasoline gained momentum at the sub-regional level that year, when that commitment was included in the Declaración Conjunta Centroamerica-USA (CONCAUSA) between

1 Senior Fellow and Professorial Lecturer, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS); President Emeritus, Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL).

2 Research Fellow and M. A., Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). MAIR form SAIS, 2022.

3 *E.g.*, A. Trevor Hodge, Vitruvius, Lead Pipes and Lead Poisoning, 85 *Am. J. Archaeology* 486 (1981).

4 Sanders T, Liu Y, Buchner V, Tchounwou PB. Neurotoxic effects and biomarkers of lead exposure: a review. *Rev Environ Health*. 2009 Jan-Mar;24(1):15-45. doi: 10.1515/reveh.2009.24.1.15. PMID: 19476290; PMCID: PMC2858639.

5 World Health Organization. (2022, August 31). *Lead poisoning*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/lead-poisoning-and-health>

6 *Lead: Health Problems Caused by Lead* | NIOSH | CDC. (n.d.). <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/lead/health.html>

7 *Lead Poisoning Prevention* | Lead | CDC. (n.d.). <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/default.htm>.

8 The United States prohibited the use of lead in the gasoline used in automobiles in 1976.

the seven Central American countries and the United States.⁹ That was followed at the Western Hemispheric level shortly thereafter in the Plan of Action of the 1994 Summit of the Americas.¹⁰ Two years later, over considerable opposition by lead-producing countries, world leaders agreed to “eliminat[e] as soon as possible the use of lead in gasoline” at the Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul.¹¹ The campaign to secure that agreement involved governments, the World Bank and many NGOs (including those mentioned above, the organization Commonwealth and Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)).¹²

As a direct follow-up to that commitment, the United States attempted in 1997 to add the elimination of the use of lead in gasoline to UNEP’s Programme of Work. This effort was blocked by an oil-producing country, even though that country’s leaders had agreed to eliminate the use of lead in gasoline at the Summit of the Americas in 1994 and at Habitat II the year before. The country’s representative was so distraught at having to block this initiative that he showed his written instructions to other nations’ delegates to demonstrate that he had no choice in the matter.

After diplomatic contacts, efforts were again made the following year to add this topic to UNEP’s work programme, this time successfully. UNEP, together with UN Habitat, thus had

a mandate as of 1998 to work with countries to eliminate the use of lead in gasoline.

UNEP’s approach included working with other intergovernmental organizations such as the World Bank and World Health Organization and establishing partnerships and thus magnifying its resources and impact. In 2002, UNEP formalized that process via the Global Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles (PCFV) at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg. The PCFV involves 73 organizations representing developed and developing countries, the fuel and vehicle industries, civil society, and leading world experts on clean fuels and vehicles. Participants combine their resources and efforts to achieve cleaner air and lower greenhouse gas emissions from road transport. These partners have been the driving force behind the PCFV’s many accomplishments, as well as providing the PCFV financial support at a country-level implementation.

UNEP serves as the secretariat for the PCFV. The secretariat administers the day-to-day operations of the PCFV, such as supporting countries to prepare and implement cleaner fuel and vehicle strategies, organizing meetings, responding to requests for support and information, and liaising with partners. The Secretariat also maintains an information database on its website of clean fuels and vehicles for all developing and transitional countries.

9 The Governments of Central America and the United States of America. “Declaración Conjunta Centroamerica-USA (CONCAUSA).” (Dec. 10, 1994), at https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/la_energy_dialog/48 Declaración: “diseñar y mejorar los esfuerzos centroamericanos en el establecimiento de normas para mejorar el uso y manejo seguro de plaguicidas y la eliminación gradual del plomo de la gasolina que se consume en Centroamérica”.

10 First Summit of the Americas, Plan of Action art. 23 (Dec. 12, 1994), at <http://www.summit-americas.org/miamiplan.htm>: “Develop and implement national action plans to phase out lead in gasoline.”

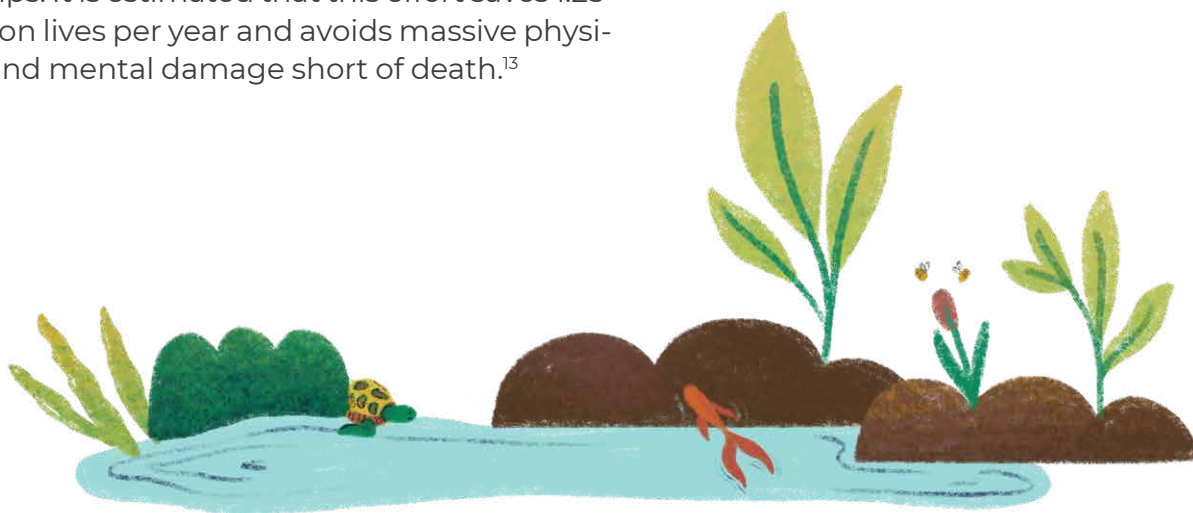
11 The Habitat Agenda: Goals and Principles, Commitments and Global Plan of Action, para. 43(bb) (1996) (outcome document of the 1996 UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)).

12 For a timeline regarding the use of lead in gasoline, see

In the years following 2002, UNEP and its partners in the PCFV engaged in painstaking technical work, country-by-country to eliminate the production, use and sale of leaded gasoline. In Africa, UNEP staffers helped governments update air pollution standards, many of which dated to colonial times. The PCFV published academic research to debunk the urban legend that unleaded fuel would damage engines and funded blood testing in countries such as Ghana and Kenya, which found dangerously elevated levels of lead in children's blood. The PCFV has made success since its inception. By 2006, for example, gasoline in all Sub-Saharan Africa was lead free. Additional work by UNEP staff and others involved some of the world's most isolated countries, such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Leaded gasoline is not the only source of lead poisoning, of course, and UNEP continues its collaboration with respect to other sources such as leaded paint and used lead-acid batteries (ULAB). UNEP is now engaged with governments, NGOs (such as the International Pollutant Elimination Network (IPEN) and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)), the United Nations Development Programme, the World Health Organization, the World Bank, the Global Environment Fund, and others to stop the use of lead in paint. As of the end of 2021, 84 countries (43%) have legally binding controls to limit production, import, and sale of lead paints.¹⁴ This is another UNEP collaboration that is already saving countless lives and avoiding untold misery.

In 2021, 25 years after Habitat II, UNEP and the PCFV achieved the global goal of eliminating the use of lead in gasoline when the last country Algeria ceased selling leaded gasoline at its pumps. It is estimated that this effort saves 1.25 million lives per year and avoids massive physical and mental damage short of death.¹³



¹³ UNEP Press Release, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/era-leaded-petrol-over-eliminating-major-threat-human-and-planetary>.

¹⁴ World Health Organization Global Status Update (2022), at <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/978924005002>. See also IPEN, <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/43-of-all-countries-have-lead-paint-laws-unep-update/#:~:text=As%20of%2031%20December%202021,Limits%20on%20Lead%20in%20Paint>.

Me gusto
la hora libre
la comida

Conocer acerca de
la flora y fauna
local.

A mi me gusto:
el viaje por el mar
y todas las actividades
(workshops y
Field trips)

Me gusta
ALGUNAS PALABRAS EN
INGLES
ESERO APRENDER INGLES

ME
GUSTO

Me gusto
mucho la
actividad, la
organización,
conocer gente
nueva. tambien
me gusto el
viaje en barco

He conocido
a mucha gente
y compañeros experimentados

Fue divertido el
taller ya que estuvimos
con personas de otros países
que no hablan nuestro idioma
pero aún así pudimos
trabajar juntos

Me fascino
Ceremonia de
Inauguración,
Workshop, el
Flareus fauna

A mi me gusta
ir al a la computadora
porque todo
con mi

me gusta la
inauguración

Lo que me gusta es la
actividad de la
organización de la
actividad de la
organización de la
actividad de la
organización de la

Me gusta el
de Aqueo-
o Stranger.

Lo que me
gusta es que me
ayuden a mejorar
y el nuevo
ambiente.

Youth and UNEP: a challenging but possible partnership – two testimonies from Latin America

by **Cecilia Iglesias** Specialized analyst at
MATANZA RIACHUELO RIVER BASIN AUTHORITY (ACUMAR)
& **Pedro Cunha**, economist, entrepreneur, global ecocitizen and activist.

My name is Cecilia Iglesias,

I'm from Argentina and I was involved in several of UNEP's children and youth programs, projects and activities for over a decade, between 1999 and 2009. After that, I kept collaborating with UNEP's work from the Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) Major Group. However, the organization I preside over, Asociación Civil Red Ambiental, continued to be involved in youth engagement. Although other members of our network took the lead, I still participated in several UNEP's children and youth events afterwards but with different roles, such as educator, chaperone, environmental expert, etc.

My concerns about environmental issues started when I was around 14 years old, soon before the Rio '92 Earth Summit. Short articles began to appear in the press, and I wanted to be a part of the solutions that I felt were about to emerge. The "think globally, act locally" motto led me to implement projects at my school and by the time I had to decide a career path, I chose to study Environmental Sciences.

I felt the urgent need to promote an environmental education focused on our own regional problems. Children were more aware about over-consumption at the global level than about natural resources exploitation in their own communities. The few available educational materials were translations into Spanish from books written to engage children in developed countries. Therefore, environmental awareness in many Latin American countries was creating a younger generation worried about issues that had little to do with their daily lives thus doing something about them was completely out of their reach.

Supported by the strong conviction that children and youth have a very important role to play in sustainable development, convinced that education is the basis of human well-being and environmental protection, and confident that new information technology and communication could improve the processes of teaching and learning, I started the EcoPibes project.

What began as a website for Latin American children, youth and educators, soon became a forum for expression, a platform to exchange intercultural and intergenerational information and

experiences and an open space for the discussion of policies and strategies concerning education, children, youth, and sustainable development. Most importantly, it was an example of what could be achieved when we take our own future into our hands, instead of copying recipes from industrialized nations with different needs and agendas.

Even though UNEP's work on youth started in 1985, proclaimed by the United Nations as the International Youth Year (IYY)¹, the first time I participated in one of its activities was in 1999, when I attended the "Youth and the Environment '99" gathering, which was held in Cordoba, Argentina. It was organized by many governmental agencies and the "UNEP's Liaison Committee in Argentina". It was the first and last time I heard of such a Committee, but it served two good purposes. First, it probably provided financial resources for that gathering, and second, it paved the way for Argentinian youth participation in the regional Latin America & the Caribbean (LAC) GEO for Youth.

The Global Environmental Outlook (GEO) is UNEP's flagship environmental assessment². It was first published in 1997 at the request of Member States to "*keep the environment under review*" and it is based on a consultative and collaborative process aimed at bridging the gap between science and policy making. Two years after this first publication at the global level, the GEO for Youth project was launched by UNEP's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC)³, an environmen-

tal assessment for youth by youth, and I decided to participate in it⁴.

By replicating the consultative methodology, the GEO for Youth raised environmental awareness, but the engagement process also provided means to express the opinions of the youth and gave visibility to youth-led actions serving as inspiration to others and encouraging youth involvement at local through regional levels. Furthermore, it was very successful in what I consider its greatest achievement: building a network of young motivated environmental activists in the region who were eager to go for more.

By the time the GEO for Youth in Latin America and the Caribbean 'Open Your Eyes to the Environment' was published in 2001, more than 800 youths had been involved⁵. Those two years were the foundation of a capacity-building and networking initiative that went far beyond the initial expectations since it inspired many to continue working together, but also to sustain a fruitful partnership with UNEP.

Although it was led by ROLAC, it was a youth-run project coordinated by youth leaders referred to as 'Focal Points'. Some came from civil society organizations, while other institutions were created afterwards to establish GEO for Youth initiatives at the sub-regional level (Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Uruguay, Colombia, Panama, Ecuador, the Caribbean, Mesoamerica, Chile, Cuba, Mexico and others). To that end, a GEO for Youth Capacity Building Manual

1 <https://www.un.org/en/observances/youth-day/background>

2 Pintér, L. 2019. Insights from the intellectual history of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) <https://envsci.ceu.edu/sites/envsci.ceu.hu/files/attachment/project/1043/geo.pdf>

3 UNEP has 6 regional offices: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and West Asia.

4 PNUMA ORPALC, 2001. GEO Juvenil para América Latina y el Caribe, abre tus ojos al medio ambiente. Oxford University Press.

5 Osorio, Iglesias, Speratti, & Nagatani-Yoshida, 2009. An environmental assessment for youth by youth: Global Environment Outlook in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 'Young people, education, and sustainable development: Exploring principles, perspectives, and praxis'. Wageningen Academic Publishers. 415pg.



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was published, with full involvement of the Focal Points⁶.

Each project had two phases. First, the preparation of an integrated environmental assessment by youth, which included an analysis of the State of the Environment, a section devoted to Youth in Action, and a chapter on Future Perspectives. The second phase was the consolidation of local networks that facilitated the dissemination of the reports and promoted youth-led actions⁷.

In 2003, during the 22nd Session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (CG/GMEF), Member States adopted the Long-term Strategy on Engagement and Involvement of Young People in Environmental Issues (2003-2008)⁸. The name given to that Strategy was TUNZA, which means “*to treat with care or affection*” in Kiswahili. Back then, I thought that a “United Nations decision” such as this one meant that THE WORLD would finally realize that we had a stake in shaping our futures. Consequently, I tried for several

⁶ Ibid 5

⁷ Ibid 5

⁸ UNEP, 2003. Long-term strategy on the engagement and involvement of young people in environmental issues. UNEP/GC.22/11 (decision 22/18). In 22nd Session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum. Nairobi.

months to contact the officer in charge of the implementation at UNEP's Headquarters.

In 2004, Klaus Töpfer, UNEP's Executive Director at the time, was in Buenos Aires for meetings and the Secretariat for the Environment in Argentina suggested he meet with "young leaders". Apparently, I was one of them and received an invitation. That day he kept talking about how UNEP was very interested in hearing our voices and I decided to raise my hand and said "I've been writing to UNEP's Headquarters for several months and I've never had a response". He took a card from his pocket, extended it to me and said "write to me, I'll respond".

A few months after that, the 10th Conference of Parties for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP10) took place in Buenos Aires and we wanted to be there. I wrote to Töpfer and he kept his promise to write back to me. He helped opening the gate to the COP and youth flooded the Conference! As a parallel event, we organised an Intergenerational Dialogue with other "Environmental leaders", but we weren't really sure they would show up. I got the tip that the ROLAC's Director was sitting in an "only delegates" room so I sneaked in to invite him. He showed up. I sent a last-minute letter to Joke Waller-Hunter, chair of the Convention, and she showed up too! It was a huge success and it made me believe that there were "important people" willing to listen to us.

Furthermore, during the meeting with Töpfer, we shared the difficulties we had to get financial resources for our projects and he made the commitment to explore options for providing seed funding for ongoing youth-led projects. In 2005, through collaboration with the Argentinian government, the Call for Projects "Our contributions to Sustainability" was made and EcoPibes was one of the winners. It wasn't a lot of money (less than USD 200 if I recall), but UNEP was our first funding partner! Also, we

had to create a real, legally recognized organization basically because otherwise we could not receive our funding. It was a big step for us!

A while after that, the GEO for Youth-TUNZA Meeting for the Southern Cone was about to take place in Montevideo, Uruguay, run entirely by youth, as everything else with a GEO for Youth stamp on it. I wasn't supposed to be there, but the GEO for Youth Regional Coordinator (a UNEP employee who was in his early twenties) was passing through Buenos Aires on his way there and over a beer he said: "If you manage to get to Montevideo by Monday, we can accommodate you with the rest of the group". I sure did! It was the best decision ever, since that ferry trip across the Uruguay river to get from Argentina to Uruguay, changed my life forever.

Long story short, over the following years I became the national focal point in Argentina, then the MERCOSUR and finally the GEO for Youth LAC Coordinator. In this last case, through a Consultant Contract with ROLAC, under the supervision of the Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA) which was in charge of all GEO processes in LAC. As a result, I participated in many training activities and consultations along with other stakeholders but also, I was responsible for providing guidance to the many GEO for Youth processes that were emerging at the sub-regional level.

During those years I met the most amazing, committed, inspiring young people one can meet. I'm sure of that. More than 16 years later, we still call ourselves "GEO brothers and sisters" and we keep running into each other in governmental, civil society and private sector forums. Because one thing is for certain, it was a seedbed and we sprouted.

UNEP officers started to ask for our feedback on UNEP's educational products and pretty soon we became consultants in several projects. In 2008, I was hired as an individual contractor to translate and adapt an edu-



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cation guide prepared by UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE) as a part of the Ozon Action Programme of the Montreal Protocol. Then, we signed a co-operative agreement to develop the global Ozzy Ozone website. That was followed by a Small-Scale Funding Agreement (SSFA) to promote "Capacity Building for Education for Sustainable Consumption" (ESC) through UNEP UNESCO YouthXchange in Latin America and the Caribbean.

We were organizing events around the environmental calendar and locally supporting several campaigns (World Environment Day, Earth Day, World Planting Day, Global Recycling Day, Clean up the World, Plant for the Planet, etc.). More importantly, GEO Focal points at the sub-national level were running successful projects all over the region.

Right from the beginning, we started to get involved in UNEP's policy decision-making processes. I personally participated in several Regional Consultative Meetings (RCM) for Major Groups (Bogota, 2006; Monterrey, 2007; Buenos Aires, 2008; Panama, 2009; Cozumel, 2010; Trinidad and Tobago, 2012; Panama, 2013 and 2015; and Buenos Aires, 2018), where I was elected to represent Latin America and the Caribbean during Regional Forums of Ministers (Santo Domingo, 2008; Quito, 2012; and San Jose del Cabo, 2014); UNEP's Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF) (Nairobi, 2009 and Bali, 2010) and the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) (Nairobi, 2014 and 2016).

I get exhausted just by writing that long list of meetings and countries. At some point, I was afraid of becoming a bureaucrat of the international system, spending more time talk-

ing about environmental issues than implementing real actions outside the UN walls. But I felt that by advocating for mechanisms to strengthen youth voices within UNEP, I was allowing other young men and women to awaken the World from the bottom-up.

Paradoxically, even though the UN always felt to me like a parallel universe, detached from ordinary people who will never meet a Nobel Prize winner or the Prince of Monaco, ROLAC's GEO for Youth was well rooted in reality because it was run by young people with their feet deep on the ground.

On the other hand, the TUNZA Strategy came from that "parallel universe". It was designed by adults in UNEP's Headquarters, and it was based on the agenda of the funding partners instead of that of the children and youth. In spite of that, we considered the existence of a global strategy as an opportunity for growth. Therefore, in LAC, TUNZA was mostly disseminated through the GEO for Youth partner organizations, and TUNZA Focal Points were also elected at the national and subnational levels.

The TUNZA Strategy created a global TUNZA Youth Advisory Council (TYAC) and a Junior Board (JB), which were supposed to be the youth voices of the six UNEP regions. They were elected at International Children and Youth Conferences, and even though I was lucky enough to introduce, educate, sponsor, accompany and mentor many of them over the years, most of the focal points from Latin America could not attend those meetings due to lack of resources and/or language barriers. The general feeling within our regional network - which was repeatedly communicated to UNEP's regional office and Headquarters - was that we were being "represented" by children and youth who were elected by "the World" in meetings in Germany, Norway, Japan, Korea, and not from the regions.

Not surprisingly, the legitimacy of those representatives was questioned, but we worked it out by inviting them to our consensus building processes, including all our activities and every project we were responsible for. We asked them to share their experiences during the TUNZA Conferences and we introduced them to our regional, sub-regional and national agendas. Since we could not elect our own representatives to the global level, at least we made sure the global representatives were involved in the region. And it turned out to be a relief for them too, since they usually felt there was very little support from UNEP during their mandate. We became friends, supported each other, and tried to build common positions to take to the global arena.

Several GEO-TUNZA meetings took place between 2006 and 2008 in each of the four LAC sub-regions (Mesoamerica, the Caribbean, the Andes and Southern Cone) and, in my capacity as Regional GEO for Youth LAC coordinator, I had the chance to participate in most of them. Aside from having capacity building workshops on environmental issues, fundraising, networking, campaigning, lobbying, conflict management, etc., we were always discussing how to better engage children and youth in environmental issues, and we had several ideas on how UNEP could do a better job at it. Most of the times ROLAC officers came to the meeting to hear our proposals and, in my personal opinion, they tried to channel these proposals in a cross-cutting way into the work of the different UNEP's divisions.

When the TUNZA Strategy was going under review for its second period (2009-2014), we organized extensive consultations to make a strong statement to the 2008 Regional Consultative Meeting (RCM) that was about to take place in Buenos Aires. It took us two years to agree on a paper that we called "Evaluation and Recommendations for the



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Implementation of the TUNZA Strategy in Latin America and the Caribbean”.

Since the event was held in Buenos Aires, I co-organized it with UNEP and the Secretariat of the Ministry of Environment of Argentina. We managed to get many young focal points there and we gained the support of all other Major Groups, that also supported our recommendations in the Regional Statement. I was elected Regional Representative once again and I was determined to make our voices heard.

The Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF), is a non-state stakeholder

meeting which takes place in connection with UNEP’s general assemblies⁹ and deals with the agendas from these meetings. They always precede the governmental meetings, but for many years, regional concerns were rarely included in statements from the GMGSFs. Somehow the “global” issues go down a parallel road, skipping local, national and regional consultations and I always felt that Regional Representatives were merely decorative “must have” pieces. Not surprisingly at all and because of the decisions made by the accredited non-state stakeholders, we didn’t get to include a single word on the new TUNZA Strategy

⁹ For years UNEP’s highest decision-making organ was the Governing Council (GC) consisting of an elected rotating membership. Following decisions made during the Rio+20 meeting in 2012, UNEP was to have universal membership and the GC was substituted by the UN Environment Assembly, UNEA. The first UNEA was held in 2014.

in any of the Major Groups' Statements back in 2008-09.

However, we did have several meetings during the Governing Councils of UNEP among the youth and got the full support of the global TUNZA Youth Advisory Councils (TYCAs). It turned out that our visions on the pros and cons of UNEP's engagement strategy were very much aligned. We also met with the Division of Communication and Public Information (DCPI) staff and some commitments were reached, although not delivered afterwards, but we still needed those inputs to impact the new Strategy.

So, when the Committee of the Whole (COW)¹⁰ of the Governing Council was discussing the youth strategy, I approached my country's delegation - with the agreement of the TYACs - to ask if they would let me address the floor from the government's seat to read our Statement. A few were shocked by my request but one of them said: "Hey, the civil society from OUR region agreed to this in Buenos Aires in a meeting that WE cohosted, can we at least read the Statement before we say no?". They asked me for a copy, made a bunch of phone calls and all of the sudden, I was reading the Statement in the COW from Argentina's seat. At the same time, the TYACs were walking around with signs outlining the proposals.

At the time, we did our best to make a difference, but no changes were made to the main document despite all of our efforts. It could seem to adults like we lost a small battle, but at that age, not being able to influence a strategy with a 5-year period meant that you lost your one and only chance.

A few hours later, we had a very small but powerful meeting with Wangari Maathai, the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, and we shared with her the feeling that once again the "voices of the youth" didn't make a difference. She encouraged us to keep up the fight, if not there, in our own towns. That's what I try to do now, so many thanks to that inspiring soul, who is probably in a green belt, high in the sky, looking at all of us environmental activists struggling every day to change the World.

That day, back in 2009, a great opportunity was lost, not just for us, but also for UNEP. A decade of genuine youth empowerment at the regional level was replaced by global events organized by adults who "knew better". ROLACs strong alliance with our network was slowly dismantled afterwards due to lack of resources that were managed exclusively from UNEP's Headquarters. Local seed funding for projects was quickly replaced by pictures of children in traditional costumes posing with governmental officials as "family pictures". They basically copy-pasted the GC/GMEF! Who would think that that's what children and youth want to do for the environment?! My guess is no one.

But there is no need to guess. The UNEP Evaluation Office commanded a Report called "Terminal Evaluation of the 2nd Long-Term Strategy on Engagement and Involvement of Young People in Environmental Issues (Tunza Strategy)"¹¹. "Terminal" because there is no longer a TUNZA Strategy (or any, for that matter). And most of the conclusions of the research for that second and last phase which ran from 2009 to 2014, are devastating: 1) the **Achievement of outputs** was Satisfactory "(...) up to about 2013 when most of the corporate

¹⁰ The Committee of the Whole functions as a decision making plenary for the Governing Council and now of the UNEAs

¹¹ UNEP Evaluation Office, 2016. Terminal Evaluation of the 2nd Long-Term Strategy on Engagement and Involvement of Young People in Environmental Issues (Tunza Strategy) <https://www.unep.org/es/node/18659>



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funding was withdrawn (...)" 2) the **effectiveness** was Moderately Unsatisfactory; 3) the **Sustainability, catalytic role and replication** was concluded to be Moderately Unlikely; and 4) **Efficiency** was Moderately Unsatisfactory.

Among the factors affecting project performance, the Report states that: the "Strategic programme design was quite weak; Tunza's role within UNEP and its relationship to other UNEP activities was often unclear. Tunza was not designed or operated with a results-based approach, had limited M&E and learning processes and was primarily activities-focussed. Tunza was over-reliant on corporate sponsorships, which were poorly managed until 2011,

and would have needed more core funding at least in the regions to really function on a global level. The programme suffered when the management stood down in the wake of a corruption investigation and suffered subsequently when the resulting leadership and management gap was not adequately filled."

To date, it seems that TUNZA is not yet fully understood by many, what it was about or what it meant for youth, but our aim with this testimony, is to help people understand and learn from this experience which we are sure will result very useful to those working for improved and genuine youth engagement in UNEP and beyond.

My name is Pedro Cunha,

I'm from Brazil and I was involved in UNEP's TUNZA Strategy and other activities, between 2011 and 2015, soon after Cecilia Iglesias ended her participation as youth delegate and basically, during that second phase the TUNZA Strategy Terminal Evaluation Report¹² is so critical about. In this sense, our narratives correspond and complement each other in explaining the changes in UNEP's involvement with the youth Major Group as it shifted over the years. After having grown too old to be labelled as youth, we both continued collaborating with UNEP's civil society mechanism, mostly at the regional level. To date, we are still very much in touch with young people and it could be said that we are both well aware of the challenges the youth group currently face.

I could say that my interest in environmental issues was an "accident". Since I was 13, I have been volunteering for children with severe diseases after my mom got cancer; I could describe this opportunity nowadays as having been "drawn together by disasters". I realized that, as a healthy person with growing awareness of citizenship values, I could do more for others.

The smiles that children gave me back inspired my heart and showed me the importance of being together with the most vulnerable. When I was 15, I started working with their families on finding ways to reintegrate them into society, especially financially. I collaborated on artworks that their parents could sell for subsistence. That experience guided me to study economics, which I understood as a way to integrate many of the social, economic and institutional dynamics I was interested in at that moment.

Before starting university at the beginning of 2008, I was in New Zealand studying English and there, I joined Greenpeace Aotearoa as a volunteer, only to improve my language skills. However, during those weeks I had a chance to learn about the environmental crisis and the urgent need to take-action. In this sense, my interest in environmental issues is a result of personal suffering, social empathy, citizenship values and my love for volunteering.

When I was back in Brazil studying Economics, I decided to develop the LiveToday Project, which aims at promoting sustainable lifestyles through 'artivisms', intercultural dialogue and intergenerational cooperation.

With this project, I applied to the TUNZA International Children and Youth Conference (Bandung, Indonesia, 2011), which gathered together more than 1,500 participants from 120 countries, under the theme "Reshaping our Future through a Green Economy and Sustainable Lifestyles", which also was one of the many preparatory meetings for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, UNCSD or Rio+20.

This first interaction with UNEP was not exactly the best one. I received my plane tickets the day before the Conference started and arrived in Indonesia basically only for the last plenary, when the Bandung Declaration¹³ was somehow approved. However, I was determined to use that Declaration, since I didn't want to be like those politicians who make document after document with no intentions to implement a single word.

I saw it as a tool to promote youth dialogue and engagement, so I created the InterUniversities Youth Forum for Sustainability and Well-Being

¹² Ibid 11

¹³ https://issuu.com/joaofelipescarpelini/docs/official_bandung_declaration_tunza_2011_1_



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in Rio de Janeiro, with hundreds of young students engaged. When I wrote to UNEP's Headquarters to share these achievements they seemed to be surprised, since, as I was told, I was one of the few participants to share any follow-up of the TUNZA Conference in 2011. I was personally left with the feeling that, at that point, UNEP had more expertise in organizing global events rather than ensuring that its outcomes had an impact at the local level. Why not stimulate youth-led projects as one of many results emanating from these conferences?

At the Rio+20 conferences, I had an active role and I ended up being in charge of the "Children and Youth Arts Space", where everyone was invited to share their voices and demands through arts.

Due to that proactive engagement, I was accepted to participate in the TUNZA

International Youth Conference on the Environment, held in Nairobi in 2013, where I was elected for the TUNZA Youth Advisory Council (TYAC) as a representative of Latin America and the Caribbean. At that time, I had no idea what that really meant and was not fully aware of the huge responsibility I was embracing. But I understood that my role was to facilitate engagement of youth and take the voices of children and youth forward, including to the decision-making processes.

For each statement I was asked to make, I tried by myself to organize consultations through forms and Skype meetings. Because financial resources from Member States for civil society participation were lagging in UNEP, I didn't receive any kind of financial support. Even though input and a statement from me was expected, I felt I wasn't there to speak on my behalf but on that of all my generation. You can

imagine how pressured I felt but I did my best to bring agreements resulting from participative and inclusive processes.

In 2014, I took a 5-month paid consultancy at UNEP's Division of Communication and Public Information (DCPI) in the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) to help bring back to life the LAC-TUNZA Network, which had been dismantled a few years back together with the GEO for Youth Network.

In 2014, the first UNEA took place in Nairobi. A new system for the Major Groups concerning accreditation was discussed. Several Member States had proposed a system for recognizing new Major Groups and a new way of accrediting civil society organizations which, if accepted, in fact would increase the control over civil society by Member States. The proposal was fortunately thrown out. During these two UNEAs, the Major Groups were not even allowed into the committee that was working on the accreditation process. It became clear to me that a growing number of Member States were not really interested in promoting Major Groups in general. I had a distinct feeling that they perceived Children and Youth as a passive audience who should only be grateful to them for being allowed to be present at the UNEA. Unfortunately, my impression is that this is also the case with many other UN bodies.

This is also linked to the volunteering culture at the UN, where young interns do not receive any financial support for their work, creating a scenario where only privileged youth can participate.

My mandate as TUNZA Youth Advisory Council (TYAC) LAC representative ended together with the TUNZA Strategy in 2015.

After having been involved with the youth work in UNEP for a decade, I realized that young people who approach UNEP and other UN agencies come from doing amazing work in their terri-

tories and are usually considered change-makers and valuable activists in their communities. But after a few years in the international governance system, they could become a bit like the politicians they used to complain about, going from conference to conference with no follow-up activities or agenda for implementation instead of becoming well-empowered environmental activists. Although, thankfully, many do continue to fight for their causes.

Therefore, in my experience, UNEP is an organization with good potential through which a proper youth engagement can be channeled, however, there are radical changes that still need to be made.

Conclusions and Recommendations by Cecilia & Pedro

In 2013, a young woman addressed the UNEA floor on behalf of TUNZA Youth Advisory Council. She said: *"Leading by example, UNEP needs to encourage a system that facilitates young people in decision-making structures that are not tokenistic"*. Certainly, those are harsh words to process for those who have held in their hands the responsibility to engage children and young people. We know many people within UNEP who have tried to do so despite many obstacles, and they have our admiration and respect. But the problem is not individual, but institutional.

A new strategy for young people needs to be designed by youth and approved by Member States, and the voices of the children and youth have to be its heart and soul. There has been some sort of youth representation in UNEP's policy-making processes since 1985, and probably all of them presented proposals to improve their participation (most of which are in UNEP's website or can be collected through the GEO for Youth and TUNZA Alumni worldwide). Therefore, our first recommendation is to appoint someone to search for all those documents, read them, and analyze them to find



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common concerns, frequent requests and the great ideas which they have expressed over the past decades.

On that basis, we present other recommendations:

- Start a consultation process from the bottom-up, which means that UNEP should provide the economic resources, technical expertise and platforms (dedicated website, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, etc. in all UN languages), but the consultations need to occur where children and youth are active, that is: at the local level.
- UNEP can't reach them directly, but it has the connections to engage them indirectly. Appoint a global leader for the consultation and liaison persons at all Regional Offices (maybe paid interns or young staff members). Children and Youth will be more prone to contact a young person, with a face and a name, than a Unit or Division; and they will feel better if it is someone they can relate to.
- Partner with all accredited and non-accredited organizations, from all Major Groups (MG), working with children and youth, and create institutional frameworks, with proper funding, so that they can provide support for the consultation. For example, the Indigenous People Major Group can better reach indigenous youth and most youth organizations.
- Reach out to Governments and make institutional arrangements to promote the involvement of Ministries of Environment, Ministries of Education and Youth Offices to organize national processes starting at the community level. This might seem extremely difficult, but Brazil did it with the International Youth Conference (CONFINT) in 2010. Cecilia Iglesias was a

part of the international methodology team, co-coordinated the national process and UNESCO (which provided funds) hired her to coordinate the group of young facilitators that were in charge of the workshops and debates.

- The activities should have sufficient technical support and economic resources from UNEP and governments, but the discussions need to be led by youth! Therefore, prior thematic and methodology training needs to be a part of the design at the national level, with support from UNEP (Civil Society Unit and Regional Offices) and maybe GEO for Youth and TUNZA Alumni.
- The initial consultation should aim at getting responses to: What children and youth need to be better prepared to contribute to environmental protection? What governments can do to support them? What UNEP can do to support them? What children and youth can commit to for the next year (which is a lot at that age)? How to stay all in touch in the future? Please, don't go into "triple crisis" or SDGs because they might not be familiar with the terminology and you will end up spending more time explaining than listening. They know the environment needs protection and that they can be a part in that task. That's enough for a start.
- As a result of each consultation, young participants should come up with a written response to those questions (there are methodologies to achieve that in a participatory and easy-going manner). And they have to elect 2 national representatives to present that paper and commit publicly to defend their positions. Governments, Regional Offices and UNEP consultation's coordinator need to receive them directly from them at the same time, and respond back with honest feedback (they will certainly prefer an honest "*no way*" than a "*we will do our best to ask someone to try to talk to someone who will think about this*"). All documents should be posted online in the consultation website, along with the names and contact info of the national representatives.
- The liaison person at UNEP Regional Offices should analyze and compile all the documents from the region based on common responses to each question but leave all of the original documents as Annexes. That compilation should be sent to the representatives in the applicable languages. If a good self-organization mechanism was set in place by the participants in each meeting (the "how to get in touch" question will probably result in many WhatsApp groups without adults on it), then the national representatives will share it with them, and they will assess if the outcome is truthful to what the annex contains.
- A virtual meeting -with simultaneous translation- should take place in each region, led by the liaison person, with all country representatives to polish the Regional proposal and 2 regional representatives should be elected to take that outcome to the global level. They should send it directly to the global coordinator in its original language and the Regional office should provide an English translation -if needed- copying the regional representatives. All documents should be posted online in the consultation's website, along with the names and contact info of the regional representatives.
- The global coordinator should analyze and compile all the regional documents and leave the ones from each region in its original language as an Annex. That should go back for a round of feedback in the six UN languages and a global virtual meeting -with translation- should take place with the regional representatives to start "translating" their proposals into a UN document: the new UNEP Children and Youth Engagement Strategy.
- Finally, UNEP can feed that into its policy cycle for consultations with Member States and other Stakeholders, as it normally does.



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We could give you a pretty good idea of what that document will contain because our combined experiences in youth engagement represent nearly half of UNEP's life as an organization. But, as mentioned earlier in this article, children and youth should have their own voices different to the usual tokenistic approach.

In the "Brief summary of the general debate" section of the Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972)¹⁴ one can read: *"Many speakers referred to the necessity for public involvement, particularly that of youth, and the support of public interest, in environmental matters; action would not be taken unless there was public demand for it, and it would not be effective unless it had public support."*

There are demands that are not being listened to, and the only way to have an effective youth

strategy is to gain children and youth support. Speak less and listen more. If a good consultation is conducted and the results are translated into a UNEP decision, not only the strategy will be better, but also you will have a great network that will be there to help you implement it.

On a final note, we wish to congratulate UNEP for the sixth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) for Youth report. We hope it can be translated into other languages and be used as a starting point to launch regional processes that are entirely youth-led (many local projects will follow and the impacts will be bigger). We also recognize the amazing job done with the "Reset Earth: Apollo's Edition Education Portal"! We also hope to see versions in other languages and... maybe we can see Apollo and Remi becoming influencers in all environmental issues!! All in one place, with a nice interactive platform, covering all themes in a cross-cutting way.

¹⁴ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/523249>



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STRENGTHENING UNEP FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION OF THE 2030
AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

Reflections on UNEP and Civil Society

by **Mark Halle**, Chairman of the Board of TRAFFIC International,
the world's leading wildlife trade organization

UNEP – at 50 – is no longer a youngster! It has grown and has become a productive and respected member of the community. It soldiers on, fighting the environment corner against heavy odds, sometimes with success but more often with disappointment. UNEP is respected and even admired, but not considered part of the top team.

There are few of us who remember UNEP's early years – the excitement and enthusiasm surrounding what was regarded as the most significant institutional experiment since the foundation of the United Nations a quarter century earlier. Two features of the new UN Environment Programme were revolutionary. First and most important, UNEP was to be located in Nairobi, the first UN body to be headquartered in a developing country.

The second, perhaps more significant, was that UNEP was conceived as a horizontal organization, working across the entire UN system to advance the cause of environmental care. Both of these innovations made UNEP's relations with civil society central to its purpose.

In respect of the Nairobi location, the politics of this decision have been dissected elsewhere¹ but, in a nutshell, the decision resulted from a shift in perspective on how to understand and frame environmental challenges. This shift peaked at the UN Conference on the Human Environment, the meeting in Stockholm in June 1972 that led to the establishment of UNEP. If the Stockholm conference had its roots in the concern of the richer countries over pollution and its transboundary impact, the environment emerged from Stockholm as the foundation for all healthy development. Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's famous statement that "poverty is the worst form of pollution" set this out starkly. Accepting this perspective on environmental challenges was the condition for developing country support for the Stockholm outcomes. The Nairobi location of the new UNEP was its symbol.

¹ See Maria Ivanova discussion of the politics of this decision in her *"The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty"*.

This sea change in how environment was perceived – and the political context within which it operated – made the new UNEP highly relevant to civil society². A pollution-focused UNEP would have engendered interest largely from local groups in developed countries fighting pollution or ill-considered industrial development. Instead, UNEP became of sudden interest to the much wider range of non-governmental players interested in development, social justice and equity, and poverty alleviation, embracing a wide range of actors from the development giants (CARE, Oxfam, Save the Children) through to the international environmental NGOs like WWF, IUCN and NRDC.

The second innovation was bold, initially necessary, and in my view fully correct. Environment, far from being a sector, a “vertical” like health, education, or agriculture, should be regarded as a facet of all human endeavour. All economic activity depends on the resources drawn from the environment and, in turn, has a measurable impact on the environment, from beneficial right across the spectrum to catastrophic. UNEP’s first Executive Director, Maurice Strong, understood this well and organized accordingly. UNEP’s task, in his view, was to infiltrate environmental thinking and environmental responsibility into every economic activity, and to lobby, support and sustain this objective not as a relevant sector organization but as a vital overlay to all sectors of economic activity.

How could UNEP manage such a challenge? As a programme of the United Nations family, it would do so by working with and influencing the other players in the UN system, helping to

make their respective interactions with member states more environmentally responsible. And it would deploy the Environment Fund, established to give UNEP some clout, across the UN family to that end.

In pursuit of this aim Strong hired not so much environmental scientists and experts but a cadre of mostly young (environment was a young field), highly original thinkers and activists working at the leading edge of environment and development innovation. He deliberately favoured people who thought and worked out of the box. His model was US President Kennedy’s “the best and the brightest”, immortalized in David Halberstam’s book with that title.³ This community of young innovators was not largely to be found in governmental circles. Instead, Strong’s approach made UNEP culturally much more aligned to the world of civil society organizations than was typical in the rest of the intergovernmental world.

The essential point was that, if environment is seen as a vertical, it will inevitably be a weak player, confined to the politically secondary “brown” issues and conservation, and low on the totem pole of political influence. Strong’s horizontal play was a key element in giving this young organization the means to succeed.

Civil society pressure and activism was an important part of the movement that led to the Stockholm conference being held, and a parallel International Assembly of UN-accredited Non-Governmental Organizations (INASEN) was created to ensure that the decisions of Stockholm were actively followed up. When

2 “Civil society” covers a wide spectrum of organizations – from local associations, church and student groups, though large and powerful global organizations and through to the corporate world in some definitions. The vast majority of civil society organizations have never heard of UNEP and have no interest in it; they are local, often specialized and draw on the goodwill and resources of communities to offer social or economic services. In employing the term in this paper, I am referring essentially to large, often international non-governmental organizations with an interest in environment and development.

3 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Best_and_the_Brightest



Indian Prime Minister **Indira Gandhi** shakes hands with **Maurice Strong**, Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) © UN / Yutaka Nagata)

UNEP moved to Kenya in 1974, this led to the creation of NGO Environment Service Centre, later renamed the Environmental Liaison Centre International. Key leaders behind this were noted US anthropologist Margaret Mead; the founder of the International Institute for Environment and Development and author of “Only One Earth” Barbara Ward; and the Secretary General of the League of Red Cross Societies Henrik Beer. Not one of these came from a classic, pollution-obsessed, scientific background.

This unconventional tandem of a “horizontal” UNEP and a powerful coalition of civil society organizations working together to keep the pressure on recalcitrant governments was an ingenious model. How well did it work?

It is perhaps a historical tragedy that, while Maurice Strong liked to set things up, he quick-

ly grew bored running them. In 1975 already, he stepped down and made way for his deputy, the Egyptian scientist Mostafa Tolba. If Tolba (one of the Vice Presidents of the Stockholm conference) was a man of boundless energy, ambition and vision, he did not by and large share Strong's belief in a horizontal model for UNEP. A crafty politician, he was convinced he needed his own constituency of Ministers and gave priority to helping Member States set up Environment Ministries or Agencies; he focused with impressive exclusivity on ensuring that their heads were content.

Further, Tolba came from a governance tradition in which only the action of government could be taken seriously. Scientists could provide the evidence, NGOs could lobby, corporations would need to be regulated, but only government could take the policy, regulatory or financial decisions that count. While Tolba paid

lip service to NGOs, he urged them to focus on the purely governmental play of decision-making in the UNEP Governing Council (later the UN Environment Assembly), though he did like and respect the NGO lobbying that preserved the voluntary contributions on which UNEP's work and influence to a great extent depended.



Whatever the influence of civil society – whether supportive or critical, whether effective or irrelevant – environmental awareness and concern grew steadily in political importance, culminating in the UN Conference on Environment and Development – the famous Rio Earth Summit in 1992 whose thirtieth anniversary (in 2022) has gone by almost unnoticed. However, in respect of the relations of civil society to UNEP, Rio marked a new chapter.

At Rio, the ingenious and feisty US Congresswoman and feminist icon Bella Abzug managed to negotiate a special status for representatives of Women's groups. Others jumped into the breach – farmers, youth, trade unions, local authorities, etc. and secured the creation of the Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum by means of which civil society interaction with UNEP has since been organized. With Rio, the relationship between civil society organizations and UNEP entered a second generation.

The Forum has certainly channelled NGO energy into UNEP in a far more effective way than the ELCI ever managed to do, and civil society presence in the life and workings of UNEP is strong and generally positive. NGOs criticize governments (often in defence of UNEP) and are more often allies than critics. The Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum is present especially at the UN Environment Assemblies, working to influence negotiated text, seeking to make their voice heard in the debates and busily lobbying delegates. They are fully part of the UNEP "game". Is this success?

To answer that question requires a sober judgement on the optimal role of environmentally-focused civil society half a century into UNEP's journey. The sorry truth is that, though there is much achievement to be lauded, the global environment is, in some of its fundamentals, in very dire condition. Both climate change and biodiversity loss are planet threatening and the curve of both is bending towards disaster. For all the conventions, resolutions, environmental institutions, funds and action plans that carry UNEP's fingerprints, it has failed to reverse the most important negative trends.

In my view, this relates to the fundamental, structural problem that UNEP and the rest of the UN family are government-based organizations in a world that is no longer led or even greatly influenced by independent government decision-making. If UNEP is the servant of its Member States, unable to move beyond what its almost two hundred members are able to decide by consensus, will it ever be able to fulfil the promise invested in it back in 1972 at Stockholm? And if the answer is in the negative, what are the implications for the proper role of civil society in respect of it? Does civil society's relations with UNEP now need to enter a third, more disruptive generation?



It is now, I believe, patently clear that the planet's environmental problems stem not from uncertainty in the science underpinning policy; nor do they arise from uncertainty as to the proper action to be taken. Both of these are crystal clear. One need only read the IPCC or IPBES reports to understand not only how robust but how incontrovertible is the science behind our problem analysis and solution identification.

If adequate action is not being taken (though it is repeatedly promised) this is because it is incompatible with the status quo in which we



April 1978 – A view of one of the blocks of the temporary headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi, Kenya © UNEP

and our governments remain locked. Our environmental problems are not largely the result of lack of environmental action but instead are hard-wired into the way the economy, the financial system and international trade function. Because they benefit the privileged, that privilege is defended tooth and nail, eliminating from political possibility the very forms of action that are needed and around which civil society action should properly crystallize.

Extinction Rebellion, for example, and the School Strike for Climate are not active in UNEP, nor do they vie for a place in the Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum. Instead, they understand that transformative change is highly unlikely to result from resolutions of the UN Environment Assembly, and even less from its outcome document. They do not believe that the governments that make up the UNEP membership (all of them, that is) will even begin to consider – beyond their rhetoric – the depth and thoroughness of the change need-

ed if UNEP is to come close to fulfilling its mandate and achieving its goals.

How, then, should civil society groups committed to sustainable development and the environment set their priorities and should they shun UNEP as too circumscribed by its structure and governance to do the job, instead turning their attention to other vehicles and targets? In my view the answer is broadly “yes”; they should think carefully about what forms of action are most likely to achieve the change that they advocate, and what forms of action are most effective.

Happily, however, it is not an either/or choice and it seems fitting that civil society should continue investing in UNEP. Perhaps, though, they should worry less about the positioning of a phrase or punctuation mark in the outcome document of a UNEP Assembly, and more in helping UNEP gain the liberty to take the stands that it – and the planet – needs to take.



Act #ForNature



Species, spare land and sperm counts: defining UNEP's coming decades

by **Richard Black**, Freelance Journalist,
former BBC Science and Environment Correspondent

UNEP's central role is to pursue solutions to the biggest environmental problems of our age. But I will go out on a limb here and predict that it will be only a bit-part player in developing solutions to the biggest one of all – human-induced climate change. Here, the biggest advance needed is to de-risk investment in clean energy across the developing world, where capital can cost 3-4 times as much as in OECD nations. Do that, and private investment will flow into renewables, battery storage and all the other key elements of the clean energy economy. And that is not an issue for UNEP, but for the Bretton Woods institutions and other multilateral donors and lenders. The reform of these finance bodies, as proposed by Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley at the 2021 and 2022 UN climate summits, is the big game in town.

If detailing something that UNEP probably won't be doing in the next few decades seems a strange way to begin an article about what it will be doing, I choose it to illustrate a fundamental point: the most important environmental issues all need addressing outside the purely environmental domain. This is one of the reasons why UNEP links up regularly now with initiatives in other disciplines both inside and outside the UN system – such as the process aiming to control antibiotic use, in which UNEP is working alongside the World Health Organization, World Organisation for Animal Health and the Food and Agriculture Organization. But co-working on solutions, and leaving the most important bits to others, will become even more common as the next decades flow by.

Many of the most obviously environmental issues are already covered by multilateral treaties, some administered by UNEP and others not. Persistent organic pollutants, ozone depletion, migratory species... the list is long and, for the moment, comprehensive. Many of these treaties were born before the consequences of the issues under consideration became obvious, provoked – as with the climate change convention – by concern over impacts projected by science rather than those already visible. Fifty years after Stockholm 1972, we are in a different era. Impacts of most types of environmental degradation are now in-your-face visible – in some cases, existentially so. When damage is already serious and some of it irreversible, navigating the

impacts becomes a progressively major focus alongside the continuing task of trying to address the causes.

In some cases, the job will be to manage trade-offs between competing demands as we try to find a way through the various dimensions of the environmental crisis; the most obvious issues centring on land use for nature conservation, carbon absorption and human livelihoods. Among the threats lie some opportunities that UNEP can play a central role in grasping – opportunities stemming from successes either in environmental policymaking or in humanity's changing tastes and the responses of business.

UNEP's role in all of this is underpinned by the unique legitimacy that it has as a UN agency reporting to all the world's governments, with a remit to advance sustainable development alongside environmental integrity, and a track record of effective initiatives in both. Legitimacy will be much in demand in the coming decades as the scale of governments' past failures makes hard decisions inevitable – decisions that should not be left to any individual country, bloc or business.

I will get around to mainstream environment issues in a moment, but let me give an example first of the kind of issue UNEP may find itself helping to manage in coming decades. Human sperm counts are falling – apparently across the world, and apparently for decades. The (presumably several) reasons are not clear – probably some are concerned with pollution, while other environmental issues may be involved alongside lifestyle questions. At the moment it is not weighing heavily on the public mind; but if the trend continues and we reach a point where more and more couples find themselves unable to have children, it could.

You can see what a complex issue it could turn into, too. If pollution and non-pollution factors are involved, what is the balance between them, and which is the easier category to tackle? Who is most responsible for the pollution, and where is the impact greatest? Is this another question dividing the developed and developing world? Are there legal rights and obligations involved? Whatever the answers, it seems obvious that a wide range of people, countries and sectors would have a stake in the conversation.

Unnatural damage

Probably the biggest, most central issue on UNEP's agenda for the coming decades will be nature. In 2010, I reported for the BBC on COP10 of the Convention on Biological Diversity. As had been obvious for a few years previously, the top story as the conference opened was that all biodiversity targets agreed 10 years previously had been missed. Recently, in the run-up to COP15, we saw the same kind of analysis and the same conclusion repeated for the last decade:¹ all targets missed.

The most shocking thing about these findings is that they have lost their capacity to shock. No-one who follows news on conservation would have expected anything different. And yet: this should shock us. Every government knows that environmental integrity underpins its society and economy. Every government knows that the price of ecosystem collapse will be huge and possibly existential. Yet ecosystem decline continues, making collapses inevitable.

What happens when an ecosystem collapses depends a little on where it is. If the country

¹ COP15 should have taken place in 2020 but was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic, meaning that the substantive negotiations took place two years later than scheduled, in December 2022



© UNEP



Planting trees at Kibera informal settlement © UNEP

is prosperous, the society and economy can withstand its disappearance, as Canada did with the collapse of the Grand Banks ecosystem, which had cod at its apex, in 1992 – the same year, of course, that Canada and virtually all other governments put their signatures on the UN biodiversity convention. Resources also flow into attempting to return the ecosystem to its previous functional state. In a less wealthy society, however, there are fewer resources to put into supporting either natural or human capital.

In the coming decades it seems inevitable that more ecosystems will collapse, on land and in the ocean. The ongoing expansion of the human footprint with its growing demands for natural resources, combined with climate change and other factors, are bound to push some systems over the precipices to which the last 50 years have brought them much closer. In less prosperous parts of the world, we are already living with questions about how the international community contributes to attempting to restore ecosystem integrity. As that becomes increasingly impossible, the question becomes one of supporting society and what remains of nature through what may be an inevitable and difficult transition, based on acceptance that the familiar natural resources of the past will not come back. The natural, human and economic worlds collide.

Such situations become even more pressing in states that are already fragile due to some combination of hunger, poverty, corruption, conflict and disease (continue the list if you like). Here, the collapse of an ecosystem (or more broadly decline in natural capital such as fertile soil) causes proportionally more social damage. It becomes one more impact that can move the state from 'fragile' towards 'failed'. And recent history shows all too graphically that the impact of state failure can be global.

This perspective also shows the crucial necessity of maintaining and increasing natural

resilience in fragile states. Yet these are also the hardest places to do this kind of work. Across the piece, the international community needs to look at nature conservation and restoration as an investment in peace and stability. UNEP already has programmes underway that aim to join up the environment and security agendas. But this will inevitably become far more mainstream than it is now, and will need to focus more on fragile states where the consequences of inaction and failure are so damaging.

Dealing with failures

Although conditional optimism continues to be a valuable motivational tool, it has to be considered likely that the next few decades will see serial admissions of failure. We are more and more likely to see climate impacts rendering some locales uninhabitable. We are likely to find species displaced from their traditional homelands, and some being unable to migrate successfully. More and more oceanic zones are likely to become lifeless as the water warms, acidifies and loses its oxygen. Plastic pollution may prove too concentrated for some organisms.

All of this, happening in the full view of science and conservation, will inevitably open up a new conversation about translocating species as the only guarantor of their survival. It is rightly regarded as a step to be taken only when all others have failed; even contemplating it is indeed a marker of failure. But in more and more cases, all other attempts at a solution will fail; and what then? Introduced species can hugely impact the ecosystem into which they come. And yet there are likely to be some cases where every other option is worse. The choice is simply which deeply imperfect strategy is the least detestable, and to manage this imperfect situation for the minimum harm.



Inside the Swedish Plastic Recycling plant, the largest sorting facility of its kind in the world © UNEP

A positive taste

If the foregoing appears to paint a somewhat depressing picture – deciding between situations that manage failure differently – that should not come as a surprise. But not everything in the environmental sphere is a failure. Pollutants have been tackled, rivers have been cleansed and ecosystems brought back. Untrammelled trades in natural resources have been ethically regulated. So, what about those successes that we can see on the horizon? What initiatives might UNEP be called upon to enact and lead then?

On climate change, things are moving fast. Wind and solar electricity generation is increasing by 20% per year compound – an inexorable exponential rise that is already eating into global oil demand and which is set to accelerate given Vladimir Putin's folly in Ukraine. Other re-

newables such as hydropower and biofuels are spreading too. At the same time governments seem to be appreciating, finally, that protecting large tracts of nature from development would be a rather good idea – hence the interest shown in the 30x30 set-aside initiative and the Global Deal for Nature around the UN biodiversity summit in December (2022). Both of these trends imply a bigger need for land even as demand for food increases. Still more may be needed for negative emissions – natural or engineered ways of taking carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere.

While sometimes competing uses can easily be reconciled (turns out sheep really do like living in fields furnished with solar panels), in many cases this will not be possible. Both biofuels and hydropower come with disturbing records of human rights abuse and conflict generation. Yet the need for nature, carbon ab-

sorption and renewable energy is huge and urgent. Someone is going to have to define good practice, monitor ecological and social consequences, and find a way through minefields of rights and obligations. No-one is better placed to do that than UNEP.

And to end, a few words on something that could turn into 'a nice problem to have.' In pristine laboratories, food production is being revolutionised. Already in developed countries you can buy a steak, schnitzel or burger made entirely from plants, with a taste and mouth-feel very close to the real thing. This trend is moving on a trajectory that feels very similar to Electric Vehicles – one minute a niche product that the committed will love but may never catch on, to something that is muscling its way centre-stage at an astonishing rate. In 2021, sales of plant-based artificial meats grew by 17% – roughly matching the annual growth of wind and solar generation. As the market expands, the costs fall and the variety available increases as more investors enter the game. And all this before lab-grown meat enters the field, which is very close, promising both mass production of staple cuts and development of novel flavours and textures that today we can only imagine.

Logically, this is likely to lead us to a situation in which for most of the world's population, there is no rational case for buying parts of a dead cow or sheep anymore. The alternatives will be cheaper and just as delicious, and can be produced to the quantities required even in countries that lack pasture. In which case there will be far fewer farmers raising cows and sheep. One potential benefit for the climate is obvious, in the form of reduced methane emissions. Realising another benefit will take more management – restoring forest and other natural ecosystems on former farmland, which will remove carbon from the air as they grow. Done with ecological sensitivity, this will also be a huge boon for nature. But ecological sensitivity is not a given; neither is the existence of social

policies to replace lost incomes while maintaining rural communities. Doing that right could produce a third climate benefit – growing trees for timber to replace concrete in buildings, or bioplastic-yielding crops that lead to more oil being left in the ground. Technological, social, environmental and economic wisdom will be needed to deliver the maximum benefits. And who better than UNEP to be the global repository of good practice?

Fifty years on from the decision to form it, UNEP's active existence is as key to global environmental progress as ever. It has already changed its foci and dominant modes of working many times – in fact they are constantly evolving – and it will have to continue doing so. If it is not to be the dominant mover in finding solutions, its roles in managing conflicting priorities, shaping responses to failures, and joining up the worlds of environment, development, economic resilience and peace is likely to become more important. Another five decades in existence? In all probability, yes; though how its agenda will have changed by the Stockholm +100 summit is anyone's guess. I will wager, however, that leaders will arrive by battery limo charged with 100% renewable electricity, and dine on exquisite cuts of lab-grown meat more delicious than anything animal agriculture can produce.





Children help the local Ocean Conservation releasing sea turtle in the ocean. Watamu, Kenya. 2017
© UNEP / Cyril Villemain



A group of children plants a tree to celebrate WED at Karura forest . June 2017 © UNEP / Josephat Kariuki



Green Hope Foundation Toronto Ravine Cleanup © Green Hope Foundation

Youth can change the status quo of the world – through cooperation

by **Kehkashan Basu**, Founder-President,
Green Hope Foundation

At 8, I planted my first tree.

I was born in the first year of the new millennium, the same year the global fraternity embraced the Earth Charter, and 189 world leaders came together at the United Nations to adopt the Millennium Declaration. As fate would have it, I was born on the 5th of June, on World Environment Day, in the same month when the Earth Charter was adopted. This shaped my mindset. It was probably pre-ordained that I would become an eco-warrior – someone who would help people and the planet.

As a young person whose life's mission is to empower those who are the farthest first, I am frequently confronted with cathartic moments of realization, where I recognize an issue and feel compelled to do something to solve it. The first of many such moments occurred more than a decade ago when, as a seven-year-old, I saw the image of a dead bird with its belly full of plastics. I still remember how I squirmed with shock, trying to fathom the bird's agony as it must have choked to death. That moment spurred me to take action – I began to realize the copious amount of plastic that was a part of our everyday lives and that there was something inherently wrong with this world causing such an innocent creature to suffer through so much pain. Plastic - was killing our biodiversity and with it, threatening our very own survival. Yet, most of us were too myopic to even notice its impact. It was also around the same time that I attended a lecture by environmentalist Robert Swan, whose words, "The greatest threat to the planet is the belief that someone else will save it", resonated deeply with me and spurred me to celebrate my 8th birthday by planting my first tree. Thereafter, I embarked on my second act of conservation, by launching a "no plastic campaign" involving my school and community. This set me on my crusade for social and environmental justice.

At 12, I was a delegate to a UNEP conference

My work got noticed and I was chosen to represent the United Arab Emirates, the UAE, as a child delegate to UNEP TUNZA's 2011 Children and Youth International Conference at Bandung, Indonesia, where I gave a presentation to a multinational audience about my grassroots work in engaging children in environmental conservation. The following year, I was invited to Rio+20, where, as a 12-year-old, I was the youngest international delegate to speak at multiple events, including at a press conference to mark the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought.

Every time I went on stage, the seating and microphones had to be adjusted to my height because I was the only child, in a sea of adults. I, quite literally, stood out but this experience highlighted the immense lack of inclusivity of children in the process of sustainable development.

In 2012, at Rio+20, it was our future that was being decided but without the wholesome engagement and participation of children. I decided to change this inequity and I made two decisions. The first was to establish my own social innovation enterprise with the objective of providing young people a platform through which they could participate in the sustainable development process. I named it "Green Hope Foundation." The second decision I made, was to throw my hat in the ring for the elections of Global Coordinators for UNEP's Major Groups for Children and Youth. I received a lot of encouragement and support for this decision. One of the outgoing Global Coordinators urged me to be brave and take the position. I must admit, as a 12-year-old, I had no idea what I was getting into. All I had was my passion for driving environmental conservation through

greater engagement of young people, especially children like me

To everyone's surprise, I got elected – making me the youngest person ever to hold this position, and not only at UNEP but across all UN processes. The initial months were heady – I was quite at ease with the demands of the role and at every stakeholder engagement forum, what I said or wrote received a bit of extra attention, most probably because it was coming from a 12-year-old.

Youth can – if we are given the opportunity

At my first Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, the GMGSF, I was invited to moderate my first-ever dialogue with the then-Executive Director of UNEP, Achim Steiner, who was immensely supportive of my election and of young people having a voice at the table. That same year, at my first Governing Council¹, I was chosen to deliver the closing statement on behalf of the Major Groups and my impassioned plea received a standing ovation from the audience. No wonder I felt proud. I felt my messages, our messages, were being taken seriously for I was also speaking for Children and Youth. Why else would adults allow a young person to speak at an intergovernmental plenary? I felt inspired.

Young people rightly feel that many existing structures that have been constructed and governed by adults are stale and not conducive to quick results. I felt there were sometimes no differences between official systems and those of civil society. I saw that the Children and Youth Major group was ready to be overhauled. I began to work to dismantle pre-existing structures that favoured a certain cote-

¹ The Governing Council was the 'general assembly' of UNEP. It was replaced in 2014 by the UN Environment Assembly with universal membership, according to decisions taken at Rio+20 in 2012.



Green Hope Foundation Mangrove Cleanup UAE © Green Hope Foundation

rie. However, jealousies soon began to creep in. While some older youth were extremely supportive and welcoming, a certain faction from the older youth felt threatened both by the attention I was garnering and because my reform ideas were met with positive responses.

Unfortunately, and because of this, I began receiving anonymous hate messages and emails. This experience really disturbed me at first, but with the support of my parents and my team at Green Hope Foundation, I decided that the best way to fight this negativity was to prove to the detractors that I had the mettle to fulfil my mandate. I realised that I was making a statement not just for myself, but for all chil-

dren who may be in this predicament in the future. I fulfilled my 2-year term at UNEP's Major Group for Children and Youth, called for elections, and handed over the baton to another youth. This election process, too, was fraught with animosity between youth from different regions, each of whom wanted to push their own candidate, and some did so by maligning others. Cyberbullying had come stay. It continues till this day, having seeped into almost all youth processes. It is a difficult environment for any person, more so for a child and I would definitely urge all stakeholders to be more proactive and responsible in creating safer spaces for young people to engage in.

The Green Hope Foundation is precisely about green hope

I was merely 15 and had in my young life, gained experience about people, multicultural events, and I, learned about the environment. UNEP had given me an opportunity to listen to people with knowledge about the environment. UNEP had also provided me with a first understanding about how the intergovernmental system functions. Understanding the system, its processes and how to approach it with new ideas, youthful ideas, made together for the key to opening more doors of the intergovernmental system. This experience, in fact, served to motivate me even more to evolve Green Hope Foundation into a vehicle that facilitated young people's engagement in the sustainable development process, especially for those who were vulnerable and marginalised.

What began as a 12-year-old's dream has now grown into a global social innovation enterprise, accredited by ECOSOC, UNEP, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Green Hope Foundation² now has chapters in 28 countries and an army of over half a million young grassroots activists. We let our work speak for itself.

My grassroots work has taken me to communities and regions that are invisible to most of the developed world. Our grassroots work is where communities are still steeped in unimaginable poverty, superstition, and medieval exploitation, where human life, especially those of their women and children are worth almost nothing. Green Hope has projects in Syrian refugee camps on the Lebanese border. We are working in Kutupalong, in Bangladesh, the world's largest refugee camp with over 77 000 refu-

gees, mostly Rohingya people who have fled from the atrocities in their own country.

Working within these communities, be it in refugee camps or amongst the vast rural communities in the Global South that have been the hardest hit by COVID-19, has given me a unique perspective of human endurance and diversity. But perhaps most of all, I have seen and experienced the potential that exists to bring about a new world order through sustainable development and a stable and healthy environment.

Together we can change the future for the better

Youth is generally portrayed as either strikers or leading protest marches. However, I feel that is stereotyping and viewing us in a one-dimensional way. It is easy to blame others, and especially the adult generation who has brought the world into the precarious political and environmental situation in which it now is. In the Green Hope Foundation, we make serious efforts to go beyond blaming others. We are all about problem solving. I began with no resources, with just my passion as my ammunition. The fact that I have been able to positively impact over half a million lives, gives me hope that changing the *status quo* is definitely possible. That is the message I take with me to every young person I meet – motivating them to move out of their comfort zones and create a world where no one is left behind.

“The greatest threat to the planet is, after all, the belief that someone else will save it.”

² <https://www.greenhopefoundation.com/>



Educating Rohingya refugee children © Green Hope Foundation



Green Hope Foundation Solar-Powered Mobile Library © Green Hope Foundation

**Section Three:
Civil Society
Organizations and
other stakeholders'
recommendations
– tapping on what
needs to be improved**



Global Major groups and Stakeholders Forum 2017 at UNEP headquarters © Major Groups

Towards Stockholm+50 and Beyond

Stakeholder recommendations for governments, UNEP and Civil Society, Major Groups and relevant non-state stakeholders

*Developed for the Stockholm+50 conference based on key issues.
Summarised by **Jan Gustav Strandenaes** & **Isis Alvarez**, Stakeholder Forum*

Introduction

From April 20th to May 12th 2022, Stakeholder Forum with Forum Norway and a number of other partners, co-organised a series of webinars that dealt with 'Legacy Themes' which are themes that have been key thematic and policy areas with UNEP from the very first United Nations Conference in 1972 on the Human Environment. These paved the way for environmental governance and policies as we know them today.

The recommendations were developed with input from experts in each of the different themes. The recommendations have relevance above and beyond the Stockholm+50 Conference, and they represent a cross section of issues that engaged individuals and organisations felt were important to discuss in 2022, the 50th year after the establishment of the UN Environment Programme.

We, therefore, present you with a set of key recommendations for Member States (national, regional & local governments), UNEP (and other UN Agencies), and Civil Society, Major Groups and non-state stakeholders to consider which are not meant to be exhaustive.

** Please note – the summaries are based on a general overview presented by the legacy theme experts and webinar coordinators, including extracts from the recorded webinars available through the website: [Towards Stockholm+50](#). The summaries are not the result of a negotiated process. We have chosen not to edit the recommendations thus overlap does occur.*

Key Recommendations for the Enhancement of the Environmental Agenda During the Next 50 Years

Legacy Theme 1: Strengthening Environmental Governance and Law

*Webinar Leads: **Leida Rijnhout** (Senior Advisor, Governance, Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future) and **Stephen Stec** (Senior Research Fellow on Environment and Democracy, Central European University Democracy Institute, Hungary)*

Recommendations for Member States/ Nations/ Regions:

- Increase corporate accountability
- Multilevel governance culture
- Subsidiarity principle (environmental decisions at level close to those who are affected) - implies multilevel governance (i.e. opposite to power concentrated on a specific centre)
- Anti-corruption initiatives
- Value-added economies (diversifying economies)
- Keep performance under constant peer review
- Strengthen generally environmental governance as this is the first thing to be obscured or sacrificed in the case of conflict

Recommendations for Governments

- Implementing good environmental governance structures and strong institutions for environmental issues
- In order to implement good governance, include, facilitate and support Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)
- Maintain Ministers for the Environment
- Implement international agreements
- Legal frameworks to enforce corporate accountability
- Of critical importance not just for youth to be listened to, but to be included as equal stakeholders in decision-making environments, processes, and structures
- International trade systems include sufficient focus on environmental impact on increased consumption
- Renegotiate trade agreements which only focus on maximizing economic returns, without enough recognition of social and environmental impacts
- Stop fossil fuel and other perverse subsidies and incentives and move towards supporting a cleaner and greener future



Recommendations for UNEP

- Urge for a global consensus on binding norms on corporate accountability
- Increase coordination and facilitation to implement and enforce environmental governance and law
- Frameworks in place with goals, targets, means of implementation, review mechanisms, indicators
- Need for increased political leadership
- Foster capacity building and enable financial sustainability
- More clarity on what the right to a healthy environment entails, how to implement it, etc. - no clear international global statement, accepted shape or definition on how those rights can be implemented
- Upgrade UNEP to a Specialized Agency
- Promotion of mechanisms, procedures, protocols, and institutions for accountability at all levels for good environmental governance. These tools support access to justice that can remedy environmental wrongs

Recommendations for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and other Non-state Actors

- Increased active roles in decision-making processes given the shrinking of the civil society space
- Increased efforts for collectively demanding good governance including governance structures and strong institutions for environmental issues
- Publish widely the “UNEP We Want” document and continue to use it for advocacy on good governance and environmental laws, etc
- During Stockholm+50, promote foundations for a binding norm on corporate accountability
- Make visible CSOs role as bridges between Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and local action (bridge between international and national levels)
- A stronger and more active involvement both at national and international level of CSOs is urgently needed
- Be prepared for the meetings

Key Recommendations for the Enhancement of the Environmental Agenda During the Next 50 Years

Legacy Theme 2: Environmental Diplomacy and Multilateralism

Webinar Lead: **Maria Ivanova**, Associate Professor, Centre for Governance and Sustainability, University of Massachusetts Boston

Recommendations for Governments/Member States

- Keep UNEP as a non-specialized agency of the UN, just make it work
- Reaffirm the centrality of UNEP as an environmental agency, strengthen synergies with all UN system, with due financial mechanisms to make implementation happen
- Focusing on implementation but first resolve implementation gap on Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs); identify sources of where the gap is at and identify solutions
- Need for integrated solutions supported by bold and forthcoming policies with due compliance and enforcement monitoring mechanisms in place
- Need for financing (beyond State philanthropy)
- Re-organise the system: rearrange thinking, rearrange priorities and think from a solutions perspective shared with inclusion, equity, ethics, accountability and transparency
- Improvements in data gathering and reporting including country reporting and business reporting in order to make data more accurate and reliable, and to make it come from all sources; better development and need for uniformity in data and criteria for measurement, as well access to data and improved capacity
- Governments committed to collective responses and all need to be actively involved – learn from success stories (i.e. Ozone layer)
- Recognize and mainstream resolutions adopted at UNEA - adopt as a norm, policy and a system of practice to achieve our aims collectively
- Including a human rights perspective into MEAs and environmental justice at the center of environmental policy
- Enable spaces to interact with different stakeholders fostering meaningful engagement and bringing opportunities for building capacity of CSOs
- Cooperation among like-minded countries (enhancement of environmental diplomacy)
- Invite the right actors to the table responding CSOs requests for meaningful engagement
- Solve challenges for smaller delegations facing issues of representation at international meetings
- Mechanisms in place for fair and just based utilization of natural resources and to solve conflicts and other related issues
- Embrace a basic principle from 1972 'Only One Earth'
- Reimagining environmental multilateralism – multilateralism could be sustained and enhanced through regional and bilateral approaches of cooperation
- Need to embrace innovation (i.e. decommissioning of fossil fuel industries and policies)
- Respect and implement the instruments of Indigenous Peoples' governments

Recommendations for UNEP

- UNEP's role not to solve all environmental problems but motivate the common vision for all of us to act
- UNEP as a platform for diverse voices for CSOs and stakeholders
- UNEP must be a relevant voice in science
- UNEP with tools to support multilateralism that enable implementation, including training and technical capacity and due financial resources
- UNEP convene governments to discuss issues but need to invite more than governments; UNEP should invest in also bringing academia around the world, and provide more consistent engagement from these stakeholders
- Work on reducing the gap between those working on environmental issues and key players in environmental sustainability
- Strengthen and promote good leadership
- Continually make administration efficient and provide it with means to facilitate issues
- Appropriate support for countries including through cooperation and other mechanisms (i.e. financial)
- Tap into UNEP's bias to please financial donors which undermines MEAs by impeding financial contributors to MEA implementation

Recommendations for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

- Further support to UNEP from other sectors (academia, CSOs, etc.) that can contribute with improvements
- Advocacy on Multilateralism as ambassador for justice and the need to respect the principle of leaving no one behind
- Building trust and confidence and finding a common language
- Inclusion of different constituencies, voices
- Improve engagement with youth, address intergenerational issues and include them in decision-making; youth as transformative power and strong force
- Strengthening work with regional offices (UNEP) - opportunity to reinforce and strengthen the office itself
- Cross-collaboration among CSOs on capacity building
- Demand governments to bridge the gap for mutual cooperation (work in an integrated way with governments)
- Multi-stakeholder approach is very needed to deal with environmental issues



Key Recommendations for the Enhancement of the Environmental Agenda During the Next 50 Years

Legacy Theme 3: Environmental Rights, Human Rights and Environmental Justice
*Webinar Lead: Professor **Daniel Magraw**, Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Institute of the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies*

Universal Recommendations

- Give full effect to the human right to a healthy environment
- Reset human's relationship with nature from a hierarchical, instrumentalist approach to an approach that recognizes that humans are but one part of the biosphere and that respects the rights of nature and its components and treats the rest of nature with reverence, respect, responsibility and reciprocity
- Conduct robust conservation efforts and do so in a manner that fully respects the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including their right to participate in decision making
- Design and implement "nature-based solutions" such that they are, in fact, nature-science-and-community based solutions
- Foster freedom of opinion and expression to safeguard our environmental and cultural heritage and engage children, youth and people of all ages in the struggle to protect the environment and human rights; a society's full potential, resilience, and strength cannot be unleashed in the absence of free civil society
- Respect and protect the rights of Environmental Human Rights Defenders and whistle-blowers, including by prosecuting those who harass environmental advocates, scientists and journalists
- Utilize cultural communication tools such as the arts and entertainment in education and otherwise, to help meet today's and future challenges, including the need to restore people's emotional connectiveness to the natural world even as digital distractions such as the metaverse proliferate
- Visionary leadership grounded in knowledge is essential in dealing with present and coming threats to human security caused by environmental destructions, and pro-active investments, new law making, and rule setting are needed to steer firms and people towards sustainable behaviour
- Develop agricultural biotechnology in the context of positive rights to utilize seeds and products instead of intellectual property rights that limit farmers' and scientists' access to resources
- Promote gender equality, non-discrimination and environmental justice for current and future generations
- Engage in all-inclusive, comprehensive internal and external dialogues so that all relevant expertise and stakeholders are in the room and at the table; different approaches to inclusive and respectful co-existence and social innovation are needed
- Individually and cooperatively support the recommendations listed herein small - just be sure to engage

Recommendations for Governments

- Establish and enforce standards for environmental justice
- Regulate Information and Communications Technology sufficiently to protect the human rights to access to information, opinion, expression, association, peaceful assembly and privacy, to combat misinformation and disinformation, and to prevent online harassment of scientists and whistle-blowers
- Impose a moratorium on all commercial forest exploitation, until governments can enact effective stewardship laws
- Stimulate innovation and investment to decarbonize the economy
- Stimulate the switch to a green economy while ensuring a just transition and high-quality jobs for those disadvantaged in that process
- Do not, and agree with other countries that they will not, engage in solar radiation geoengineering
- Do not let the prospect of geoengineering delay taking needed measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change
- Adopt and align measures to prevent exposure to hazardous substances on the basis of the best available scientific evidence and make scientific information available and accessible
- Regulate businesses regarding their domestic and transboundary human rights and environmental performances, including with respect to their disclosures of environmental risks – business as usual will seal our fate
- Establish and enforce standards for Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) claims and net-zero-carbon claims
- Address and redress the impacts of manufacturing, using and disposing of plastics, including effects from endocrine disrupting chemicals
- Provide more resources to intergovernmental organizations involved in protecting environmental rights, human rights and environmental justice
- Undertake legislative and governance measures to prevent harm from disasters, including by targeting inequality and exclusion and being guided by a human rights-based approach that empowers communities
- Avoid conflict and build peace, including through strengthening mutual understanding, increasing transparency, and having due regard for the interests of others
- Remove subsidies to the oil and gas industries and fishing industry
- Provide adequate resources to developing countries to deal with environmental threats, including with respect to climate justice
- Protect the human rights of internally displaced persons and immigrants, as well as of the residents in territories through which they pass or in which they ultimately settle

Key Recommendations for the Enhancement of the Environmental Agenda During the Next 50 Years

Legacy Theme 3: Environmental Rights, Human Rights and Environmental Justice

*Webinar Lead: Professor **Daniel Magraw**, Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Institute of the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies*

Rethink the character of borders, including by eliminating border walls, lifting up ecological values, ensuring humane treatment, and providing economic opportunities so that they are more welcoming to life than death

- Reform international trade law and the investor-State dispute settlement system to provide normative space for green innovation and redress the financial and knowledge imbalance between investors and developing countries
- Institute effective regulations and laws to govern environmental issues in outer space and celestial bodies, including: pollution (e.g., space debris, waste left on the moon and planets, intentional destruction of satellites in orbit; interference from mega-constellations of satellites); protection of areas on celestial bodies to preserve sites of historic, aesthetic, or other value; and development of a shared understanding of safe and responsible behaviour in space
- Cooperate fully on the recommendations listed herein
- Work to achieve success on a pandemic convention and improved International Health Regulations (with the World Health Organization)
- Utilize the right to a healthy environment to create a normative cascade that leads to greater protection of the environmental and human rights
- Strengthen work on environmental rule of law, including training judges
- Strengthen work on compliance with environmental law
- Work with the UN system to integrate environmental rule of law considerations into all the UN's rule of law work, for instance in the context of the Rule of Law Coordination Group with a view to strengthening and coordinating the UN's overall rule of law activities
- Integrate fungi into research, policy and operational activities, including those relating to MEAs (in which fungi are currently ignored)
- Raise awareness of the impact of, and interrelationships between, the current environmental crises threatening humans and nature, e.g., biodiversity loss, climate change, deforestation, overfishing, toxification of the planet, and water scarcity
- Provide support to the global science-policy interface platform on chemicals, wastes and pollution approved by UNEA-5.2, in order to identify emerging issues, produce authoritative scientific assessments and curb disinformation

Recommendations for UNEP

- Strengthen its catalytic role
- Work to achieve success in upcoming negotiations on a plastic convention, including to make its scope comprehensive and its obligations binding

Recommendations for Civil Society

- Robustly advocate for, support, and monitor the achievement of the recommendations listed herein
- Utilize a rights-based approach
- Rigorously monitor environmental conditions to identify progress (including via good practices) and emerging threats
- [For Businesses] Business as usual is not an option: Implement policies and programmes to behave in an environmentally responsible, including with respect to Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) considerations, net-carbon-zero, and all other activities relevant to the environment

Recommendations for Individuals

- Recall that though we face environmental crises and the present is not as good as it should be, it also is not as bad as it would have been without the efforts of individuals like you
- Be brave enough to recognize and speak about what has gone wrong and build upon what has been done right, remembering that you and the rest of civil society are both a sword for progress and a shield against disappointments: we need you!
- Remember that dialogue is not a monologue, be sure to go in with open ears, open minds, and open hearts
- Engage in protecting the environment and human rights whatever way you can – no step is too



Key Recommendations for the Enhancement of the Environmental Agenda During the Next 50 Years

Legacy Theme 3: Environmental Rights, Human Rights and Environmental Justice
Webinar Lead: Professor **Daniel Magraw**, Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Institute of the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies

Recommendations for International Organizations

International Organisations Generally

- Mainstream the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as effectively as possible
- Cooperate efficiently and effectively with other international organizations, governments and civil society to achieve the recommendations listed herein

UN General Assembly

- Recognize the universal human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

Financial institutions (including multilateral development banks, private banks, foundations, sovereign wealth funds, export assistance agencies, and others)

- Institute effective and transparent citizen-based accountability standards and mechanisms

UN Development Programme (UNDP)

- Work more effectively with UNEP on the environmental rule of law and the right to a healthy environment, including by prioritizing these in the country offices

UNICEF

- Strengthen programmes to engage children in the right to a healthy environment, including through art, drama and music

UNESCO

- Promote knowledge about human's relationship to the biosphere, including in order to assist in re-setting human's attitudes toward nature and its components
- Promote biosphere reserves

ILO

- include occupational safety and health within the framework of fundamental principles and rights at work (FPRW)

WHO

- Work with UNEP and other actors to achieve success in upcoming negotiations on a plastic convention and on and improved International Health Regulations

FAO

- Foster food systems that are sustainable and meet the needs of rural populations and the poor
- Integrate fungi more effectively into research, policy and operational activities

WTO

- Prohibit fishing subsidies

Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

- Conduct research on plants, animals and fungi that will help sustain poor farmers and small holders
- Conduct breeding programmes with the stresses that climate change is already causing and will likely increasingly cause in the future

International Criminal Court (ICC)

- Recognize ecocide as an international crime within the ICC's jurisdiction

International Sports Authorities

- Address negative impacts from climate change such as increased heat or humidity on the right to engage in sport as well as sports with high environmental impact
- Curtail, or modify to make more energy efficient and use green energy, sports that utilize high amounts of petrol such as car racing, snowmobiling, boat-based sports and airplane- or helicopter-based sports



Key Recommendations for the Enhancement of the Environmental Agenda During the Next 50 Years

Legacy Theme 4: Connecting the Dots – Making a Forceful Canon of the Rio Conventions and the Multilateral Environmental Agreements

Webinar Lead: John E. Scanlon AM, former Secretary-General of CITES

Recommendations for Governments

- Governments to include Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in conservation efforts
- Focus on conservation approaches that offer opportunities to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCS) and ensure there's a local benefit (i.e. examine the incentives for them to do the conservation)
- Issue of IPLCs participation well-embedded in the different MEAs, inclusion and equity, engagement, gender mainstreaming, knowledge on Indigenous women
- Find how to leverage instruments that we have and how to strengthen the implementation of these instruments already adopted, and make them more effective as part of achieving unified environmental goals ensure that new global frameworks (i.e. the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) are inclusive and leverage these conventions avoiding duplication, as a unifying framework allows for more connections, priorities and impact
- Consider marine context and species when drafting laws and regulations (see e.g. Draft UNTOC Protocol on Wildlife Crime)
- Aim for complementarity (see e.g. FAO Port State Measures Agreement)
- (Create incentives to) Overcome silos (see e.g. CITES capacity building projects)
- Build partnerships
- Stop making artificial differentiation between environmental organizations and development organizations – fundamental shifts only if the community grows together

Recommendations for UNEP

- UNEP as the only international organization specialized completely in the environment, needs to inspire, connect and collaborate and not necessarily administer operations of various agreements
- UNEP could help create synergies and create programmatic coherence – bring MEAs together
- Hire more diverse people and have them speak to help make UNEP more visible
- Identify and agree on top few things that need to be done in a specific timeframe, that come across all drivers of destruction of nature
- Time for a stock-take: a lot has been done to address environmental problems including different MEAs; assess successes and pitfalls 50 years in and find ways to leverage each individual mandate in a more cohesive way

Recommendations for the UN system

Global

- Improve systemic information and knowledge sharing for effective impact
- Improve systemic and coordinated support to countries
- Improve system wide monitoring, tracking and accountability systems
- Improve and consolidate indicators to inform policy-making and identify solutions for emerging challenges
- Improve environment expertise and resources tailored for specific situations
- Enhance multilateralism (collaboration for coherence in science policy (linking more MEAs COP processes with UN agencies legislative processes and invest in coordination)
- Building more coalitions
- Employ the nexus or cross-cutting approaches such as One Health approach as common denominators for convergence and collaboration
- Establishing UN-wide Strategic Planning Framework to address the triple planetary crisis through vertical and horizontal interlinkages
- Enhance peer-to-peer reviewed support, review and learning systems
- Mobilize the youth and the people in the UN system constituencies and connect to each other

Regional and National

- Benefit from reinvigorated UN country teams and resident coordinators
- Make national biodiversity or chemical strategies and action plan owned by the UN specialized agencies
- Use the technological developments and digitalization to facilitate information exchange and collaboration
- Peer to peer review learning and support
- Enhance investment
- MEAs and mainstreaming at UN corporate level



Key Recommendations for the Enhancement of the Environmental Agenda During the Next 50 Years

Legacy Theme 5: The Environment and Education Looking to the Future

*Webinar Leads: Professor **Daniella Tilbury**, Commissioner for Sustainable Development and Future Generations, Gibraltar & **Thomas Macintyre**, a research fellow, and consultant on UNESCO projects and project leader at the Colombian Foundation 'Mentes en Transición'*

Recommendations for Governments

- New and strengthened guidelines are needed to be used at the national level by Member States to develop policies in education, sustainable development, or policies in the environment, that have a component of education and learning, despite those already provided by International agencies
- Support pilot projects on education and learning to encourage particular activities, and look at how they can be mainstreamed, to catalyse change on the ground or directed to a particular sector, theme, or particular environmental issues
- Foster International collaboration, where Member States come together to develop or advance particular initiatives, for example in teacher education, and outdoor learning. Such international collaboration could be strengthened, especially with the increased focus on multi-stakeholder partnerships
- Support contexts where there is lack of resources and investment for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda
- Harness, coordinate and distribute environmental learning and education funds equitably to Member States with a focus on environmental laws
- Emphasize and reinforce learning and education for environment and sustainability at the primary level, and early years
- Engaging with religious and traditional actors as a way to promote a more values-and-ethical- approach, to bring about positive change for the environment
- Move away from theme-based approaches and encourage a shift in paradigms, so we learn to better engage and connect sustainability to the environment
- Work towards empowering stakeholders to take action, and international agencies to frame opportunities for this to happen at the Member State level



Recommendations for UNEP

- UNEP commits to evidence-informed policies developed through multi-sectoral, multi-level and inter and trans-disciplinary collaboration at all levels of governance, including diverse forms of knowledge, and equal attention to both summative and formative forms of assessment and evaluation
- UNEP supports a systemic engagement of these issues in formal, non-formal and informal education
- UNEP commits to increasing its focus on primary level and early years, and creating opportunities to build ability and capability of young learners through participatory learning
- UNEP commits to moving away from individualistic behaviour change approaches to promoting more systemic responses and collaborative engagement approaches between learners and stakeholders
- UNEP commits to investing in education and learning as a tool for empowering stakeholders to take action and to frame opportunities for this to happen, for example through supporting pilot projects and upscaling successful projects in fields such as teacher education and outdoor learning
- UNEP commits particular policies and resources to marginalised peoples, regions and contexts, to ensure those most affected by environmental impacts have the resources and opportunities to learn about, effectively prepare and respond to these changes
- UNEP commits to an international perspective, promoting collaboration between Member States to develop or advance particular initiatives, as well as international conferences and summits to raise the profile and status of education and learning in the context of the environment
- UNEP and related agencies should strengthen capacity building at Country-level for environmental learning and education
- Partnerships with other international and regional agencies including UNESCO, who have a global remit in Education for Sustainable Development. Alignment in matters and activities such as climate change, circular economy and biodiversity education strengthens the cooperation of Member States and actors in this area
- UNEP commits to working alongside UNESCO in the launch of an interagency initiative that seeks to improve the access to, and embedding of, learning for the en-

Key Recommendations for the Enhancement of the Environmental Agenda During the Next 50 Years

Legacy Theme 5: The Environment and Education Looking to the Future

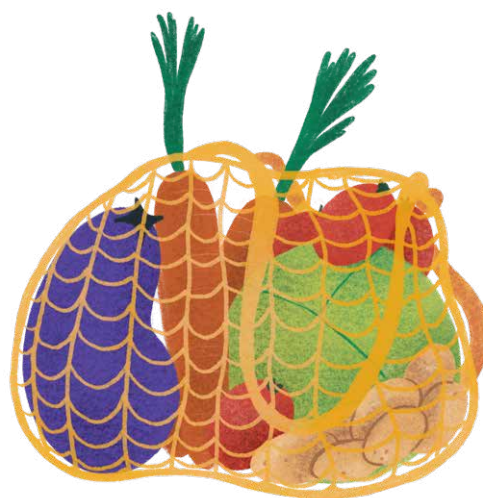
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vironment across the UN Family as well as support the establishment of a SG Special Envoy to create greater connections and opportunities for social learning for the environment across Member States

- Designate a special rapporteur with responsibility for education and learning for environment/sustainability, based on an inter-agency process
- A permanent committee, hosted by UNEP, that reports on collaboration and progress of the learning and education agenda for environment and sustainability across the UN family
- UNEP to scale up capacity-building and empowerment opportunities in for inter-generational knowledge and learning
- Need for UN agencies to have some metrics - evidence-informed decision-making, to be able to lead progress, and not just generate random activities, in environmental education and learning
- UNEP to design a new metric, to assess the meeting of the 2030 Global Goals through education and learning, and through convergence of such conferences like Stockholm+50

Recommendations for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

- There is a strong need to have more reflective spaces to assess the progress and evolution, and not just best practices of education and learning





Key Recommendations for the Enhancement of the Environmental Agenda During the Next 50 Years

Legacy Theme 6: CIVIL SOCIETY, STAKEHOLDERS, THE ENVIRONMENT & UNEP

Webinar Lead: Professor **Javier Surasky** - Programme Officer Governance and Financing for Sustainable Development, CEPEI

Recommendations for Governments

- Including Civil Society in a meaningful way and not just checking the box, will support legitimacy for governments at country level as citizens continue to ask for more accountability on environmental issues, this in turn also supports legitimacy for UNEP
- Countries need to increase the level of ambition on environmental issues and is desired that they work along CSOs and recover the practice of bringing CSO representatives among their negotiation teams. In fact, Member States should regard CS as allies rather than enemies. This would support the former recommendation for meaningful participation



Recommendations for UNEP

- UNEP needs to take a stronger role on environmental issues and ensure that they are at very centre of the multiple agendas (i.e. few SDGs under custody on UNEP; scarce role of UNEP on climate negotiations, etc.)
- UNEP should ensure a common agenda calling all UN community to action, including in the context of Stockholm+50
- Strengthened role to support CS engagement, i.e. open ways for integrating CS data like new/local environmental data produced by CSOs
- It is expected that each organization lobbies for funds to sponsor members participation at global meetings but it is a quite challenging request for smaller/grassroots organizations. UNEP must enable an effective and meaningful participation mechanism to all CSOs including enabling financial support to attend UNEP-related meetings; UNEP should invest more in ensuring the participation of smaller organizations that are or cannot be accredited and that have trouble achieving that accreditation. MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION of CSOs, will in turn support legitimacy for UNEP

Recommendations for Civil Society and other Stakeholders

- Urgent need to collectively explore what can be done autonomously, and propel all strategies available
- Review and assessment of what are the problems we are creating and why are we far from solving them
- Be more strategic, keep diversity of CS and build on that diversity with a holistic approach to environmental issues
- Continue to hold governments accountable as CS continue confronting powerful entities
- Support UNEP in its attempts to build a less dangerous environmental world
- Need to insist and believe on the power of CS to change the world
- Make the circle bigger and adopt smaller organisations in the bigger fray; continue to invite affected peoples and other vulnerable groups including women from the grassroots
- Demand the opening of spaces for CSOs for meaningful participation, so that everyone has the opportunity to express their positions





Stockholm+50 Stakeholders at the Arrival Hall © UNEP

Outcomes from a full-day event on the People's Environment Narrative*

by Jan Gustav Strandenaes & Isis Alvarez, Stakeholder Forum

An online event for civil society and other non-state stakeholders was held on May 18th, 2022. The purpose of the event was to engage civil society and non-state stakeholders in contributing to the content of outcome documents in connection with the Stockholm+50 conference. Seven themes guided the discussion which are referred to as the Legacy Themes. They have been given this name because the themes played significant roles in the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm. The Legacy Themes have been presented and discussed during online [expert legacy webinars](#) which were open to all stakeholders and where a set of recommendations emerged. The goal for the session included the active participation of civil society and non-state stakeholders in identifying the gaps in the 6 Legacy webinar outcome recommendations and whether any recommendations missing should be included, according to the participants' areas of work thus, it also served as a space to hear about their efforts to build a healthy planet for the prosperity of all.

The seven themes were clustered in three groups :

CLUSTER 1

- Environmental rights, human rights and environmental justice
- “Strengthening environmental governance and law” with reference to UNEP@50
- Connecting the dots – making a forceful canon of the Rio Conventions and the MEAs

CLUSTER 2

- Civil society, non-state stakeholders, and how they have worked for the environment and UNEP
- Environmental diplomacy and the need for multilateralism

CLUSTER 3

- The environment, education and the future
- Science and the environment – What now?

**A statement based on these outcomes was presented during the closing Stockholm+50 plenary on June 3rd, 2022 (see below).*

OUTCOMES FROM CLUSTER 1

- **Strengthening implementation of environmental laws including MEAs** in general, such as full implementation of the Declaration on the **Rights of Indigenous Peoples** and World Conference on Indigenous Peoples as well as at a **national level**; States should not resort to derogations in a general manner and such derogations to obligations in the agreements should be interpreted narrowly; neither should the use of derogations reduce the commitments to a level where the agreement practically does not affect the State anymore
- Need to **uphold tenure, land rights, and equitable distribution of resources** for environmental HRs and justice, especially of indigenous peoples
- **Effective representation of rightsholders** to ensure that the necessary input is gathered (including from grass-roots organisations, marginal groups, indigenous people, women) ensuring inclusion of diverse voices (goes beyond UNEP/ touches upon UN system), especially in legislation development process in countries who haven't already done so
- Bring back attention to the **science-policy interface**
- Have lifecycle projects that **gather the right people together** to enhance the work of UNEP
- **Stronger need to give people education, capacity building, incentivize peer learning and create awareness** of environmental issues, for instance, clear links with human consumption and production patterns, need to rethink, reuse, transform, recycle in order to make Peace with Nature and build together a safe, sustainable, healthy, fossil fuel free world for all Children and Futures to come. UNEP could be more specific on capacity building and financial sustainability
- We need **greater knowledge and monitoring of the key drivers of the environmental crisis** including through establishing a Global Commission on Fossil Fuels to produce an authoritative evidence base on the impact of fossil fuels on a healthy, sustainable and inclusive planet and a Global Registry of Fossil Fuels to increase **accountability and transparency**; and by establishing a clearer differentiation between tree plantations and forests, among others
- Continuing to demand **accountability and enforcement** in international law
- Increased **awareness on environmental justice** including taking strong and effective measures on climate justice while recognizing local organization's key role (i.e. a functioning loss and damage mechanism that could be a resource for compensation to people impacted by climate change (could fit into different themes beyond climate change); in fact, damage as a key and challenging legal concept
- Very important to highlight **language on environmental governance and protection for Human Rights defenders** – one of the major topics raised by civil society as an obstacle to environmental governance
- Recognizing the role of **HRs defenders and adopting legislation and international conventions to protect them**
- **Common ecological understanding of “nature-based solutions”** away from being a tool for greenwashing; “nature-based solutions” must be integrated in rights issues
- Strong need for a **preparedness mechanism for emergency** situations that includes local volunteers and people on the ground, and early warning systems
- **Institutionalize youth participation** in decision-making and go beyond (i.e. Ombudsman person for young people/ youth task force particularly in terms of climate change); ensuring a seat at the table as everyone else and inclusion of future generations in advocacy spaces; Children and youth need to have a sum-

marized environment report through their networks so as to have the views reflected at UNEP platform

- **Closer collaboration between CSOs and Members States** including attention to alternate environment collaborative reports to have accountability, check towards environment programs and validate strength and weaknesses identified from the local levels; this will also help member states and CSOs/MGS to identify gaps and elevate the importance of getting involved in tackling environment challenges and come up with best practices which are affordable and manageable
- **Intergenerational approach:** parents, grandparents & caregivers can also raise their voices and stand up for younger children who are not able to take part in such stakeholder dialogues
- **Evidence-based MEAs** that demonstrate enabling environmental protection, for instance, a disaster & treaty negotiation
- Establish a new international crime for **ecocide** by including ecocide in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Create personal criminal liability for those whose decisions lead to environmental damage
- Need for an **International Court for Environmental Justice** that can enforce environmental law, for instance, mining companies destroying the environment
- Promote **decentralization** recommended by the IPCC to allow for the protection of ecosystems by local communities
- **Lawyers and judges must be trained** that the environment has rights; MEAs should be re-written with a different understanding of the rights of the environment
- **Rethink the role of governments** in relation to extractive industries (i.e. shift from fossil fuels – not only about the subsidies but also governance)
- **Stronger regional cooperation** on issues like transboundary pollution
- Need to add strong **reference to the Rio principles** / Rio institutions
- Need for **a global approach to addressing fossil fuels** - A new agreement/fossil-fuel focused treaty/new multilateral mechanism for international cooperation to realize and implement the clear scientific recommendation of no new investments or licensing of fossil fuel infrastructure/ Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, to be situated within the UN system to agree an equitable phase out of existing production in line with the 1.5C temperature goal, and to develop and resource a plan for a global just transition for fossil fuel dependent countries and communities
- **More effective coordination between the stakeholders, rightsholders and other Major Groups** – need for dialogue, coordinated actions for people and the environment striving for joint solutions; having a tangible and presentable collaborative reporting system to work with MS, Indigenous people, grassroots, etc.
- Reflect on the fact that **Stockholm+50 could have gone beyond an event for commemoration** and have more political weight; What exactly hindered this from happening could be an important lesson for agencies, organizations and institutions
- Need to **mainstream an intersectional gender perspective** in every public policy; gender perspectives are lacking in the legacy themes
- States should commit to **revealing their military emissions** in their greenhouse gas inventories and Nationally Determined Contribution plans (i.e. contributions to climate change, fossil fuel use, etc.); **make data available and accessible**, include these emissions in their greenhouse gas inventories. Environmental impacts from military activities, weapons testing and use, and armed conflict must be recognized and stopped

- Civil society ready to **work together in order to enforce the recommendations** we are making
- Important to **push for the recognition of rights to rights to a healthy environment at the UN General Assembly**. Humans' relationship with nature is very hierarchical with humans seeing themselves at the top, as above the rest of nature. This can be seen as unethical and/or not unitarian. It is unethical, as other parts of nature are very important and just as worthy of life and protection as humans. The way we treat nature is killing human race. It is important to focus on working towards co-existence of humans and wildlife.

OUTCOMES FROM CLUSTER 2

- **Integrate civil society and NGOs in data collection and analysis**, and break down data into specific categories (i.e. women and children that are disproportionately affected by catastrophes) in order to curb the unbalanced collection of data, actually, a lot of civil society organizations have important and relevant data. Empower the CSOs to help validate and verify reports
- **Establish databases and platforms to identify the challenges, performance and progress sharing** from stakeholders on the implementation of conventions including climate change (Information platform)
- All countries to **report on progress on Roadmap and Framework on ESD in their VNRs** and civil society to report on such progress or lack of it in their shadow reports - including extent of teacher training at all levels
- In light of continued exclusion of CSOs and due to security issues or technicalities, it is urgent to **include CSOs in a credible and constructive way**; governments request engagement but only used by politicians to create illusion of legitimacy
- **End systemic racism and discrimination** to allow indigenous people to safely develop and share their science and technology
- **UNEP should work closer with civil society and strive for active engagement** including by building a common agenda to strengthen the role of CS engagement and facilitating **spaces for meaningful participation** with governments, such as processes for creating norms and through initiatives such as a world's citizens' initiative (i.e. referendum) to bring issues to the general assembly or to UNEP, as well as a UN parliamentary assembly
- **Enabling conditions for smaller CSOs and NGOs from the Global South** to access funds to travel to meetings, for instance, by **establishing of a UN Participation Fund**, and to get through the accreditation process successfully
- **'Meaningful engagement' means governments including civil society and NGOs as well as indigenous peoples in relevant negotiations and securing accessibility** both to venues and all meeting documents; reminder for enshrined rights of non-governmental community
- **Improved dialogue and stronger articulation** between stakeholders is a MUST! Local and international NGOs are key for multi-stakeholders' joint action and multilevel cooperation; finding areas of consensus between civil society and both States and Major Groups and stakeholders, to identify what can be built upon – lack of trust is a big issue and these areas of consensus can be a driving force to renewing cooperation/trust
- Civil society should participate together with the government; NGOs need to **find the way to collaborate and compromise** with authority, without losing integrity including by bringing experts to the table, observers of technical discussions, and having a very strongly presence in the implementation phase

- **Closing the gap** between local communities, governments, and UNEP
- Every resolution or communique from UNEP or any government should have **a sheet that allows for endorsement by Major Groups**
- **Prioritize implementation of acquired commitments and provide support**; the focus on implementation should be stronger and noting gaps in means of implementation including Global South States difficulties for participation and engagement
- **Focus on the implementation of the principles that underlie Stockholm+50** and using these to guide our work as they remain relevant today however they require updates in order to reflect current priorities that are not yet integrated, for instance, the 'Gender equality' factor is a key issue that has been left out ever since the initial Stockholm meeting in 1972
- **Need for a different model of CSOs participation**, one that is **effective and allows for meaningful participation** in multilateral meetings as it seems that current methods result ineffective, a model for collaborative development with multilateral organizations like the GEF and UNEP; Creating space for CSOs to present their findings to MS and encourage CSOs involvement in environmental issues (UNEP+Gov); UNEP to put a given slot of time for CSOs/MGS to present their inputs for the Member States to integrate CSOs inputs
- **Establish a youth focal point in UNEP**
- **UNEP should have more weight diplomatically** in MEA's but there are also still many things that need to be fixed such as addressing inherent bureaucracy
- **UNEP needs to strengthen synergies with other UN agencies** including synchronizing targets and priorities (i.e UN HABITAT, UNESCO, UNITAR, among other institutions to also strengthen environmental training)
- **Mechanisms in place for transparency and accountability, compliance, monitoring and enforcement** of MEAs; governments should set up more national policies (on yearly basis) with reference to international frameworks
- **UNEP, CSOs and Governments should all learn from success stories**: success stories of struggles (i.e. ozone layer, Minamata Convention on Mercury, etc.), success stories of collaboration (i.e. between civil society and governments recognizing a whole of society approach), and others
- Multilateralism has made important advancements - **a regional approach and cooperation that strives to empower cross-regional coordination**, not necessarily consensus based, but a new multilateralism that goes beyond the priorities on consumption that is "Crossborder and co-development"
- **Establish a "Coalition of the Willing"**, a group of stakeholders that is willing to take a new and different approach to advance the present recommendations
- **Recognition of gaps from civil society** themselves and hurdles for reaching meaningful participation in order to improve the mechanism for engagement including solving issues of representation
- **Examine the UNEP Coalition for Digital Environmental Sustainability (CODES)** project for follow-ups by CSOs who have not been involved in the preparation of the CODES roadmap
- **Expanding and including more perspectives** is crucial for representation and equitable policies
- Publications and newsletters need to go **paperless** (Digitization of UNEP and all UN system).

RESULTS FROM CLUSTER 3

- Encourage governments to **invest in cleaner economies**
- Maintain a **strong link between environmental ministries with the heads of governments**
- Distinguish science and politics in MEAs and **make the science communicable and available**
- **Urgent need for practical teaching** such as introducing different animals, plants and fungi to children to help them understand the environment and ecosystem
- **Create advisory bodies** like the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to generate the impetus for more informed actions on the environment such as climate change, among others
- **Improvements for inclusion and meaningful participation** of indigenous people, youth, peasant farmers and women ensuring everyone's views are taken into account
- **Connect decision-makers and CSOs during important conferences** and guarantee access to latest information
- **Integrate indigenous traditional knowledge** into textbooks in order to preserve and strengthen
- **Make education culturally sensitive and specific** to the target audience and ensuring that governments also address country-specific education adequate to address the challenges posed for specific countries
- **Promoting education and learning exchanges** including sharing obstacles and difficulties at the local level (fostering peer-to-peer learning)
- Facilitate equal **access to digital tools worldwide** ("digital equity") considering diverse learning needs and capabilities that can enable diverse groups participating in discussions (lesson from COVID-19)
- **Education to push for relevant issues**, i.e. strong action towards an education system focusing on sustainable sanitation; **education not guided towards humans as consumers** but as part of a system learning how we can act in an environmentally sensible manner
- **Compulsory for governments to include environmental education and sustainable development in curricula**, and tailor it on the specific needs of each region or even country in order to contribute to environmental sustainability and preservation
- Environmental curriculum should include three aspects: **close collaboration among all stakeholders, civil society, national governments and UNEP** who should take up that responsibility and draft this curriculum via an inclusive dialogue between these multilateral stakeholders – with the aim of meeting the demands of local peoples and future needs
- **It is crucial that environmental education is not siloed from other sectors of society**, as it is closely linked with other aspects of society, especially economics, and instead of focusing on the fundamental sciences it exposes the interconnection between the environment and society
- **Recognize the limitations of conventional education and that there are levels** to "education" on the environment: UNEP education and activities that are specific to children: "Education is the main source of transferring information if possibly taught with approach towards environment in a manner where they learn with fun, and gratitude towards the environment while learning that they are the pillar to ensure a better future"

- UNEP can play a key role in encouraging **Member States to incorporate mandatory environmental education national policies**
- **Climate education should be mandated by governments**, and that opportunities be given to youth to be climate literate and take on the mantle of stewardship of the environment from a young age
- Building a world of sustainable consumption and production implies **practical education for nature-based solutions** at all levels
- Goals and exploration of new paths towards environmental education should contemplate a **set of values, norms and policies that prioritizes socio-ecological objectives, human well-being, natural and built environments, the aesthetic, ethical and cultural meaning of the existence**, encompassing all dimensions of being in the world (intimate, interactive, social and biophysical), as they interact to elicit the events and activate change
- UNESCO and governments recently completed a **new Framework and Roadmap on ESD for the rest of the decade** that are excellent. We all should read them and encourage our governments to implement them
- **Access to information** as most activities contributing to environmental degradation including climate change, are localized (and the people contributing often do not know the consequences of their actions)
- **Joint capacity building of important local actors including government** representatives at different levels, to facilitate communication and education
- UNEP should act as more of a “regulator” but **ensure that fundamental basic concepts are included** (i.e. global warming causes) across the board
- **CSOs and NGOs will strongly and actively be involved in facilitating youth engagement** in education and learning including public knowledge education (i.e. CSOs should embark on national sensitization/awareness Raising Campaigns across all sectors)
- **Indigenous Peoples should be supported and protected** by CSOs as they educate governments at all levels on balanced participation in ecosystems
- CSOs should engage various stakeholders in order **to identify how to best introduce ESD in local school systems and in higher education institutions**
- **Develop an international process, under a collaborative effort coordinated by UNESCO and UNEP, and carried out in conjunction with UNEA with the participation of national UNESCO Committees and educational ministries**, in order to follow up and fully implement the recommendations contained in the Framework and Roadmap on Education for Sustainable Development in all countries and regions.

CONCLUSIONS

A wide array of civil society actors involved in efforts to address environmental degradation and strive for a healthy planet came together during the People's Environment Narrative webinar and shared their views on issues related to Stockholm+50. Despite the variety of participants involved, there were common points in which all agreed and believed that were of utmost importance in order to address the environmental crisis we face today, after 50 of environmental governance. Many views coincided with the need for better articulation between civil society, non-state stakeholders and rightsholders, and Member States and the UN system, with a specific focus on UNEP. These 4 key recommendations came across in most cluster themes and working groups:

1. Prioritize strengthening implementation of environmental laws and acquired commitments including MEAs and provide support including mechanisms in place for transparency and accountability, compliance, monitoring and enforcement. Focus on the principles that underlie Stockholm+50 - Universal recognition of R2HE¹, and the need to rethink our relationship to nature

2. Establish a new international crime for ecocide by including ecocide in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Create personal criminal liability for those whose decisions lead to environmental damage

3. Guarantee inclusion, meaningful participation and effective representation of civil society, non-state stakeholders and rightsholders in general making sure that diverse voices and visions are heard and understood; integrate civil society and NGOs in data collection and analysis, UNEP should work closer with civil society and strive for active engagement and enable meaningful participation. Closer articulation of civil society and rightsholders is needed where there is recognition of each other as allies. Access to information must be ensured.

4. UNEP needs to strengthen synergies with other UN agencies including synchronizing targets and priorities (i.e UN HABITAT, UNESCO, UNITAR, among other institutions to also strengthen environmental training).

Stockholm+50 has provided an important momentum for all actors involved in the recovery of a dying planet bringing together different struggles around climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution which so far, have been treated as siloed policy processes that still cannot find the way to tackle the drivers of environmental degradation. Decision-makers and all those institutions and rightsholders have now the opportunity to come together, listen to each other and collectively decide on the best ways to achieve what was proposed 50 years ago in terms of environmental commitments.

¹ The universal human right to a healthy and sustainable environment (R2HE)



Stockholm+50 Youth Assembly © UNEP / Duncan Moore



Jamaica, rising seas, adaptation - Kadir van Lohuizen / NOOR - Mangrove nursery at the University of the West Indies at Port Royal © UNEP



UNEP Farmers Major Group © Farmers Major Group

People's Environment Narrative:

Key Messages from UNEP's Major Groups emerging from the Consultation webinar

by *Jan Gustav Strandenaes & Isis Alvarez, Stakeholder Forum*

The United Nations Environment Program's Major Groups and Facilitating Committee (MGFC), organized an online event on May 19th, 2022, prior to the commemoration of the 50 years of the Conference on the Human Environment. The focus of this meeting was on consolidating messages from UNEP's Major Groups to the Stockholm+50 international meeting; the report 'The UNEP We Want,' produced by the MGFC with input from a broad range of stakeholders and presented in March 2022, and input from the six recent regional UNEP stakeholder consultations held between January and May preceded these discussions together with the other political priorities of the Major Groups.

The 3 Leadership Dialogue themes presented by the organizers of the 'Stockholm+50 – A Healthy Planet for the Prosperity of All' event, were used as guidance for the discussions and thus, results from each of them are presented below. In this regard, it is important to note that outcomes from the official Leadership Dialogue sessions as well as other related events, bring up different sectors' priorities. However, for civil society and other non-state stakeholder, the focus has been consistent.

Leadership Dialogue 1: Reflecting on the urgent need for actions to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity of all

- There is **no time to waste** and we need to take more urgent action for the planet.
- **We need to address the root causes of biodiversity loss and climate change**, inter alia unsustainable and unjust management of natural resources, unsustainable food systems, unsustainable production and consumption cultures, unsustainable financial flows. We need to change how we as humans view nature: away from a utilitarian perspective to one of living in harmony with Nature.
- All nations should orient their solutions at ensuring a good life for a child born on 2 June 2022.
- Need a 'stand-alone' focus on **fossil fuels** as the primary and unique driver of the triple crisis from climate to biodiversity to pollution. There is a lack of global governance on the **just transition** from fossil fuel production.

Leadership Dialogue 2: Achieving a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

- The pandemic had and still has a massive **impact on jobs and incomes**, it has increased poverty.
- There will be no recovery without an end to vaccine colonialism and **provi**

sion of free vaccines to all countries worldwide. Wealthier nations must support the Global South in building up health infrastructure.

- The **right to health** includes a right to good health care.
- One **focus on children and youth and education systems**: these have suffered tremendously during COVID-19, in particular in the Global South.
- A second focus must be on **digitalization and access to digital tools for all**, which have become so crucial during the pandemic.
- The recovery must focus on **increasing equality, in particular gender equality**, by addressing persistent issues, such as the gender pay gap and the care-work burden.
- In the recovery, we must **use the disruption of supply and value chains** during the pandemic to address fundamental flaws and to make them sustainable.
- We must recognize the increasing dangers to human health from heightened exposure to zoonotic diseases due to human activity disrupting and infringing on ecosystems. **We need an International Convention on Pandemics** to prevent future pandemics and recognize the interrelation between human, animal and environmental health and offer additional mechanisms for addressing pandemics and zoonotic diseases.
- **Monitoring and accountability are crucial for recovery** and building back better. Businesses are vital for recovery, but there is no mechanism to measure their input, their impact on people and planet, nor whether commitments are system-transformative. Business as usual is no longer an option.
- We need to **focus on economic justice**.
- Focus recovery on **ecological and peaceful action**.

Leadership Dialogue 3: Accelerating the implementation of the environmental dimension of Sustainable Development in the context of the Decade of Action

- We need to **strengthen environmental international law and governance, multi-lateralism and environmental diplomacy**.
- We need active citizens engagement in environmental diplomacy, **ensure we bring all voices to the table**, including youth.
- **Rewrite how civil society is seen in many countries and their rights to freedom of expression** in many places where the word “activism” is stigmatized or synonymized with anarchy: civil society and NGOs must be recognized as collaborators and partners with governments to induce positive and inclusive change.
- **Develop indicators** as a tool to measure the effectivity and effectiveness of International Environmental Law, and the different rules, plans, strategies, and to ameliorate monitoring and reporting. Significantly **increase funding for the implementation of international environmental law**. UNEP to conduct a multi-stakeholder consultation on determining the impacts and benefits that come from different means of financing and to develop recommendations for the best means of financing environmental policies and legislation.
- The Stockholm+50 process has recognized the **need to massively mobilize and scale-up financing for development and environment**, aligning public and private portfolios with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and the post-2020 biodiversity targets. An ongoing process needs to be developed to provide sufficient financing to fully support all countries in transitioning to more appropriate and regenerative policies similar to or as a part of the Montevideo Programme for strengthening environmental legislation and law.
- UNEP needs to make recommendations for **developing an on-going process for developing collaboration across the MEAs and Rio Declarations**, etc. and to reach out to and consult with the Environment Management Group (EGM) and civil society on what should be included in the recommendations, and it should include recommendations for how best to include civil society in the process for developing collaboration and integration.
- Environmental rule of law is key to providing constitutional guarantees of the right to a healthy environment. We call for the criminalization of large-scale environmental destruction by **including ecocide in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court**.
- **Implement the recommendations contained in the Framework and Roadmap on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)** in all countries and regions, including teaching training for K-12 and curriculum materials.
- We need to **hold businesses to account and strengthen access to justice**. To ensure environmental justice, we need to ensure remedies for those who have suffered environmental degradation.
- For the decade of action, we need to **address consumption patterns and rules governing the market economy**.
- We need to **accelerate digital literacy** as a basic foundation to strengthening effective partnership and meaningful participation of all, particularly children and youth.

Section Four: The Five Legacy Papers

This section contains the five Legacy Papers – each covering a Legacy Theme, a theme which has been an integral element of UNEP's work since its inception. The papers are written originally for this report, by world leading experts in their field.

As written in the Preface, there are two versions of the PEN – a **Standard Version**, and a fully searchable **Extended Version**. For purposes of downloading the document, Section Four is organised in two different ways. However, the content of the two versions is identical. In the **Standard Version** there is an executive summary of each of the five papers. The full length legacy paper is here accessed by pressing the **pdf** symbol found at the start of the executive summary for each of the papers. The fully searchable **Extended Version** contains the complete Legacy Papers following their executive summaries.



United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) meets at Stockholm. An environmentalist group demonstrates outside the New Parliament Building during one of the Conference sessions. © UNEP

The Web of Life and Rights:

The 1972 Stockholm Conference's Legacy regarding Environmental Rights, Human Rights and Environmental Justice

by **Daniel Magraw**, Professorial Lecturer and Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Institute at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and President Emeritus of the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) & **Li Lin**, Research Fellow with the International Justice Initiative at the Foreign Policy Institute at Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)

Download the complete Legacy Paper by clicking on the PDF icon



Executive Summary

Principle 1 of the Stockholm Declaration is among the most revolutionary and influential pronouncements in diplomatic history. Its legacy is powerful and ongoing.

Principle 1 proclaimed the human right to a healthy environment – a right that was overwhelmingly recognized by the UN General Assembly in 2022 in the form of the “human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment” (R2HE). Principle 1 announced that humankind has a responsibility to protect and improve the environment for future generations, which has been recognized by academics, courts and intergovernmental instruments many times since then and whose parameters are still being explored. Principle 1 declared that environmental protection must be free from discrimination, presaging the present-day movements to achieve environmental justice, to treat indigenous peoples justly, and to provide a just transition for persons affected by major societal changes. Principle 1 speaks of human well-being, thus clearly including human health as an environmental concern, which too many policy makers still do not understand.

Integrating environment and human rights, which encompasses a wide range of human behaviour, and achieving universal recogni-

tion of R2HE required 50 years and intense, sustained effort. Making R2HE a reality will take similar involvement by civil society and others and many more years. Indeed, given the existential threats now facing humanity and nature and the certainty that additional dangers will arise, protecting the environment, environmental rights and human rights will require eternal vigilance.

In 1972, the world did not know what environmental and human rights problems would arise. We are in the same situation now regarding the next 50 years. In order to try to shed light on the future, while also being aware of the hubris of trying to actually predict the future, the present report explores the concepts identified above and attempts to imagine and illuminate their implications for the future through three lenses.

Part I – Introduction to the Present -- analyses the impacts of the Stockholm Conference to the present, including addressing R2HE, rights of future generations, environmental justice, treatment of indigenous peoples, rebalancing humankind's relation to nature, rights of nature, and inequity generally. Part II – Introduction to the Future -- is comprised of a compendium of 45 short essays, including a poem and a song, written at our request by

thoughtful, knowledgeable individuals of various backgrounds and ages from around the world, some on topics we identified and some on topics selected by the essayist. The essays provide a challenging cornucopia of ideas, perspectives, conclusions and recommendations. Part III – Reflections on the Future -- consists of our own thoughts on what is likely to transpire, based on the essays and our own research and experience.

The revolutionary integration of human rights and environmental protection implicit in Principle 1 and R2HE has strong analytic and empirical bases. These include the realizations that, because of the ecosystem services it provides, nature is the infrastructure of human society and thus that achieving many human rights depends on a healthy environment, on the one hand, and that protecting the environment requires the exercise of human rights such as access to information and freedom of opinion, expression, association and assembly, on the other. This integration of rights and the environment comprises the Web of Life and Rights.

The universal recognition of R2HE transformed the pantheon of human rights. R2HE requires clean air, safe and sufficient water, healthy and sustainably produced food, non-toxic environments where they can live, work, study and play, healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, and a safe climate. It also comes with a toolbox of access rights, including access to environmental information, public participation in environmental decision-making, and access to justice if the right to a healthy environment is being violated or threatened. R2HE is intrinsically related to the International Labour Organization's addition (also in 2022) of occupational health and safety (OHS) to its Framework of Fundamental Principles of Rights at Work, thus elevating the importance of protecting health and safety within the ILO and opening a door for major improvements in chemicals management. The opportunity for synergy is exciting

R2HE thus is obviously of great significance in its own right, adding a powerful overarching arrow to the quiver of a rights-based approach to protecting the environment and the planet. Importantly, R2HE also provides a key to approaching other issues addressed in Stockholm Principle 1 and to other environmental concepts. R2HE is the (often-unspoken) assumption of environmental justice, because there cannot be justice if the environment is destroying human lives. At the same time, R2HE provides a seamless means of protecting the rights of future generations, because regardless of whatever else they might want or need, future generations will certainly want and need a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. R2HE also provides a rights-based mandate for the Precautionary Principle and the doctrine of *in dubio pro natura*: if there is doubt about the environmental or health impacts of a course of action, take the path that does not risk violating R2HE.

R2HE also effectively requires a new focus on protecting nature, because R2HE can only be protected if the environment is protected. Today's environmental threats include, in addition to the so-called "triple crisis" of climate change, biodiversity loss and toxification of the planet: antimicrobial resistance, deforestation and loss of wetlands, food insecurity, freshwater scarcity, ignoring and suppressing science, misinformation and disinformation, overfishing in the oceans, outer space debris, and plasticization of the planet. The characteristics and severity of these crises have led to the realization that humankind's current attitude towards nature, which is human-supremacist and hierarchical, valuing nature only in terms of its instrumental value to humans, is fatally flawed and needs to be rebalanced – a view that is supported by ethical considerations. One way to do that would be to accord some sort of rights to nature.

Inequity is rife within societies and between them. Often this means that those most im-



Stockholm+50 Youth Protest at Venue © UNEP / Duncan Moore

pacted by environmental harm had the least to do with causing that harm and have the fewest resources to deal with it. This is inherently unjust. Environmental threats are inequity and injustice multipliers.

All elements of society must be involved in addressing inequity and in realizing R2HE, inter-generational equity, environmental justice and the rights of nature. We need to connect local voices to global action. This includes protecting environmental human rights defenders (EHRDs), at least four of whom are murdered each week around the world. It also includes incorporating the experience and wisdom of indigenous peoples and other local communities dependent on natural resources.

The world needs an engaged and unfettered civil society. Current information and communications technology (ICT) provides ways of

bringing people, including activists, together; but it also poses serious human rights threats and obstacles to effective advocacy, particularly because of the surveillance economy and the advertising-driven business model of ICT mega-firms. Moreover, civil society is under attack around the world by authoritarian governments that restrict access to the Internet or its equivalent.

Businesses must become responsible citizens, including taking all three scopes into account in their environmental, social and governance (ESG) commitments. Businesses must stop contributing to politicians who oppose actions combatting climate change and other environmental threats or who oppose democratic processes. Business as usual is not an option – too many people will die and too much nature will be forever destroyed.

Preservation of natural resources must be strengthened. Nature-based solutions that are science-based and community-based should be utilized when possible, as should rewilding: nature is resilient if given a chance. Conversion of forests and wetlands to urban areas or farmland should cease and be reversed. Agriculture (including forestry) must be managed so that it benefits the environment rather than degrades it, decreases inequality rather than increases it, and improves food security rather than diminishes it. Regenerative and precision farming should be encouraged, while protecting poor farmers' interests. Food must not be burned.

Freshwater resources are imperilled and must be protected, including by considering the virtual water contained in products and services. Trade laws should be reformed to prioritize the human rights to food and medicine over intellectual property rights, prohibit fishing subsidies, and to clearly allow countries to take account of embodied carbon in products and services. Other actions are required to stop illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. The profusion of plastic, including microplastics in freshwater, food soil and the oceans, must be curtailed.

Peacebuilding efforts should be enhanced, and armed conflict avoided or undertaken in a way that least harms nature. Internal and external population movements caused by environmental problems will increase tensions and exacerbate inequity; moderated residency and passport measures may be necessary. Border walls, which are proliferating, should be avoided and removed. In short, the international community should strive to build peace, not walls.

Environmental threats should be addressed seriously and specifically, at the appropriate level and taking into account the full panoply of environmental considerations. For example, human health must be protected, but at the same time the future of the world depends on decarbonizing society. Dangers from rising heat levels require dealing with extreme heat as a natural disaster (perhaps naming and ranking heat waves), local heat-emergency planning, availability of cooling stations, and international energy-efficiency standards for air conditioners. In this and other respects, constructive technological and social innovations – including regarding biotechnology -- must be encouraged and disseminated.

It is especially critical to involve young people. The arts, entertainment and sports offer avenues for personal expression and cultural communication. Whether virtual or real-life, these have the cultural reach and the “soft power” necessary to engage citizens and communities with the transition to a net-carbon-zero and sustainable future. The virtual world can also be addictive and dissociative. We need to harness the Age of Entertainment and metaverse to restore emotional connections to nature and inspire people to engage in the struggle to protect nature and human and environmental rights.

Many efforts to confront environmental threats have been successful, as evidenced by the recent elimination of lead from gasoline and the successful regime to protect the ozone layer. But severe threats remain and the trends on most environmental indicators are downward. The struggle must and will continue – hopefully with many of you as agents of change.



Photo submitted for UN Environment's Shaping Forests competition © UNEP / Елена Давидянц



UN drought appeal. In frame, community member Abdul Malik fetches water for his donkey. Maalimin, Kenya© UNEP / Nayim Ahmed Yussuf

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Training of the Arhuaca indigenous community ecological restoration strategies. Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia. 2023 © UNEP

The Web of Life and Rights:

The 1972 Stockholm Conference's Legacy regarding Environmental Rights, Human Rights and Environmental Justice

by Daniel Magraw¹ and Li Lin²

Acknowledgements

We wish to express our deep appreciation to the authors of the essays, poem and song in part II below and for their permission to include those in this publication. Those were written by the authors in their personal capacities and do not necessarily represent the views of their employers or anyone else. Their thoughtful contributions shed light on important issues that will define the future of humanity, nature, human and environmental rights, and our planet.

The Web of Life and Rights

I. Introduction to the Present

The legacy of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment is profound with respect to human and environmental rights, the relationship of human rights to the environment, intergenerational equity, and environmental justice. The Stockholm Conference was also the first international intergovernmental conference to truly welcome civil society participation, even to the extent of letting civil society representatives address the plenary of government officials.

Principle 1 of the Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment is straightforward and bold. Expressing the emerging consciousness about the critical importance of nature, it declares:

Man [sic] has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being, and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations. In this respect, policies promoting or perpetuating apartheid, racial segregation, discrimination, colonial and other forms of oppression and foreign domination stand condemned and must be eliminated.³

1 Senior Fellow & Professorial Lecturer, Foreign Policy Institute, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS); President Emeritus, Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL).

2 Research Fellow, International Justice Initiative, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS).

3 Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, 5-16 June 1972, at 4, A/CONF.48/14/Rev.1.

This statement contains several revolutionary assertions about rights and the environment. Indeed, it is the most revolutionary and influential pronouncement in diplomatic history.

A. Human Right to a Healthy Environment

The declaration that humans have the right to “an environment that permits a life of dignity and well-being” makes clear that humans have the right to a healthy environment. Stockholm Principle 1 thus opened the path for the universal recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (R2HE) by the UN Human Rights Council almost 50 years later in 2021,⁴ and by the UN General Assembly in 2022.⁵ Both resolutions were adopted by overwhelming margins and expressly recognized this lineage by referencing the Stockholm Declaration in their opening preambular paragraphs. The universal recognition of R2HE transformed the pantheon of human rights by adding for the first time an environmental right, thus filling a gaping hole occasioned by the fact that environmental consciousness was virtually non-existent at the time the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the General Assembly in 1948.

Not coincidentally, a specific aspect of R2HE was recognized on June 10, 2022, when the International Labour Organization (ILO) agreed to add occupational safety and health to the Framework of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW). The original Declaration of FPRW, adopted in 1998, commits member States to respect principles and rights in four fundamental categories, including freedom of association and collective bargaining, the elimination of forced labor, the abolition

of child labor, and the elimination of discrimination. These rights are universal and apply to people in all States. The recognition of occupational health and safety as a fifth principle and right provides enormous potential to improve an array of environmental issues such as chemicals management. According to the ILO website, this “landmark decision means that all ILO Member States commit to respect and promote the fundamental right to a safe and healthy working environment, whether or not they have ratified the relevant Conventions.” This development also recognizes that environmental protection within the workplace is at the same level as the other fundamental principles and rights, and it harnesses the ILO's processes and institutions for its realization.

R2HE is important in many ways. Even before the General Assembly's 2022 resolution, approximately 155 countries were already legally bound to respect the right to a healthy environment (variously phrased), either by national constitution, national legislation or legally binding treaty. In addition, some sub-national units are bound (such as the state of New York in the United States of America). These jurisdictions have treated the right differently according to their particular legal system and environmental, cultural and other circumstances. Among other benefits, the universal recognition of R2HE is expected to strengthen those efforts and perhaps encourage coherency among them.

R2HE adds substance to human rights, because it is more than the sum of other rights that are related to protecting the environment and human health (also implicated by Principle 1, as discussed below). This is clear from the human rights disasters facing the Inuit in the Arctic, whose entire way of life and culture is

⁴ UN Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/48/13 (Oct. 8, 2021), adopted by a vote of 43-0-4.

⁵ UNGA Resolution A/RES/76/300 (July 28, 2022), adopted by a vote of 161-0-8. 117 countries co-sponsored the resolution.



Stockholm+50 Youth Protest at Venue © UNEP / Duncan Moore

being destroyed by warming temperatures, and the Republic of the Maldives, which will become uninhabitable due to rising sea levels with business as usual.⁶ It is also clear from the reports of the Special Rapporteurs on human rights and environment, John H. Knox and David Boyd, which provide significant substance to the content of R2HE.⁷ As a result, R2HE clarifies the scope of States' obligation to protect the environment and serves as a capstone to those rights, solidifying and organizing the existing law of human rights related to the environment and making possible a nor-

mative cascade in which those rights and nature receive more vigorous protection.

An aspect of that is that R2HE provides the basis for future programmatic activities and fundraising across the myriad international institutions to which it is relevant, such as the 15 UN agencies (including the UN Development Programme and the World Health Organization) that expressed their support for R2HE in advance of the Human Rights Council vote. In this sense it is akin to the 1996 global commitment to "eliminat[e] as soon as

6 Daniel Magraw & Kristina Wienhofer, *The Fundamental Right to an Environment Capable of Supporting Human Society and the Full Enjoyment of Human Rights: The Malé Formulation of The Overarching Environmental Human Right*, in John Knox & Ramin Pejan, *The Right to a Healthy Environment* (2018).

7 *E.g.*, John H. Knox, *Framework Principles of Human Rights and Environment*, UN Doc. A/HRC/37/59 (2018) [hereinafter *Framework Principles*].

possible the use of lead in gasoline".⁸ As a direct follow-up to that commitment, eliminating lead from gasoline was added to UNEP's program of work in 1998, formalized in the Global Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles in 2002, and eventually realized, after painstaking country-by-country efforts across the globe, when Algeria ceased selling leaded gasoline at its pumps in 2021.⁹ The key now is to make R2HE real in practice on-the-ground.

At a different level, R2HE constitutes a springboard for resetting humans' relationship with nature, away from a hierarchical, anthropocentric view, because R2HE cannot be respected unless nature is also respected and protected. Many commentators and activists have highlighted the need for this, as do many of the essays in part II, below. In addition, R2HE provides an essential component of environmental justice. Indeed, as discussed below, R2HE is the (often unspoken) assumption of R2HE. R2HE provides a normative basis for the Precautionary Principle and for concept of *in dubio pro natura*: if there is uncertainty or doubt about a course of action, decide so as to avoid or minimize the possibility of violating R2HE.

Finally, R2HE provides a framework for seamlessly approaching the question of how to respect the rights of future generations. A common criticism of intergenerational rights is that we cannot know what future generations will need or want, and thus it is impossible to protect their interests. R2HE provides an answer: we know that individuals in the future will want and need a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and that they will have the human right to it. By protecting this right

in existing generations on an ongoing basis – as people are born – the process of protecting future generations becomes seamless and adaptable to changing environmental threats and conditions.

As is thus evident, the significance of R2HE is both fundamental and expansive.

B. Relationship between the Environment and Human Rights

Principle 1's assertion that there is a right to a healthy environment implies another concept that in 1972 was novel: environmental protection and human rights are related. After decades of work to establish the details of this relationship through, e.g., analysis, scholarship, litigation, and governmental and intergovernmental activity, we now know that the two areas are interdependent and that there is a reciprocal relationship between them: a healthy environment is essential to the realization of a vast array of human rights such as the rights to life, health, and culture; and protecting the environment requires the exercise of human rights such as freedom of expression, association, assembly and participation. The close relationship between the environment and human rights is evident across all aspects of the human rights system, as demonstrated conclusively by the empirical mapping exercise conducted by the first UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and environment, John Knox, and further developed by him and the current Special Rapporteur David Boyd.¹⁰

Elaboration of the relationship between the environment and human rights is not complete.

⁸ The Habitat Agenda: Goals and Principles, Commitments and Global Plan of Action, para. 43(bb) (1996) (outcome document of the 1996 UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)).

⁹ UNEP Press Release, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/era-leaded-petrol-over-eliminating-major-threat-human-and-planetary>.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Framework Principles, *supra*.

Among unresolved issues are the extent of a State's responsibility for transboundary (also referred to as "extraterritorial") harm it causes, the nature of human rights responsibility of business entities regarding the environmental harm they cause, the meaning and application of environmental justice in some contexts, and the extent to which humans have environmental duties that correspond to their human rights or the rights of nature. Moreover, the situation is not static: challenges continue to arise as society, technology, the environment, scientific knowledge and human behavior change.

Another assertion is also implicit. Principle 1's reference to human well-being indicates that environmental protection includes protecting human health. This fact has important substantive implications, as well as political ones. The inclusion of human health is perfectly logical: it ties in nicely with the human rights to "safe and healthy working conditions" and "enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health"¹¹; and environmental protection includes protecting animals, and humans are animals. But the inclusion of human health is often not explicit, as is the case with Principle 21 of the Stockholm Declaration¹² and its progeny Principle 2 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development¹³. More importantly, the inclusion of human health is not always appreciated or acknowledged, as evidenced by the perceived need in the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to clarify that the conser-

vation and sustainable use of biodiversity includes risks to human health.¹⁴

C. Duties to Future Generations

Principle 1 explicitly states that humans have duties with respect to the environment, and that these responsibilities extend to protecting future generations. Principle 1's references to "solemn responsibility" and "future generations" make these points clear. Important work has occurred regarding intergenerational equity¹⁵, but much work remains to be done. Importantly, Principle 1, by addressing both the human right to a healthy environment (R2HE) and the rights of future generations, illuminates a critical conceptual path forward: as explained above, R2HE provides a framework for protecting the rights of future generations.

The issue of environmental duties has not been sufficiently developed in international law but is of potentially great significance. Among other things, it has implications for the human rights and environmental duties of human organizations, such as business entities, as well as for duties that humans may have to protect nature.¹⁶

D. Environmental Justice

The second sentence of Principle 1 prohibits various forms of discrimination in the context of environmental protection. In some countries (such as the United States) this concern is in-

¹¹ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Arts. 7(b) and 12(1), UN Doc. A/RES/21/2000A (1966).

¹² Stockholm Declaration, *supra*, Principle 21.

¹³ Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Principle 2 (1992).

¹⁴ Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity, art. 4 (2000): "This Protocol shall apply to the transboundary movement, transit, handling and use of all living modified organisms that may have adverse effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking also into account risks to human health."

¹⁵ See, e.g., *Oposa v. Factoran* (G.R. No. 101083 July 30, 1993); Edith Brown Weiss, In Fairness to Future Generations: International Law, Common Patrimony and Intergenerational Equity (1989).

¹⁶ See James W. Nickel, Duties Under the International Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment, in Part II, *infra*.

creasingly phrased in terms of environmental justice. Environmental justice requires that no person or community (regardless of their race, nationality, gender, etc.) bear a disproportionate burden of environmental harm, that all persons have equal access to environmental amenities such as clean drinking water and parks, and that all persons have meaningful and equal right to participate in decisions affecting health and the environment. In addition, even if those criteria are met, there cannot be *justice* if human activities create environmental conditions that harm people. That is, there will not be environmental justice without the right to a healthy environment. The right to a healthy environment thus is the (often unspoken) assumption of environmental justice.

Another aspect of environmental justice concerns providing a just transition for persons affected by non-marginal changes required to deal with environmental threats. Closing a coal-burning power plant, for example, affects the livelihoods of workers in the power plant and possibly coal miners and others. The language about “just transition” and “creating decent work and quality jobs” in the Preamble to the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change speaks to this need. This may require job retraining, provision of unemployment assistance, and other measures.

Environmental injustice occurs for different reasons in different cultural contexts and in different countries. The immediate keys are to prevent it from occurring and to remedy it when it does.

E. Environmental Rights & Rights of Nature

The assertion that humans have a “solemn responsibility to protect and preserve the envi-

ronment for present and future generations” (discussed above) could be read to mean not only that the environment (i.e., nature) must be protected but also that it has rights, because Principle 1 does not specify that only generations of humans need be protected. That reading is supported by the fact that the Stockholm Conference emerged from the 1968 UNESCO Conference on Man and the Biosphere. On the other hand, the fact that the first part of the sentence refers to humans arguably implies that nature should be valued, managed and protected in terms of utility to humans and human society.

Principle 1 of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, a progeny of the Stockholm Conference, provides some guidance. It reads: “Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.” The anthropocentrism of the first sentence does not leave much room for the rights of nature. The use of “entitled” in the second sentence suggests that humans have rights. The qualification that such rights must be “in harmony with nature”, however, suggests a balance, i.e., that humans do not have priority over nature and that nature, regardless of whether it has “rights” *per se*, must be protected. This is the better reading, and it is the better policy.

The issues of whether nature has rights and anthropocentrism have been explored in literature and litigation. A recent example is that in 2019 the New Zealand Parliament granted legal personhood to the Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River) because of its inseparable connection with the Māori and established a unique legal framework rooted in the Māori worldview of the Whanganui tribes, who revere the river as a tupuna, or ancestor.¹⁷ Particularly be-

¹⁷ See, e.g., Dan Cheater, I am the River and the River is Me: Legal Personhood and emerging rights of nature, at <https://www.>



Photo submitted for UN Environment's Shaping Forests competition © UNEP / Елена Давидянц

cause of the dysfunctionality of human's treatment of nature as evidenced by the existential environmental threats currently confronting both nature and human society, the question of whether nature has rights, either generally or via its animal, plant, fungal or ecosystem components, has taken on renewed urgency. Rights of nature and anthropocentrism are addressed in Parts IIA.2 and II.A.6.

The existence and details of environmental rights are informed by our increasing empirical knowledge about the natural world, its interdependence, its fundamental importance to human society, and behavior by non-human spe-

cies that approximates human behavior (e.g., communicating, sharing nutrients, counting, self-recognition, using tools, problem solving, postponed gratification, etc.¹⁸). Understanding the roles that ecosystem services, i.e., the services that nature provides to humankind for free, fulfil has led to the realization that nature is the true infrastructure of society. Ecosystem services include: the provision of food, fuel, fiber and water; pollination of food and other plants by insects; protection of the basis of the ocean food chain and humans from ultraviolet radiation; purification of water by wetlands; prevention of erosion by forests; provision of opportunities for religious, spiritual and recreational

wcel.org/blog/i-am-river-and-river-me-legal-personhood-and-emerging-rights-nature.

18 See, e.g., Peter Wohlleben, *The Secret Lives of Trees* (2016); John M Marzluff & Tony Angell, *In the Company of Crows and Ravens* (2005); Peter Wohlleben, *The Inner Life of Animals: Love, Grief, and Compassion – Surprising Observations of a Hidden World* (2016); Merlin Sheldrake, *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds & Shape Our Futures* (2020). See also Christine Korsgaard, *Fellow Creatures: Our Obligations to the Other Animals* (2019).

experiences; and regeneration of soil and other aspects of the biosphere.¹⁹ Humanity simply could not afford to provide all these services by ourselves, nor do we even have the technical knowledge to attempt that. Environmental rights – human and otherwise – and human society as we know it cannot survive if this infrastructure, i.e., nature, is destroyed.

That infrastructure is in crisis. Biological diversity is under severe threat, as species go extinct and the number of non-human animals decreases markedly.²⁰ Climate change threatens dire consequences of many types, from sea level rise to increases in the ranges of pathogens to ocean acidification to changes in growing seasons of food crops to increased frequency and intensity of storms, droughts and wild fires.²¹ The proliferation of dangerous chemicals and plastics is causing the toxification of the planet, with dire effects on human, plant, animal, fungi and ecosystem health.²² Over two billion

people lack access to safe drinking water; and projections are that as many as one out of three people in the world will live by 2025 in countries that are subject to water stress or chronic water scarcity.²³ Antimicrobial resistance to medicines is increasing and already kills around 5 million people per year.²⁴ Groundwater is being depleted at unsustainable rates.²⁵ Oceans are warming, rising, acidifying and losing productivity faster than predicted, and severe overfishing depletes the oceans. The Arctic is warming several times faster than the rest of the planet²⁶, and Antarctica is experiencing record heat levels²⁷. At least four environmental activists (referred to as Environmental Human Rights Defenders) are murdered every week on average around the world.²⁸ Massive internal displacement and transboundary migration are predicted.²⁹ Unexpected trophic cascades abound. These problems and their effects are interdependent, as are the ways of confronting them.

19 E.g., United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) & World Resources Institute, *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment – Ecosystems and Human Well-Being* 40 (2005).

20 E.g., Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services: Summary for Policymakers* 12 (S. Díaz et al. eds. 2019), <https://perma.cc/ZV2U-SAPK>; World Wildlife Fund, *Living Planet Report 2018: Aiming Higher* (Monique Grooten & Rosamunde Almond, eds., 2018); Kenneth V. Rosenberg et al., *Decline of North American Avifauna*, 366 *SCIENCE* 120, 120 (2019), <https://perma.cc/NED5-367S>.

21 See, e.g., Intergovernmental Panel on climate Change, *Summary for Policymakers of Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C*, at 4-5 (V. Masson-Delmotte et al. eds., 2018), <https://perma.cc/P8T8-C8YK>.

22 See, e.g., Philip J. Landrigan et al., *The Lancet Commission on Pollution and Health*, 391 *LANCET* 462, 462 (2018), at [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(17\)32345-0](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(17)32345-0).

23 World Wildlife Fund, *Water Scarcity*, <https://perma.cc/Y6NN-H3QY> (last visited June 7, 2020).

24 Antimicrobial Resistance Collaborators (Christopher J.L. Murray et al.), *Global burden of bacterial antimicrobial resistance in 2019: a systematic analysis*, 399 *The Lancet* (Issue 10325), pp. 629 (Feb. 12, 2022) (concluding that 4.95 million deaths occurred in 2019 from AMR).

25 E.g., Jonathan Lambert, *Too Much Groundwater Pumping Is Draining Many of the World's Rivers*, *SCIENCENEWS* (Oct. 9, 2019), <https://perma.cc/AFV7-6D53>.

26 Dec. 12, 2018), <https://perma.cc/WA7L-BQF7>.

27 *Antarctica Hit 65 Degrees this Week — Potential Record High for the Continent*, *Associated Press* (Feb. 7, 2020), <https://perma.cc/5HNB-NW5N>.

28 See, e.g., Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Environmental Human Rights Defenders must be heard and defended*, at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2022/03/environmental-human-rights-defenders-must-be-heard-and-protected>.

29 Kanta Kumbari Rigaud, et al., *The World Bank, Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration* xvii (2018).

Concern about the environment is not new. Plato and Aristotle bemoaned the loss of topsoil in Ancient Greece³⁰, and the Roman engineer Vitruvius warned against the use of lead in water pipes in 200 BCE because of human health concerns³¹. But the magnitude and urgency of the anthropogenic threats are far more serious now. The Earth has entered a new geologic era, the Anthropocene, in which humans are a dominant determinant of the health of the biosphere.³² It is clear that the promise of Stockholm Principle 1 has not yet been realized. The planet, including human society, is facing a multi-dimensional environmental crisis.

F. Inequity & Power Imbalance

Respecting the rights described above and dealing with the existential environmental crises facing the world are made much more difficult by the extraordinary inequity characteristic of the Anthropocene. That inequity resonates in the presence of environmental threats. For example, access to provisional ecosystem services such as fuel, food, fiber and water can be hampered by biodiversity, organism and habitat loss, affecting indigenous peoples and poorer communities more than wealthier ones; marginalized communities are more likely to be affected by local pollution and they have less access to healthcare to deal with the effects of pollution; reduced access to drinking water caused by floods or storms is likely to harm poorer communities more than wealth-

ier ones – the list could go on. The reality is clear. Environmental threats are inequity and injustice multipliers.

Inequities exist within societies and between societies. The numbers are almost incomprehensible. For example, the richest 0.001% of people own three times the wealth of the bottom half of the world's population, and about 1.1% of global population owns about 45% of global wealth.³³ Beyond raw wealth or income, access to health care, clean drinking water and sanitation, education and other amenities differ markedly within countries; and Gross Domestic Product and average standards of living differ greatly between countries.³⁴ These differences translate into differences in power.³⁵

Vast disparities exist in terms of causing environmental harm, as well – disparities that are related to wealth and income disparities. For example, it is reported that roughly 10% of the global population owns 76% of the wealth, garners 52 percent of income, and accounts for 48% of global carbon emissions.³⁶ As the 2022 World Development Report stated:

The threats to human lives in the Anthropocene are fundamentally unequal, as they will more quickly and intensely affect people and countries that have contributed less in relative and absolute terms to planetary pressures and benefited less from the changes that drive plan-

30 Tiziano Gomiero, *Soil Degradation, Land Scarcity and Food Security: Reviewing a Complex Challenge*, 8 Sustainability 281, at 9 (2016), <https://perma.cc/WG5N-E7RR>; Curtis C. Runnels, *Environmental Degradation in Ancient Greece*, SCIENTIFIC AM., Mar. 1995, at 96.

31 E.g., A. Trevor Hodge, Vitruvius, Lead Pipes and Lead Poisoning, 85 Am. J. Archaeology 486 (1981).

32 E.g., Eugene Stoermer & Paul Crutzen, *The Future of Nature* (2000); Daniel Magraw & Lin Qin, 50 Shades of Green, 32 Geo. Envtl. L. Rev. 468 (2020).

33 World Inequality Report 2022, Ch. 4.

34 See generally UN Development Programme, *World Development Report 2022*.

35 This topic is addressed in the essay by Edith Brown Weiss, *Human Rights and Environment in the Anthropocene*, in Part II.A.2.

36 Andrew Stanley, *Global Inequalities* (March 2022), on the website of the International Monetary Fund: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2022/03/Global-inequalities-Stanley>.

etary pressures. [L]arge and often growing inequalities and power imbalances are a defining feature of the Anthropocene, underpinning the destabilizing dynamics that divert policy attention and may delay action to ease planetary pressures.³⁷

As noted above, environmental threats are inequity and injustice multipliers. Too often this has caused a downward spiral that further complicates respecting human and environmental rights and protecting the environment: environmental problems threaten human and environmental rights and at the same time increase inequity and worsen the power imbalance, which makes it harder to counter the environmental problems, which intensifies threat to rights... and the spiral goes on. It must be broken.

Increased taxes on the wealthy could reduce inequality and provide funds for respecting rights and protecting the environment. Easier said than done, we know.

A final point about inequity is that it can lead to societal and political instability that can affect everyone, including economically. Chief Bisa said in the 1990s, "If you do not share your wealth, rest assured we will share our poverty."³⁸ It is difficult to see how today's extreme inequity can persist.

G. The Web of Life and Rights

The legacy of Stockholm is not yet determined, of course: it lives on. We didn't know in 1972

what types of new environmental issues would arise. The same is true now regarding the next 50 years – what new challenges in addition to the existing ones will arise, and what new tools will we have to confront them?

We do know, however, that humans and nature are in an inextricable web of life and rights. In the 13th century Rumi wrote:

*We began
as a mineral. We emerged into plant life
and into the animal state, and then into
being human,
and always we have forgotten our
former states,
except in early spring when we
slightly recall
being green again.*

- Rumi³⁹

We know this not only conceptually, but also empirically because of our knowledge about fundamental importance of ecosystem services and the reciprocal relationship between human rights and the environment. In addition, we now know that we have a responsibility to respect the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, reset humans' relationship with nature, protect future generations, achieve environmental justice, and respect the rights of indigenous peoples. These imperatives require that we think about the future. The rest of this report seeks to do that.

³⁷ Id., at 34.

³⁸ Quoted in Dianne Dillon Ridgley, Sustainability obligations and opportunities of business in a globalizing world 36, in Stockholm Thirty Years On: Progress achieved and challenges ahead in international environmental cooperation (2002) (a conference organized by the Government of Sweden commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment).

³⁹ Rumi, *Selected Poems*, at.155 (Penguin UK 2015).



UN drought appeal. In frame, community member Abdul Malik fetches water for his donkey. Maalimin, Kenya© UNEP / Nayim Ahmed Yussuf

II. Introduction to the Future

Parts II and III of this report attempt to imagine and illuminate the future by providing ideas and potential ways forward with respect to some unresolved environmental problems and emerging environmental challenges, in the context of environmental rights and justice.

The present Part II approaches this through the lens of short think-pieces written at our invitation by thoughtful, knowledgeable individuals of various backgrounds and ages from around the world whose perspectives we thought would be instructive and challenging. The essays were written by the authors in their personal capacities and do not necessarily represent the views of their employers or anyone else. Some essays address an issue or issues we identified; some address issues selected by the author. The essays are arranged by topic, some of which involve several essays with common themes. Quite a few essays directly

or in passing address more than one topic, which is not surprising given that environmental problems and solutions are often interrelated. Cross-references are provided to essays that directly address more than one topic.

In addition to addressing different topics, the essays vary widely in form and tone. Most are straightforward essays; one is a poem and one a song. Some contain dire warnings; some focus on positive possibilities for the path forward. All are thoughtful and contribute to our understanding of the facts that humankind and elements of nature are facing serious threats that demand action while at the same time individuals need to continue living creatively and joyfully without being paralyzed by looming dangers.

Space constraints precluded having essays addressing many issues and approaches that are

virtually certain to arise, such as antimicrobial resistance, the lack of energy standards for air conditioners, many likely categories of technological developments, nanotechnology, and issues related to gender, which are addressed by Sascha Gabizon in another part of the People's Environment Narrative. Some of these are referenced in essays focusing on other topics or are woven into Part III (Reflections on the Future). In any event, we invite you to think about these and other challenges and opportunities that will help define humans', nature's and our planet's future.

We want to emphasize that we are aware of the difficulties of predicting the future. Among other things, we are cognizant that disruptions caused by economic depressions or “projects and politics of militarism and imperialism, of racial and cultural rivalries, of monopolies, restrictions, and exclusion”, as Keynes put it⁴⁰, can create environmental havoc and severely impact rights and justice. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 provides a tragic example.⁴¹ Widespread nuclear war presents the most devastating anthropomorphic threat of this type. The possibility that significant environmental tipping points, such as if climate change causes the cessation of the Gulf Stream, may be reached raises other plausible scenarios for non-marginal, transformative impacts on the environment and rights, as do the possibility of “wild card” inventions regarding energy production or storage, desalinization of seawater, or autonomous vessels (on air, land or sea). Perhaps less radical, but nevertheless transformative change might result from integrating current knowledge into international policy and law. For example, as they were in Rumi's 13th cen-

tury poem quoted above, fungi are currently virtually ignored in international environmental policy and law, despite what we know now about their obvious ecological importance.⁴² That integration needs to happen.

Similarly, we are aware that environmental, rights and justice issues can be strongly affected by technological and social innovations. This is addressed by essays in Part II.D and by us in Part III.D.

Last but far from least, we are keenly aware that the price of protecting both liberty and environmental rights and nature is eternal vigilance, and that history has shown that such vigilance requires the active involvement of civil society. Especially for international environmental problems, civil society participation involves transnational activism, i.e., the involvement of people and organizations based in more than one country. That very fact underlines the critical importance of respecting human rights for environmental protection and of realizing the right to a healthy environment for achieving human rights, including the rights of future generations. It also has implications for the protection and rights of nature, to the extent they exist, since nature itself cannot articulate its needs or views without human intervention. Civil society and its ability to participate in both domestic and international activism, however, are under direct governmental attack in many countries and are also threatened by today's surveillance economy and the advertising-driven business model and other aspects of current information and communications technology.⁴³

40 John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, Ch. 1 (1919).

41 See, e.g., Joint Statement by Global Civil Society Organizations at UNEA-5.2 on Ukraine (2022), at <https://eeb.org/library/joint-statement-by-global-civil-society-organizations-to-unea-5-2-on-ukraine/>.

42 See Merlin Sheldrake, *The Hidden World of Fungi Is Essential to Life on Earth*, in Part II.B.1, *infra*.

43 See Dafne Carletti, *The Future of Transnational Advocacy Networks: Defending Environmental Activism*, in Part II.B.7, *infra*.

A. Right to a Healthy Environment, Environmental Rights, Environmental Justice and Humans' Relationship with Nature

Although each of the essays in this report relates in some way to this overarching category, the essays most directly addressing this category are reproduced below. The universal recognition of the right to a healthy environment (R2HE), described in Part I.A, is central to these essays, one of which addresses the addition of occupational health and safety to the International Labour Organization's Framework of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Several emphasize that humans' current hierarchical, instrumental relationship to nature has led to existential environmental crises and thus needs to be rebalanced – a view also supported by ethical considerations. Some essays explore the idea that recognizing that nature has rights is a way of achieving that resetting. Protecting the rights and interests of future generations and indigenous peoples is essential, as is achieving environmental justice. As discussed above, R2HE is central to each of those.

1. Right to a Healthy Environment (R2HE) & the Addition of Occupational Health and Safety to the International Labour Organization's Framework of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work

Inspired by the Stockholm Declaration: The Transformative Potential of the Right to a Healthy Environment

*David Boyd*⁴⁴

The 1972 Stockholm Declaration sparked dramatic changes not only in environmental

law but also human rights law and constitutional law. The bold assertion, in Article 1, that “Man [sic] has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being” has been particularly influential.

Today, the right to a healthy environment is recognized by more than 80 percent of nations (A/HRC/43/53). In 2021 it was the subject of an historic UN resolution confirming that everyone, everywhere has the right to live in a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (A/HRC/RES/48/13).

History proves that human rights can be a powerful catalyst for transformative change. Think about the role of equality rights in the abolition of slavery and the emancipation of women. Rights also played a central role in the end of apartheid, the civil rights movement and dramatic improvements in the status of Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and LGBTQ+ persons.

In the face of today's unprecedented global environmental crisis, it is exciting to contemplate the potentially transformative impact of recognizing and implementing the right to a healthy environment.

But what does the right to a healthy environment mean? Decades of experience have established that it means people have the right to clean air, safe and sufficient water, healthy and sustainably produced food, non-toxic environments where they can live, work, study and play, healthy ecosystems and biodiversity and a safe climate. It also comes with a toolbox of access rights, including access to envi-

⁴⁴ Dr. David R. Boyd is the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment (2018-2024) and a professor of law, policy, and sustainability at the University of British Columbia. He has written ten books and 100+ reports and articles on environmental law and policy, human rights, and constitutional law.

ronmental information, public participation in environmental decision-making, and access to justice if the right to a healthy environment is being violated or threatened. And finally, the interpretation of this right is guided by key human rights principles including prevention, non-regression and non-discrimination (Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment).

The implementation of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment can be a real game-changer, as shown by leading nations and a series of recent events.

Costa Rica and France lead the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, are part of the Beyond Oil and Gas Coalition and have been leading voices in the campaign for universal recognition of the right to a healthy environment. Their own experiences illustrate the transformative potential of this right.

After adding the right to a healthy environment to its constitution in 1994, Costa Rica became a global environmental leader. Thirty percent of Costa Rica is national parks. Ninety-nine percent of electricity comes from renewable sources, including hydro, solar, wind and geothermal. Laws ban open pit mining and oil and gas development, while carbon taxes are used to pay Indigenous people and farmers to restore forests. Back in 1994, deforestation had reduced forest cover to 25% of all land, but today reforestation has driven that number above 50 percent.

France embraced the right to a healthy environment in 2004, sparking strong new laws to ban fracking, implement the right to breathe clean air, and prohibit the export of pesticides that are not authorized for use in the EU because of health and environmental concerns.

The right to a healthy environment has been used by communities in recent months as a shield against unsustainable activities. The

right was used to protect forests from mining in Ecuador and eliminate the use of a bee-killing pesticide in Costa Rica. It was used to block new offshore oil and gas activities in Argentina and South Africa because of potential impacts on marine mammals. The right was used to compel governments in Indonesia and South Africa to take action to improve air quality and to stop an ill-advised coal fired power project in Kenya. Climate lawsuits drawing upon the right to a healthy environment are occurring all over the world and research indicates they are more likely to be successful.

The key strengths of taking a rights-based approach to the climate, biodiversity and pollution crises include: putting a human face on the problem; focusing on people and communities suffering the most severe impacts; and providing mechanisms that ensure accountability. Bringing human rights into the picture addresses the fundamental weakness of international environmental laws such as the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biodiversity, which is a glaring lack of enforcement or accountability mechanisms. By uniting international human rights law and international environmental law we create powerful synergies that integrate the best available science with strong tools for compelling governments and businesses to fulfill their commitments.

Because its core requirement is a healthy planet, the right to a healthy environment also reminds us that humans are neither superior to nor separate from the rest of the natural world. DNA analysis confirms that we are in fact related to all other forms of life on Earth. Perpetuating today's hierarchical relationship between humans and nature would undermine our efforts to attain a sustainable future.

Fifty years after the pioneering Stockholm Declaration, the right to a healthy environment has finally gained global recognition. The



Toxic and hazardous waste barrels washed up on the shore of Russia's Arctic Coast © IISD / iStock

task for the next fifty years is to focus on implementation, so that every single person in the world is able to breathe clean air, drink safe water and eat sustainably produced food. All nations should be free of pollution, with a safe climate and healthy biodiversity and ecosystems. Implementation of the right to a healthy environment should also accelerate the transitions to renewable energy and a circular economy, two of the most challenging and vital shifts in all of human history.

In today's troubled world the pursuit of these ambitious goals may seem quixotic. Fortunately, the global recognition of the right to a healthy environment subverts the dom-

inant paradigm, converting what were previously perceived as mere policy options into ethical and legal obligations. Implementation of the right to a healthy environment will ensure that today's egregious exploitation of people and planet is replaced by just and sustainable societies living in harmony with Nature.

The Future World of Work: A Rights-Based Paradigm Shift for Occupational Safety and Health?

Halshka Graczyk⁴⁵ & Lacye Groening⁴⁶

Every year, nearly 3 million workers lose their life due to occupational accidents and diseases, with another 402 million workers suffering

⁴⁵ Dr. Halshka Graczyk is an occupational safety and health (OSH) professional and currently working as a Technical Specialist on OSH at the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva, Switzerland.

⁴⁶ Lacye Groening is a Junior Technical Officer on occupational safety and health at the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva, Switzerland.

non-fatal occupational injuries. Many of these diseases, illnesses and injuries are due to hazardous chemical exposures– and all of them are entirely preventable. The size of the global chemical industry exceeded 5 trillion USD in 2017 and is projected to double in size by 2030. Regulatory risk assessments simply cannot keep up with the thousands of novel chemicals that pour onto the market each year, resulting in an occupational health crisis for workers around the world.

In a rapidly evolving world of work, new technologies, processes and novel chemical formulations present a range of safety and health risks to workers. The green economy, which includes ways of work and technologies to improve the health of our planet and mitigate climate change, also can pose new risks to workers, especially when such work processes are novel (e.g., the use of mercury in energy-saving compact fluorescent lightbulbs).

Moreover, workforce demographics are witnessing enormous change, with an influx of migrant workers in many regions, aging populations in developed economies and a booming young worker population in developing economies – each requiring their own approaches to safety and health. At the same time, the world of work is shifting towards non-standard forms of employment, with increasing reliance on the gig economy and digital platforms, exacerbating regulatory challenges.

Hazardous exposures to chemicals often affect those populations that are already the most vulnerable, including migrant workers, indigenous and tribal peoples, women and children. Migrant workers may not speak the local language, and therefore can be unable to access chemical hazard information. For women, the hazardous effects of chemicals can be even more profound, having devastating impacts on reproduction and pre-natal development.

Workers' rights are human rights – and human rights are workers' rights. We cannot work towards realizing human rights, including the human rights to life and the highest attainable standard of health, without addressing exposure to toxics in the workplace. Workers have the “right to know” – the right to be informed of the risks they face at the workplace, including adequate safety and health training, so they can take measures to protect their own health.

This year, the International Labour Organization's (ILO) International Labour Conference agreed to add occupational safety and health (OSH) within the framework of fundamental principles and rights at work (FPRW). The original Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at work commits member States to respect principles and rights in four categories, including freedom of association and collective bargaining, the elimination of forced labour, the abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination. These rights are universal and apply to people in all States, regardless of the level of economic development. The world of work now faces a critical junction – a potential paradigm shift for addressing occupational safety and health deficits worldwide. The inclusion of OSH as an FPRW has enormous possibilities for improving global chemicals management and will not only protect workers but will also ensure the health and safety of families and communities worldwide, as well the promotion of a healthy environment – and healthy planet – for generations to come.



2. Rebalancing Humans' Relationship to Nature

Human Rights and Environment in the Anthropocene

Edith Brown Weiss⁴⁷

For the last 11,700 years, we have lived in the Holocene Epoch, in which we were part of the natural system and were both affected by it and affected it. We have now entered the new Anthropocene Epoch, in which we are for the first time the major force affecting the biochemical, physical and geological future of the planet. Earth is now in the hands of humanity. We are now more than just a part of the natural system. This is the construct in which we have to consider human rights and the environment.

The new construct means that we have obligations to ensure the integrity and resilience of the planet and its environments. The obligations are to each other and to future generations, but most of all they flow to the planet itself. Unless we meet these obligations, the Earth as we know it will not survive. We are obligated to take certain actions and to refrain from taking others.

Not all obligations entail rights. All rights entail obligations. Who hold the rights to which the planetary obligations attach? Conceptually we can argue that the Earth with its ecosystems, and natural fauna, flora and fungi, has a right to survive and that we are obligated not to destroy the system of which we are an integral part. This triggers specific obligations. But entities that are not human or inanimate objects cannot hold a human right. Is it time then to

develop a new form of right: the right of Planet Earth to integrity and resilience so that it can support humans, who are part of the natural system of Earth?

Human rights by definition attach to humans. In the context of environment, they articulate that we are entitled to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and that governments are obligated to refrain from actions degrading the environment and to advance those that enable us to have such an environment. These human rights are still highly relevant in the Anthropocene, but they need to incorporate the future and be implemented consistent with the future challenges of the Anthropocene. Acknowledging rights of future generations in relation to the human environment would be a step in this direction. While one cannot know their values in advance, we can identify certain requirements, such as diversity and quality of resources and access to them, which they need to satisfy their own needs.

In the Anthropocene, the risk is that humans will trigger tipping points in the climate system, or in other systems, which will bring untold harm to the integrity and resilience of the planet and certainly to the realization of a human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. This means that we need to address risks, engage in the scientific research and monitoring necessary to identify and manage such risks, and to view such measures as obligations necessary to implementing a human right in the Anthropocene. Cooperation will be essential, and this could be considered as an essential element of implementing a human right to environment.

⁴⁷ Edith Brown Weiss is University Professor and Francis Cabell Brown Professor of International Law Emerita at Georgetown University. She is past President of the American Society of International Law, Chairperson of the World Bank Inspection Panel, and member of Boards of Directors for international organizations. In 2017, she delivered the General Course on Public International Law at The Hague Academy of International Law.

In the Anthropocene, equity issues may become even starker. States with the least economic resources may suffer most in the Anthropocene but lack the capacity to constrain their own footprint. Wealthier ones may become even stronger forces harming the planet's integrity and resilience. In this context, human rights can empower individuals and communities to force governments and other actors to minimize environmental harm, and to facilitate sustainable development.

The normative construct for human rights and environment in the Anthropocene is one of the obligations that we have to the Earth, with a human right to environment today that considers the future and is a force for actions to enhance the integrity and resilience of the Earth.

Human Privilege

*Peter Adams*⁴⁸

Human rights look likely to be smashed in the upcoming 50 years. Obliterated, crushed for two reasons: 1. The entrenched non-inclusive, hierarchal, patriarchal, non-indigenous values of humanity. 2. Over population of the human species.

Whilst the second reason is blindingly obvious and stems from the first, it is the first reason that I want to consider.

The recent recognition by the UN Human Rights Council that "the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a human right" should not be viewed as only extending to humans to the exclusion of nature and other species. Focusing only on humans would show a hubris, smacking of privilege where human rights, yet again, take precedence over all other species' rights. Indeed, the warped ideolo-

gy of separating humanity from nature is what catalyzed the environmental catastrophe the whole of planet earth is now facing.

*As Russia's war on
Ukraine continues... hu-
man lives take priority.
Environmental work is be-
ing put on hold.
Guardian newspaper
(28 March 2022)*

Because human rights should be just a subset of the Rights of Nature, the wiser question is: *How are the Rights of All Beings going to be impacted?* Within this deeper question a more useful answer is to be found.

What ultimately undermines human rights is to not take into consideration all of creation. This lack exacerbates the growing environmental challenges caused by resource depletion, pollution, species extinction, climate change and over population.

Fifty years ago, one could be expected to think the "rights" issue as the sole domain of humans. Today, though, as science knows deeply about the complex inter-relational web of life, going into the next 50 years "rights" have to include everyone: wombats and trees, snails and streams, dragonflies and arctic terns.

We repeatedly talk about the massive humanitarian crisis that threatens millions of human

⁴⁸ Peter Adams is an environmental artist whose site-specific Peace Garden, Gaia Evolution Walk, sculptures and benches in Tasmania have for 30 years explored the above topic. His sculptures are in collections in major museums around the world.

lives, but never about the mass species crisis that threaten millions of non-human lives whether by environmental climate change, war, or simply, land clearing to feed the growing mouths of humans.

All non-humans have an intrinsic value separate from human agency, with the healthy whole greater than the sum of its parts. All within this diverse tribe have to be in equal relationship to each other where humans live in harmony, reciprocity and gratitude with our non-human ancestors of the animal, plant, fungal and mineral kingdoms.

All of us linked together is the key to justice.

For our own human survival we need to accept the truth of the evolutionary kinship we have with our Family of all Beings. Although not our kind, they are our kin. The totality of our planet Earth has to be viewed as sacred and inviolate because to neglect one ancestral relative is to neglect the whole. Can we not feel “... *our whiskers wider than minds*” as poet William Stafford exhorts us to do in his poem *Atavism*?

The deepest sources of our being lie within a reality that we have done our best to ignore. We might think of non-humans as separate from ourselves, but this cannot be, for tree and stone reside in our genetic history and the collective unconscious. Our earliest ancestors did not walk, but grew out of the ground, feet of roots and branching hands begging for light.

They're still begging, but this time for a voice at this conference. Stockholm +50 desperately needs a Council of All Beings.

We Are One: Relationship of Humans and Nature

Sara J. L. Svensson⁴⁹

In 2021, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution recognizing the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right. The UN General Assembly followed in 2022. While a victory that our system has come this far, we have not yet reached the finish line.

The idea that humans have the right to a healthy environment is strongly influenced by the western worldview that places humans at the center of the world. What does this mean to other species and the rest of nature? What about the rights of nature itself? And what happens to us humans when we adopt a worldview that presents the universe as impersonal matter and the Earth as a dead machine, with resources for us to exploit?

Since time immemorial, humans are evolutionary developed to understand and experience the world as an animistic universe, with culture as a medium to ritually and symbolically communicate with the jaguar people and the eagle people, with trees, gods and ancestral spirits. We are developed to relate to this living, conversational cosmos, animated by forces and intentions.

The original worldview, which indigenous peoples on different continents have kept at their core, is based on the basic principle that everything that exists in nature is alive. All living things have a soul and a consciousness. All living beings have a task and are mutually de-

⁴⁹ Sara Lehman Svensson is former youth advisor to UNEP and works to include marginalized groups in environmental decision-making. She spent six years in the Amazon rainforest, where she married into a tribal community in Suriname. Active in the ecopsychology network Lodyn in Sweden, she attended Stockholm+50 with the Green Hope Foundation delegation.

pendent on everything else. Therefore all life is sacred.

All beings are part of the same life force. The Earth with all inhabitants are one and belong together in the vibrant web of life. Everything we do in the fabric of life affects each and every one of us. What we pour into the river of life comes back to us in the water that we ourselves are to drink.

To create a sustainable future, there is an urgent need to redefine the relationship between humans and nature as “we are one”. We need to reawaken ancient knowledge to fully understand that we are part of nature, and relearn to treat the rest of nature with reverence, respect, responsibility and reciprocity. Cultures that have lost these principles of life are suffering. Disorder in the relationship between humans and the rest of nature causes stress, anxiety and loss of meaning and is the root cause of the ecological destruction of our time.

Moving forward into the future, we need to widen our perspective by challenging our view of ourselves as separate individuals. As conscious and compassionate beings, we have the freedom to choose what and who we identify with, whether it is a dying river, a group of stranded refugees or the entire planet. By expanding our concept of self beyond the boundaries of our own skin, we are reminded of our deep connection with all life. This connection gives us courage, motivation and endurance to resist the forces that destroy our world. It's not about making sacrifices or acting unselfishly: when we see nature and the Earth as part of ourselves, we want nothing else than to protect it.

Once in Madagascar

we snorkeled off an atoll
corals of colors never seen
stony fingers
stone bouquets
yellow purple pink

eyes wide we moved
through perfect clarity
each fish each fin
hours we hung suspended
looking

since then I've swum
in other seas
reefs gone gray
or brown
their rainbows lost
fish so scarce
the human swimmers mob
a single angelfish or grunt

murk defies our gaze
we poison what we crave—
to see even a barren reef
a fish or two

last year in Hawaii
the pandemic closed a cove
no one swam that year
the reef healed
reclaimed its colors
in those months
free of us

yet we feed the seas
our garbage our plastic
like the closet no one cleans
never see our impact in the deep

the waters grow warmer
they swell rise wait
for us to disappear
— Susan Okie⁵⁰

50 Susan Okie is a former Washington Post medical reporter and science editor, a physician, and a poet. Her poems have appeared

3. Duties to Future Generations & Intergenerational Equity

Duties Under the International Right to a Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment

James W. Nickel⁵¹

Human rights get much of their power from their associated moral and legal duties. This essay attempts to identify in broad terms the duties that flow from the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment (R2HE). A duty is a mandatory norm that prohibits or requires some action by identified parties. Rights typically differ from goals by having mandatory duties, though international environmental goals such as Goal 12 of the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (“Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”) can be very important and could be hardened into duties under R2HE.

R2HE is a *human* right; the duties associated with it are duties to people, not directly to nature, plants, non-human animals, fungi, oceans, or ecosystems, though they would benefit from realization of R2HE. It is not the same as the broader idea of rights of nature. See Daniel Corrigan & Markku Oksanen, eds., *Rights of Nature: A Re-examination*, Routledge Explorations in Environmental Studies (2021). R2HE is only one part—although a very important one—of an adequate conception of environmental ethics and law.

The *object* of R2HE (what the right is to) is an ideal condition in which all people on earth enjoy a natural environment that is clean, healthy, and sustainable. R2HE’s focus is the natural

environment on earth, including its atmosphere, oceans, watersheds, rivers, lands, built environments, and climates. The duties generated by R2HE cannot be understood without reference to this state of affairs. R2HE prescribes that this environment be *clean*, not dirty or polluted. When pollution from human activities occurs, as it inevitably does, it is adequately limited and mitigated. R2HE also prescribes that this environment be *healthy*. Threats to human health from this environment are adequately limited and mitigated. And R2HE prescribes that this environment be *sustainable*, that it be preserved and maintained over time. R2HE provides grounds to demand justification for human practices that pollute, cause disease, or use resources in unsustainable ways.

Abstractly described, the duties associated with R2HE are to take all necessary and appropriate steps over time to realize this state of affairs. These duties are not limited to particular environmental problems that are prominent today such as loss of biodiversity, toxic pollution or climate change. Knowing what these steps are at a particular time requires identifying as best we can the threats to the availability of this condition now and in the future. Such threats are numerous, varied, and change over time. Types of duties under R2HE include actions to recognize and respect R2HE, protect its object against identifiable threats (including from non-State actors), and provide and/or facilitate the availability of needed resources to officials, scientists, and ordinary people. These duties are sure to have different levels of specificity. Some will be fairly broad in order to cover all countries and long time periods. Others will be much more specific.

in various literary journals and a chapbook, *Let You Fly*, was published in 2018. She teaches small group classes on patient-interviewing and ethics at Georgetown University School of Medicine.

51 James W. Nickel is Professor of Philosophy and Law Emeritus at the University of Miami. He is the author of *Making Sense of Human Rights* (2006) and of many articles in philosophy and law.

As a human right, R2HE has many neighboring rights. Other human rights may set limits to appropriate action under R2HE. Rights to life, food, water, shelter, and work mean that duties under R2HE must coexist with the production, consumption, pollution, and energy use required for earth's large human population to enjoy these rights.

In the foreseeable future, steps to realize R2HE must be taken within the existing international system, one in which Nation States play a central role as duty-bearers under human rights. States are obligated to create laws and policies that realize R2HE within their territories. But important duty-bearing and goal-promoting roles are also played by international organizations, business corporations, civil society, and individuals.

Energy and Future Generations

Seth Grae⁵² & Sweta Chakraborty⁵³

We have made tremendous progress over the past 50 years since the adoption of the Stockholm Declaration, but we have much further to go – and we have to go faster, too. The latest report from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) suggests we are running out of time to secure a livable future because of inaction on climate change.

More and more we are discovering the interconnections between development, human rights, and the environment. Progress in one area can have profound effects in another. Over the past 50 years, the increased use of fossil fuels has expanded prosperity but at environmental costs.

“Human rights and the environment are intertwined; human rights cannot be enjoyed without a safe, clean and healthy environment; and sustainable environmental governance cannot exist without the establishment of and respect for human rights,” according to the UN Environment Program.

We must expand our use of clean energy sources to meet the next 50 years or future generations will suffer irreparably. To achieve this, the IPCC calls for a major expansion of carbon-free energy sources. Doing so at the pace and scale required to avert climate disaster means expanding all carbon-free sources including solar, wind, nuclear, geothermal, hydro, and others.

Just as important is that we conserve our resources and use them efficiently. Technology advancements are enabling us to produce more energy using less materials and having a smaller environmental footprint. We are on the cusp of a new era in which we can change the energy dynamic to provide all people with affordable, clean electricity.

We can also move beyond power generation to decarbonize other emissions-heavy sectors, such as manufacturing, transportation, and agriculture. We must significantly reduce emissions from all parts of the global economy. It is more critical than ever that we change the trajectory we are on to meet our climate targets.

Breaking through into the clean energy future will affect all of us. But it cannot be done without everyone's participation. The social impacts of shifting lifestyles and incoming technologies will be far-reaching and sometimes unpredictable. That's why the people who will be most

52 Seth Grae is CEO of Lightbridge Corp. He is a member of the Civil Nuclear Trade Advisory Committee to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce and is a member of the Nuclear Energy Institute's board of directors.

53 Dr. Sweta Chakraborty is president for U.S. operations for We Don't Have Time, the world's largest review platform for climate solutions. Sweta chairs the ESG committee of the board of directors of Lightbridge Corp.

affected have the right to a full role in decision making. Only by respecting everyone's input can we be sure that everyone's rights are defended and fulfilled in this energy transition. The alternative to a just transition is one that is slower, more uneven, and marred by new injustices in the future on top of historical ones.

Failing to address climate issues would lead to environmental degradation such as habitat loss, ocean acidification, and sea level rise, and will result in mass migration, civil strife, and possibly even war. Parts of the globe may become uninhabitable.

Ultimately, human rights flourish in a world where all cultures in all countries benefit from clean, affordable, and efficient energy that is, in a word, "sustainable." We have the expertise and skill to make that happen. Now, we must make it a reality.

Intergenerational Equity in Outer Space

Steve Mirmina⁵⁴

The first principle of the 1972 Stockholm Declaration asserts that humanity "bears a *solemn responsibility* to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations." In the environment of outer space, humanity does not seem to be living up to this commitment.

Activities in outer space are essential to achieve many of the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals, including ending poverty and hunger, ensuring clean water, conserving the world's oceans, and halting biodiversity loss. This is because space technology provides decision mak-

ers with the scientific data necessary to establish sound environmental governance policies.

Outer space is also essential for the protection and preservation of human rights, including the right to life. In terms of the human environment, satellites provide data on climate change (such as the decline in Arctic Sea ice, warming ocean temperatures, or increase in sea level rise). Satellites provide global communications, enabling telemedicine, emergency relief efforts, and, perhaps unfortunately, observation and evidence of human rights abuses (including in Syria, Sudan, Myanmar, and Ukraine). Satellites also help sustain peace through Transparency and Confidence Building Measures (TCBMs) in the fields of arms control and nonproliferation. In addition, space technology saves countless lives by providing warning of impending disasters, including hurricanes, tsunamis, or asteroid strikes.

Although outer space is infinite, the orbit around the Earth is a finite resource - and it is being increasingly utilized by both States and non-State actors. Addressing today's environmental pollution in outer space (waste left on the moon; space debris, intentional destruction of satellites in orbit, mega-constellations of satellites, and the concomitant risks of collision in outer space), will demand international collaboration by all spacefaring entities (public and private) as well as an affirmative commitment to protect the space environment. Protection of areas on celestial bodies to preserve sites of historic, aesthetic, or other value will also require international agreement.

With ever-increasing numbers of state and non-state actors competing in an environment

⁵⁴ Steve Mirmina is currently teaching Space Law at Georgetown, UCONN, and Vanderbilt Law Schools. He has spoken widely and published numerous articles in the field of space law. Outside of his teaching, he practices law in the International Law Division of NASA Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

of limited resources (such as the lunar south pole where water is preserved in the form of lunar ice) preservation of peace is key. It is essential to develop a shared understanding of safe and responsible behavior in space. Avoiding conflict in outer space (and on Earth) will occur through strengthening mutual understanding, increasing transparency, and having due regard for the interests of others. Measures regarding the safety and stability of outer space operations will need to be established. These are keys to a peaceful and prosperous future.

Principle 21 of the Stockholm Declaration notes that, "States have the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental policies, *and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.*" (Emphasis added.) Space debris, as well as destructive anti-satellite (ASAT) missile testing, unequivocally causes damage to the areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

There is no Plan B. We have no "backup planet" or "reset button" if we cause this one to be uninhabitable for humankind. It's misleading to think that humans might destroy this planet. Earth will be around for another 5 billion years. The most that we can do is make Earth unlivable for humans. Given our current level of technological advancement, only in science fiction can we live under the oceans or terraform Mars to make it hospitable to humankind. The technology required to enable those possibilities is many generations into the future.

Long-term sustainability of the outer space environment means conducting space activities to meet the needs of the present gener-

ation, *while preserving outer space for future generations.* Whether we refer to this as inter-generational equity, stewardship, Stockholm Principle 1, or the Golden Rule, humanity really has no choice other than to honor its solemn responsibility.

4. Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous Peoples: Contributing to Protecting the Earth and Its Rich Human Mosaic

*S. James Anaya*⁵⁵

Indigenous peoples show what humanity's relationship with the environment can be. Any generalization about the world's indigenous nations, tribes, and communities risks obscuring the diversity among them and their realities. But across time and the planet a pattern of environmental stewardship among Indigenous peoples is there, as characteristically indigenous life is interconnected with the natural world.

When the Stockholm Declaration emerged to mark the modern era of global environmentalism in 1972, Indigenous peoples from across the globe were beginning to join in efforts to gain international recognition of their fundamental rights. Having experienced centuries of colonial onslaught, and in many cases plunder of their life-sustaining or sacred lands, they started a movement to reverse that course. Eventually the movement led the United Nation General Assembly to adopt in 2007 a Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which features recognition of their rights to traditional lands and "to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their territories and resources."

A priority for indigenous peoples is to secure

⁵⁵ S. James Anaya is Professor and former Dean of the University of Colorado School of Law and was the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. He is of Apache and Purépecha ancestry.



Txai Suruí, founder and coordinator of the Movement of Indigenous Youth of Rondônia, Brazil, addressing world leaders at the Glasgow Climate Change Conference in 2021 © IISD / ENB / Mike Muzurakis

their territorial rights through land titling and other means, something that benefits not just them but humanity, since indigenous peoples tend strongly toward sustainable and ethical practices of land management. Notably, securing indigenous control over forested lands has shown to contribute to the preservation of critical carbon sinks. In many places, Indigenous peoples, often in cooperation with others, are developing resource conservation or restoration programs, drawing on a wealth of traditional knowledge acquired over centuries. Indigenous peoples stand to contribute ever more to environmental stewardship, as they both gain more control over their traditional lands and their participation in all levels of land and resource governance is elevated.

Compared to others, Indigenous peoples bear little of the fault for the different forms of environmental degradation plaguing the earth, yet they often disproportionately bear its effects. Indigenous peoples living away from urban areas have hardly contributed to the causes of

global warming, the world's greatest environmental threat; yet in many places they are already suffering its harms, when for most of the rest of the world the harm of climate change is but predicted. Rising sea levels, the thawing Arctic, and increasingly altered weather patterns are affecting Indigenous peoples' access to critical subsistence resources and menacing related cultural patterns, and are threatening to do so in the future at an accelerated pace. These experiences are punctuating that climate change is not just an environmental but a human rights crisis.

Given their situations of vulnerability to global warming and other environmental harm, indigenous peoples have for decades been acting to contribute to solutions. They are forging ways to participate not just at the national level but also in the major global environmental processes, including those hatched at the 1992 Rio conference and inspired by Stockholm. They are no doubt prominent stakeholders in the efforts to preserve biodiversity, and they bring

to the discussion important experiences and knowledge. The world will do well to value, ever more, what Indigenous peoples have to contribute to the earth's protection and to the rich human mosaic that inhabits it.

5. Environmental Justice & Environmental Human Rights Defenders

Crossroads for Justice and the Environment

*Samia Shell*⁵⁶

We are at a crossroads. The collective must decide whether our societies shall fully integrate our environmental and human rights, coupled with the rights of nature, or whether we shall continue to operate in siloes. The former path is the one which demands our earnest attention, and eternal pledge.

Humanity has nearly abandoned our universal duties and obligations as inhabitants of this unique planet. Our present state of disconnection from the land, from each other, and from our human calling exists by no mistake. It is the manufactured result of an industrial and neoliberal world—festered by colonialism, and now sustained by imperialism, racism, and extractivism. Yet, with many ills, solutions abound.

Our predecessors took on the task of preserving our planet, traditional ways of life, and nonhuman relatives. It is in this spirit that the Stockholm Declaration signified the root of a global commitment to ourselves, and our progeny. Today, we have reaffirmed and broadened our global dedication to one another and our environments through universal recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. This recognition will reverberate through the test of time; it will undoubtedly serve as an anchor against un-

foreseen shockwaves. And, presently, it will guide us in the face of climate change, biodiversity decline, toxification of the planet, extreme poverty, and persisting conflict.

Looking to the future, the work that stands before us is evident. The right to a healthy environment serving as a foundation, the world must now meet the occasion to realize environmental and climate justice. As a first pillar of environmental justice, we must address the distribution of environmental benefits and harms. With a deep, global history of harms being borne by those least responsible for them, all future development and decision-making must occur under a lens of equity and restoration. Similarly, as environmental benefits have been disproportionately stripped from innocent peoples, ensuring that those benefits are available to all people will become a vital approach.

A second pillar that will guide us while addressing climate change is recognition. We must endeavor to protect rights to cultural inheritances, including traditions, knowledge, practices, ways of life, kinship, religious sites, and intimate place-based relationships. We must lay to rest the detrimental anthropocentric view of our planet, and remember the inextricable, nonhierarchical connection between humans and nature. Moreover, we will consider questions of the meaning of citizenship, in the face of mass migration due to climate change.

A final pillar—participation—will be at task. In some Indigenous cultures, everyone has a duty to act in the best interest of seven succeeding generations. The vast majority of our current legal systems, however, do not recognize future generations as persons, with rights and interests that can be represented and protect-

⁵⁶ Samia Shell is a Black American environmental justice and human rights advocate, law student, model, and youth. Her work is propelled by a liberation ethic for both people and the planet. She envisions a regenerative, just, kind, and cooperative future for us all.

ed. A livable, equitable future that fully ensures our rights to a healthy environment will require us to enshrine the rights of future generations through legal personhood. Likewise, current environmental crises implicate the resounding lack of representation of the interests of women, children, youth, and gender non-conforming people in governments and decision-making bodies. A just future will lead to inclusive governance in which these groups possess constitutional rights of participation, resulting in a holistic improvement of our societies.

6. Environmental Rights & Rights of Nature

Rights of Nature

Christina Voigt⁵⁷

What happens if ecosystems, certain species or natural spaces have a legal personality with the right to exist, to thrive, to regenerate, and to play their role in the web of life?

“Rights of nature” is not a new legal concept. At least 29 countries have already enacted nature’s rights in constitutions, national statutes, and/or local laws. In several countries, courts have recognized legal personhood of natural subjects such as rivers, forests, mountains, glaciers or national parks.

A general starting point of the modern legal discourse on rights of nature is Christopher Stone’s germinal article “Should trees have standing? Towards Legal Rights for Natural Objects.” (Southern California Law Review 45. (1972): 450-501). Stone traced the development of the idea of legal rights, noting that children, the elderly, women, foreigners, and minorities have been treated as without rights in many societies throughout human history. He further

points out that legal rights have been extended such that previously rightless people and things, such as companies, have come to be recognized and valued for themselves. He proposed that we give legal rights to natural elements of the environment and to the natural environment as a whole.

While the “western” legal discourse on rights for nature is a fairly recent one, traditional Indigenous worldviews have long embodied a connection with nature and regarded nature as a living ancestor. From this worldview arises the responsibilities to protect nature as kin.

Examples of countries that recognized rights of nature through legislation include:

- *New Zealand* where nature is recognized as “indivisible and living whole” or “a legal personality, in its own right” (Agreement between the Crown (the State) and Maori iwi, later included in law through the Te Awa Tupua Act (2017) (Whanganui River) and the Te Urewera Act (2014));
- *Ecuador* where the 2008 Constitution states that “Nature or Pachamama, where life is reproduced and exists, has the right to exist, persist, maintain itself and regenerate its own vital cycles, structure, functions and its evolutionary processes.” and that “All persons, communities, peoples and nations can call upon public authorities to enforce the rights of nature.” (art. 71); and that “Nature has the right to be restored ...This restoration shall be apart from the obligation of the State and natural persons or legal entities to compensate individuals and communities that depend on affected natural systems.” (art. 72); and
- *Uganda* where the National Environment Act states that “Nature has the right to exist,

⁵⁷ Christina Voigt is Professor, University of Oslo; Co-Chair, Paris Agreement Implementation and Compliance Committee (PAICC); Chair, IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL); Coordinator, PluriCourts, Center of Excellence, University of Oslo.

persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles, structure, functions and its processes in evolution.” (2019, No. 5, (7 March 2019) art. 4).

We also see developments through jurisprudential practice. In *Ecuador* there is a significant amount of case law implementing the constitutional provisions regarding the rights of nature described above, including lawsuits addressing the impaired flow in the Vilcabamba River through hydropower projects. In *Colombia*, the Supreme Court in a climate change case brought by a group of children and young adults held that the Colombian Amazon has legal personhood. It stated that “for the sake of protecting this vital ecosystem for the future of the planet,” it would “recognize the Colombian Amazon as an entity, subject of rights, and beneficiary of the protection, conservation, maintenance and restoration that national and local governments are obligated to provide under Colombia’s Constitution” (STC4360-2018 of 5 April 2018). As a remedy the court ordered the nation and its administrative agencies to ensure a halt to all deforestation by 2020. The court further allocated enforcement power to the plaintiffs and affected communities, requiring the agencies to report to the communities and empowering them to inform the court if the agencies were not meeting their deforestation targets.

On the international level, development is slow. Advancements during the early 21st century in international “soft law” have initiated discussions about the potential for integrating nature’s rights into legal systems. The United Nations has held nine “Harmony with Nature” General Assembly Dialogues as of 2019 on

Earth-centered governance systems and philosophies, including discussions of rights of nature specifically. These dialogues may provide a foundation for the development of a Universal Declaration of the Rights of Nature which, like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, could form the foundation for rights-based nature laws worldwide.

In 2012, the Members Assembly of the International Union for Conservation of Nature adopted a resolution calling for a Universal Declaration of the Rights of Nature. The IUCN’s World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL) in 2016 issued an “IUCN World Declaration on the Environmental Rule of Law” recognizing that “Nature has the inherent right to exist, thrive, and evolve”. Currently, WCEL works together with the IUCN Secretariat on a project that aims at initiating a global dialogue for designing and implementing a strategy for dissemination, communication and advocacy concerning rights of nature.

In sum: Recognizing rights of nature can contribute to improving governance to protect biodiversity and address climate change as well as pollution. If natural elements are seen as subjects of rights - and not longer as legal objects - the integrity and diversity of nature could be conserved in more effective ways. By recognizing rights of nature, law and governance would be based on what is good for the planet Earth (including people and nature) in a holistic, sustainable and long-term manner. It would also enable the defense of nature and ecosystems in court – not only for the benefit of people, but for the sake of nature itself.



Toward an Ecocentric Worldview and Rights for All Species

Bruce A. Byers⁵⁸

The 1968 UNESCO Biosphere Conference used the “biosphere” concept—for the first time in international deliberations—to argue that humans and all other species are part of an interdependent global ecosystem, such that the wellbeing of humans and the nonhuman species of the planet cannot be disentangled. The idea to develop an international “Declaration on the Human Environment,” at the Stockholm Conference, was first proposed at this Biosphere Conference. In retrospect, the title of the 1972 Stockholm Conference, “on the Human Environment,” carried a human-centered implication at odds with the ecocentric biosphere concept.

The wellbeing and even the long-term survival of the human species are threatened by the current crises of anthropogenic biodiversity loss, toxification of the planet and climate change. Worldviews—how we think and feel about our place in nature—shape our individual and collective behavior, and thus the effect we have on ecosystems. A root cause of the ecological crisis is the human-supremacist worldview that now dominates, and is used to justify, the current global economic and geopolitical system. A sustainable and resilient long-term future for the human species requires more than technological and managerial (i.e. governance) changes. As was true in 1972, a transformation of the present unsustainable global human economic and geopolitical system is necessary. Such a global societal transformation requires adopting an ecocentric worldview

to replace the currently dominant human-centered worldview.

Pervasive, systemic human supremacism creates societies and economies that enable—and perhaps inevitably lead to—economic inequality, racism, violence, and the violation of human rights. Societies underlain by a human-centered worldview ultimately lead to overexploitation of resources, overpopulation, overconsumption, resource competition, and structural and overt violence at all scales, from local to global.

Traditional indigenous cultures usually evolved technologies, economies, and worldviews that were adapted to, and sustainable within, local bioregions. The Western, human-supremacist worldview colonized and destroyed many of those ecologically adapted cultures. Fortunately, ecocentric worldviews adapted to the diverse bioregions of the biosphere can be revitalized and restored from many of those traditional cultures. They can also be derived from principles of ecological science.

The first of the 26 principles of the 1972 Stockholm Declaration concerned human rights. Most of the other Stockholm principles are likewise human-centered in orientation. A future challenge for the international community is to extend the Stockholm principles using language that reflects an ecocentric rather than a human-supremacist worldview. For example, for Principle 1, perhaps:

“The rights of all living beings must be respected, protected, and promoted; non-human species must not be treated as of

⁵⁸ Dr. Bruce A. Byers is an ecologist, independent consultant, and writer. His career has focused on understanding and improving the long-term resilience of social-ecological systems (i.e., healing the human-nature relationship), and especially the role of biological diversity and functioning ecosystems in that resilience. Bruce has worked in more than 40 countries around the world, and in 35 UNESCO-designated biosphere reserves, some of which are featured in his scholarship.

lesser, or only instrumental, value compared to humans; and the ecosystems of the biosphere must not be colonized and exploited as resources, nor conceived as of value only for the human species.”

In the half-century since Stockholm, some progress—but not nearly enough—has been made toward dismantling the human-centered worldview in international environmental deliberations and governance, through, for example, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves, and the IUCN Species Survival Commission. Now we need to take the next steps toward an ecocentric worldview and rights for all species.

B. Current Environmental Crises

Indisputable evidence exists that humans and nature face existential, inter-related environmental threats. As of this writing, the term “triple environmental crisis” is often used to describe the threats of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution and toxification of the planet (including by plastics). In reality, the situation is even direr. Other serious environmental threats include: antimicrobial resistance (AMR), which renders many medicines increasingly ineffective and already results in an estimated 5 million deaths per year; deforestation; freshwater scarcity; ignored reality, perhaps epitomized by the fact that international law and policy essentially ignore fungi despite their critical importance to ecosystems; migration resulting from environmental degradation, including internal displacement and transboundary migration; misinformation & disinformation, which not only interfere with

appropriate environmental policy and law but also hamstringing informed and effective civil society participation and other human rights such as privacy and freedom of opinion; overfishing, acidification, deoxygenation and pollution of the oceans; and outer space debris and pollution. The essays below address selected aspects of these threats, except for AMR which is addressed in Part III.B.1.

1. Biodiversity & Species Loss – Fauna, Flora & Fungi

Biodiversity and Human Rights

*John Hyde Knox*⁵⁹

The full enjoyment of human rights, including the rights to life, health, food and water, depends on the services provided by ecosystems. Of the many connections between diverse natural ecosystems and healthy human life, some of the most important are the derivation of medicinal drugs from natural products; the development of immune responses, especially to allergens; the productivity of food sources; the protection of clean water; and the recovery of a stable climate. Indeed, biodiversity and healthy ecosystems underpin many of the Sustainable Development Goals (e.g., 14 & 15).

States have obligations to protect against environmental harm that interferes with the enjoyment of human rights, and the obligations apply to biodiversity as an integral part of the environment. Through the Convention on Biological Diversity and other agreements, States have identified the steps necessary to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity. However, States have failed to effectively implement the treaties and their goals have not

⁵⁹ John H. Knox is the Henry C. Lauerman Professor of International Law at Wake Forest University. From 2012 to 2018, he served as the first UN Independent Expert, then the first Special Rapporteur, on the human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

been met. As a result, biodiversity continues to decrease at unsustainable rates.

Although everyone depends on ecosystem services, some people depend on them more closely than others. For indigenous peoples, forest-dwellers, fisherfolk and others who rely directly on the products of forests, rivers, lakes and oceans for their food, fuel, medicine, and spiritual life, the loss of their ancestral lands has disastrous consequences.

Human rights law sets out clear and specific duties of States towards indigenous peoples, including in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169). Among other obligations, States have duties to recognize the rights of indigenous peoples in the territory that they have traditionally occupied and the natural resources on which they rely, to ensure that indigenous peoples receive reasonable benefits from authorized activities affecting such territory or resources, and to provide access to effective remedies, including compensation, for harm caused by these activities. States must facilitate the participation of indigenous peoples in decisions that concern them, and development or extractive activities should not take place within the territories of indigenous peoples without their free, prior and informed consent.

Groups that do not self-identify as indigenous may still have close relationships to the territory that they have traditionally occupied. States have similar or equivalent duties to protect people in these situations from the adverse effects of exploitation of natural resources.

Protecting the rights of those who live closest to nature is not just required by human rights law; it is also often the best way to protect biodiversity. The knowledge of the people who live in natural ecosystems is vital to the conservation and sustainable use of those ecosystems. It has been estimated that areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities cover at least as much land surface as protected areas administered by Governments. Protecting their rights has been shown to provide improved protection for ecosystems and biodiversity. Conversely, trying to conserve biodiversity by excluding them from a protected area typically results in failure. In short, respect for human rights should be seen as complementary, rather than contradictory, to environmental protection.

The Hidden World of Fungi is Essential to Life on Earth

*Merlin Sheldrake*⁶⁰

As you read these words, fungi are changing the way that life happens, as they have done for more than a billion years. They are eating rock, making soil, digesting pollutants, nourishing and killing plants, surviving in space, inducing visions, producing food, making medicines, manipulating animal behavior and influencing the composition of the Earth's atmosphere.

Fungi make up one of life's kingdoms – as broad and busy a category as 'animals' or 'plants' – and provide a key to understanding the planet on which we live. Yet fungi have received only a small fraction of the attention they deserve. The best estimate suggests that there are between 2.2 and 3.8 million species of

⁶⁰ Merlin Sheldrake is a biologist and author of the award-winning best-seller, *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds, and Shape Our Futures*. Merlin is a research associate of the Vrije University Amsterdam, and works with the Society for the Protection of Underground Networks and the Fungi Foundation.

fungi on the planet – as many as 10 times the estimated number of plant species – meaning that, at most, a mere 8% of all fungal species have been described. Of these, only 358 have had their conservation priority assessed on the Red List of Threatened Species, compiled by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), compared with 76,000 species of animal and 44,000 species of plant. Fungi, in other words, represent a meagre 0.2% of our global conservation priorities.

Mushrooms are only the fruiting bodies of fungi: for the most part fungi live their lives as branching, fusing networks of tubular cells known as mycelium. Mycelial networks have no fixed shape. By ceaselessly remodelling themselves they can navigate labyrinths, solve complex routing problems, and expertly explore their surroundings. Globally, the total length of fungal mycelium in the top 10cm of soil is more than 450 quadrillion km: about half the width of our galaxy.

Many of the most dramatic events on Earth have been – and continue to be – a result of fungal activity. For example, plants only made it out of the water around 500 million years ago because of their collaboration with fungi, which served as their root systems for tens of million years until plants could evolve their own. Today, over 90% of plants depend on symbiotic mycorrhizal fungi which weave themselves between plant cells in an intimate brocade, supply plants with crucial nutrients, and defend them from disease. These fungi are a more fundamental part of planthood than leaves, flowers, fruit, or even roots, and comprise an ancient life-support system that easily qualifies as one of the wonders of the living world.

Fungal networks embody the most basic principle of ecology: that of the relationship between organisms. Mycelium is ecological connective tissue, a living seam by which much of life is stitched into relation. Soil would be rapidly sluiced off by rain were it not for the dense

mesh of fungal tissue that holds it together. Mycelial networks wind through plant roots and shoots, animal bodies, sediments on the ocean floor, grasslands, and forests — one of the largest known organisms is a mycelial network in Oregon that sprawls over 75 hectares. Bacteria use fungal networks as highways to navigate the crowded rot-scapes of the soil. Symbiotic fungi link plants in shared networks sometimes known as the 'Wood Wide Web', through which water, nutrients, and chemical signals can pass. Globally, at least 5bn tons of carbon dioxide are sequestered within mycorrhizal networks each year, a quantity roughly equivalent to the amount of carbon dioxide emitted annually by the US. In 1845, Alexander von Humboldt described the natural world as a 'net-like, entangled fabric'. Fungal mycelium makes the net and fabric real.

There's a good reason why so much work goes into assessing the conservation status of different species: from the point of view of policy, if nothing's under threat, there's nothing to protect. But we know of many threats to fungi despite their minimal presence in our lists of endangered species. Fungi are subject to a barrage of disruption, from ploughing to the over-use of fungicides and fertilisers. Of the grand total of six medicinal fungi that have had their conservation status assessed, one is listed as 'Vulnerable' due to overharvesting. Another, a species found to have powerful activity against a range of viruses including herpes and flu (*Lacriiformes officinalis*, or agarikon) is listed as 'Endangered', threatened with extinction by the destruction of the forests it inhabits.

Pioneering work by the Chilean NGO Fungi Foundation suggests a way forward. As things stand, most environmental legislation and international assemblies together with many large international NGOs, refer to the conservation of *Flora* (plants) and *Fauna* (animals). Adding at third 'F', *Funga*, to the list would write this neglected kingdom of life into conservation and agricultural policy frameworks,

and unlock crucial funding for mycological research, surveys, and educational programs.

Organisations like the Society for the Protection of Underground Networks (SPUN) are leading a massive global sampling effort to create open-source maps of Earth's fungal networks. These maps will help chart the properties of underground ecosystems, such as carbon sequestration hotspots, and document new fungal species able to withstand drought and high temperatures. Researchers will be able to track the distribution of fungal networks as they shift in response to changing climates and patterns of land use, much as they already do for global vegetation, climates and ocean currents.

A deeper knowledge of these dynamic living systems will support conservation projects and policies that aim to halt their destruction and encourage their recovery, besides driving much-needed innovation in underground ecosystem science and technology. Given that fungi sustain us and all that we depend on, these developments will support the ability of human populations to thrive and survive. We are unthinkable without fungi, yet seldom do we think about them. It is an ignorance we can't afford to sustain.



2. Climate Change & Geoengineering

Extreme Heat, Health, and Global Warming

Walter Weiss⁶¹ & Susan Okie⁶²

From a world health perspective, a major risk in 2072 will be heat-related illness and death due to global warming. By that date 1 to 3 billion people will be living in places with mean annual temperatures of 29C or more, which are now only seen in the Sahara. (Future of the Human Climate Niche, Xu et al., PNAS, May 26, 2020, vol. 117 no. 2 p11350–11355). Areas of excessive heat are expected to include large parts of equatorial South and East Asia, Africa, and South America. These temperatures are well outside the range in which most humans have lived during recorded history. Children will be especially at risk. Just as sea level rise will remove coastal areas from human habitation, expanding areas of extreme heat will reduce the inland areas where people can survive.

To limit harm from extreme temperatures, steps must be taken now to minimize global warming. Reducing temperatures by even a fraction of a degree would save millions of persons from exposure to excessive heat. However, even with the most optimistic scenarios, 1 billion persons will be living in areas of extreme heat in 2072.

It will be very difficult for people to survive such extreme temperatures, particularly in the hottest seasons and during heatwaves. Low-cost cooling stations, air conditioners and refrigeration systems are needed for everyday usage and heat emergencies. A high priority is an international agreement setting standards for

61 Walter Weiss MD MPH is a Tropical Disease researcher and a climate activist. He is a graduate of Harvard Medical School, and the Bloomberg School of Public Health. He lives in Bethesda Maryland USA.

62 Susan Okie is a former Washington Post medical reporter and science editor, a physician, and a poet. Her poems have appeared in various literary journals and a chapbook, *Let You Fly*, was published in 2018. She teaches small group classes on patient-interviewing and ethics at Georgetown University School of Medicine.

energy efficiency and permissible-coolant-use in air conditioners.

If extreme heat in poor and populous regions cannot be prevented, an alternative would be to reduce the number of people living in the hottest areas. In theory, this could be achieved by limiting population growth, facilitating migration, or both. Each of these could raise serious political, religious or ethical issues for the societies in question; but allowing the deaths or severe illness of millions of people raises similar difficult issues.

Focusing national and international resources for contraception and education of women on zones of future extreme temperatures might reduce the number of people suffering from heat-related illnesses. The next 50 years might be enough time for a lower birth rates to decrease populations by 2072.

Encouraging migration from heat-prone areas could also reduce the number of people exposed to extreme temperatures. Internal migration from hotter to cooler coastal or mountain regions would help, as would migration to cities where cooling stations and air conditioning are available. Even with the heat island effect, cities may be safer than rural areas. Migration could also be facilitated from the hottest regions to countries with cooler climates. International and domestic migration laws should recognize escape from dangerously hot climates as a valid reason for entry.

Exposure to extreme heat requires amelioration as part of the “just transition” called for in the Paris Agreement on climate change. These measures could include training workers so they are able to find work when they migrate,

and educating people in how to treat patients in heat emergencies.

Whether or not policies are instituted to encourage migration, it may occur out of desperation. Planning should start now to prepare cities and cooler areas to receive and care for climate migrants. Climate change will force extremely difficult choices, which must be made carefully and transparently with all relevant parameters, including equity, being considered.

Geoengineering, a Tool of Climate Action Delay

Neth Daño & Silvia Ribeiro⁶³

As IPCC reports state that we only have few years to hold the increase of Earth's temperature below 1.5° Celsius, a few governments and others seem to be convinced that geoengineering —deliberate large-scale technological manipulation of the Earth's systems to counteract some symptoms of climate change— could be a useful tool. However, the environmental, social, economic and political risks that come with geoengineering are massive and could even worsen the climate crisis and global inequity. None of the geoengineering proposals address the causes of climate change. If it were possible for the technologies to function as advertised (they are currently not developed or available at any relevant scale), they would at best mask symptoms, as emissions would continue. If deployed at the massive scale necessary to affect climate change, all proposed geoengineering techniques would most likely have significant negative impacts on the environment, biodiversity, livelihoods and food security. Since the root cause of climate change

⁶³ Neth Daño (Philippines) and Silvia Ribeiro (Uruguay) are members of the Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC Group), an international civil society organization that conduct research and share information on the impacts of emerging technologies on society, particularly on the vulnerable and marginalized populations.



UN drought appeal. Women stand near a well in Maalimin, Kenya © UNEP / Nayim Ahmed Yussuf



UN drought appeal in Maalimin, Kenya © UNEP

will continue to exist, geoengineering would create a captive market and human survival would become dependent on these dangerous technologies and those who control them for many generations to come.

(<https://www.geoengineeringmonitor.org/>)

Solar radiation management is one form of geoengineering technology. It aims to block or reflect back part of the heat and light that reaches the Earth, attempting to lower global temperatures. It includes injecting sulphates into the stratosphere to mimic the effect of volcanic clouds, brightening marine clouds or spreading synthetic glass beads to cover ice surfaces and slow down their melting. The uncertainties of solar geoengineering and the risks to the basis of livelihoods and other aspects of human society are huge and beyond measure. Moreover, it could worsen other serious global environmental problems, such as depleting the ozone layer, as well as worsen or have no effect on grave harms caused by climate change, such as ocean acidification. In addition, solar geoengineering techniques could be weaponized to control temperature and rain patterns in other regions, worsening geopolitical tensions. More than 250 scientists have concluded that solar geoengineering is impossible to govern and therefore should not be developed or used. They propose an international non-use agreement of solar geoengineering. (<https://www.solargeoeng.org/>)

Some proposals aim to technologically remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. In a proposal known as Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS), large monoculture plantations are burned to produce bioenergy, the carbon emitted in the combustion process is captured and injected in exploited oil wells or other grounds for its storage. But over 80 percent of CCS projects are used to access deep oil reserves which leads to increased CO₂ emissions. Other proposals aim to manipulate ocean chemistry by dumping tons of rocks or minerals -including toxic mining wastes- or to

fertilize the ocean by dumping iron or urea, to force oceans to absorb more carbon, which could disrupt marine food chains and cause anoxia in some layers of the sea. Some research is occurring regarding direct carbon capture, but even if it could be done at scale and at a reasonable cost, two very difficult question remain: it demands huge amounts of energy, if fossil energy is used it will increase CO₂ emissions, and if renewables are used, it will compete with other much needed uses for that energy, which is currently underdeveloped. In all technological carbon capture projects, the question remains, how to deal with the massive amounts of carbon that would have to be stored and ensure it is permanent. Some technologies might be developed in the future; but in the meantime, greenhouse gasses would continue proliferating in the atmosphere, making catastrophic climate change more likely and making the task that geoengineering would have to accomplish once it became feasible even more difficult.

Proponents of geoengineering recognize that it will “create losers and winners”— as some places may benefit from the intentional atmospheric changes, but others will suffer. This is an overly glib euphemism. According to scientific modeling, in some cases, there will be millions or billions of “losers.” Solar geoengineering, for example, could disrupt the monsoons in Asia and increase droughts, particularly in Africa, endangering food and water sources for 2 billion people. And those are just the potential side effects of the most thoroughly researched solar geoengineering proposal. Scientists, environmentalists, and the Saami Council strongly rejected an experiment to develop this kind of technology in Sweden last year. (<https://stopsolargeo.org/>)

The most immediate risk that geoengineering proposals entail is that they appear to provide an alibi for industries and governments to avoid making the necessary reductions of carbon emissions now, because they would supposedly be technologically offset in the fu-

ture. This is a dangerous gamble that wastes the short time that we still have to address the root causes of climate change and concentrate our resources on scaling up the many real, social and ecologically sustainable alternatives that already exist.

50th Anniversary of the Stockholm Declaration: Reflections on Climate Migration

Siobhán McNerney-Lankford⁶⁴ & Duygu Çiçek⁶⁵

The plight of climate migrants provides a tragic and vivid illustration of the critical role of environmental protection to the enjoyment of human rights. Those who are already the most economically, socially and politically vulnerable will be most negatively impacted and have their ability to respond to stressors diminished and their capacity to enjoy human rights undermined. We refer to “climate migration” to capture internal and cross-border movement by people without differentiating whether it is “voluntary” or “forced” as this is often difficult in practice. Human mobility is also used in this context and involves (“forced”) displacement, (“voluntary”) migration and planned relocation. While climate impacts may lead some people to move internally or across borders, it may also render others unable to move away from affected areas.

Human rights-based approaches can strengthen the implementation of measures to reduce and manage displacement risks through strengthening climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures. They can also

support the “do no harm” concept enshrined in Principle 11 of the Stockholm Declaration which provides: “environmental policies of all States should enhance and not adversely affect the present or future development potential, of developing countries, nor should they hamper the attainment of better living conditions for all.” Such approaches may also help strengthen the resilience of communities at risk in the spirit of the Sustainable Development Goals’ commitment to “leave no one behind”.

Internal and cross border movements are likely to increase if adaptation efforts fail to effectively address the nature and scale of climate impacts. Thus, climate justice concerns exist between countries too. Those most likely to have to flee their countries of origin come from developing countries (which have contributed least to the climate crisis) and will have to navigate often challenging circumstances, such as a lack of legal protection on arrival, in their new host countries, including with respect to their human rights. There is, moreover, limited understanding of how to apply international law definitions of “refugee” to the climate context. Existing international legal frameworks should be used to their full potential to address the needs of climate migrants, including through the application of relevant global and regional refugee and human rights law. The human rights of the residents through which migrants pass or in which they ultimately settle must also be respected.

In this respect, the Stockholm Declaration’s commitment to inter-State cooperation in Article 24 is apposite to the plight of climate

64 Dr. Siobhán McNerney-Lankford is Senior Counsel at the World Bank Legal Vice-Presidency where she advises on human rights, international law and environmental and social policy. She has published widely on international human rights law and is an Adjunct Professor at American University - Washington College of Law.

65 Duygu Çiçek is a legal consultant at the World Bank, Environment & International Law Practice Group. She also serves as a member of the International Law and Sea Level Rise Committee of the International Law Association, working on international law issues prompted by the mid- and longer-term impacts of sea level rise.

migrants since the cooperation of States of origin and of destination is essential to facilitating safe, dignified, and regular migration of affected persons to other countries to adapt to climate change impacts. Sea level rise already poses unprecedented implications for low-lying island States as they face the risk of being rendered permanently uninhabitable. Some of these challenges warrant reexamination of how international law may need to adapt to address protection gaps. In certain contexts, efforts may also need to go beyond adaptation to address loss and damage.

The international community has a key role to play. The Stockholm Declaration recalls that while States remain primary duty bearers, their ability to fulfil their positive obligations may be impaired by diminished capacity and there may be a need for international cooperation and support. More recently, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration highlights the idea of collective commitment to improving cooperation on international migration. The unprecedented implications of climate change demonstrate that the international community will have to come up with new strategies for effective international cooperation that also consider justice and equity.

The 50th anniversary of the Stockholm Declaration reminds us of the importance of international policy and legal coherence and an integrated approach to the protection of climate migrants. Their plight exemplifies the need for coherence between different regimes of public international law: in the spirit of the Stockholm Declaration, environmental policy promulgated by States and international organizations must recognize the social and hu-

man impacts of environmental degradation and climate change including for climate migrants, and States must fulfill their international legal obligations in a way that promotes all aspects of sustainable development for all climate migrants.

3. Deforestation

Earth's Forests

Nicholas A. Robinson⁶⁶

Forests cover 30% of Earth's surface, nested integrally in unique regional ecosystems: whether boreal, temperate or tropical, in marine mangroves or freshwater wetlands, on alpine slopes or in chaparral. Forests embrace the tallest living beings, in redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*, 84 meter tall and 11.1 meters wide) and the oldest, in White Mountain (California) bristlecone pines (*Pinus longaeva*, living more than 5,000 years). Humans have lived among trees since time immemorial, investing in them many cultural and spiritual values. Forests are essential to the Earth's hydrologic cycle, for Earth's soils and biological diversity, and in the planet's biogeochemical cycles for carbon and nitrogen. Put plainly, life on Earth could not exist without trees.

People take forests for granted. They admire trees in public parks or along urban avenues, while ignoring how whole forests are consumed as fuel, replaced by crops and cattle, cut to trade as timber, or supplanted with roads and real estate developments. A century ago, 15% of Earth's surface, outside Antarctica, was devoted to crops and livestock; today the figure is 77%. 10,000 years ago, forests thrived across 57% of Earth's habitable lands. While now 38% (4 billion hectares) is wooded, with 15% plant-

⁶⁶ Nicholas A. Robinson is Kerlin Professor Emeritus at the Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University, and Executive Governor of the International Council of Environmental Law. He was Legal Advisor for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and chaired its World Commission on Environmental Law for eight years.



Illegal logging continues in the Brazilian Amazon, despite global commitments to reduce deforestation.
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These sloths agree that major policy amendments are needed to protect forests. © ISSD / Ken Canning

ed in crops and 31% for grazing animals. The deforestation continues, at a rate of 12.9 million hectares per year, in spite of ambitious (if sometimes naïve and often unmonitored) campaigns with the stated goal of planting a “trillion trees”.

Although forests are manifestly a “common concern” of humanity, there are virtually no international laws governing forest stewardship. In 1995, the Environmental Law Programme of International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) called for negotiating an international forest regime, in the wake of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit’s failure to agree on binding rules to manage Earth’s degrading forest ecosystems. By 2000, the UN Economic & Social Council (ECOSOC) had established the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF). Yet despite deliberations of the UNFF, and climate policies for “Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation” plus conservation (REDD+), or the Food & Agricultural Organization’s forestry programs, forest losses continue unabated. REDD+ programs and schemes for “Payments for Environmental Services” (PES) are essentially a commodification of a tree’s photosynthesis and other capacities. The drive for trade in forest products, as illustrated in the International Tropical Timber Organization’s agreement, persists more robustly than do the tepid forest conservation efforts under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

Only the African Union offers leadership, through its greenbelt project, which will restore forest ecosystems in an expanse 15 km wide and 7,775 km long, across the Sahel-Saharan region from Senegal (West Africa) to Ethiopia (East Africa). This “green wall” can reverse desertification trends afflicting 46% of Africa. While persistent degradation of dryland ecosystems affects 30% of the Earth, only 50 States have ratified the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.

Domestically, a plethora of inconsistent laws regulate forests, depending on whether the forests are held in private ownership, or possessed directly by States as their natural resources, or are under community stewardship in protected areas or on the lands of Indigenous peoples. The agricultural, transport, and development sectors lawfully treat forests as expendable, their ecological benefits merely economic “externalities.” So long as national environmental laws are ineffective, Earth will continue to lose forests.

Climate change increases the risks to forests, everywhere. Worldwide, the wildfires of 1997–98 have returned with a vengeance. Partially in response, in 2015 the UN adopted Sustainable Development Goal 15, which obliges all States to “protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.” This “soft law” policy is necessary but insufficient.

Governments should impose a moratorium on all forest exploitation, until they can enact stewardship laws. This has happened before. New York State acted in 1894, placing its degraded forests into a constitutionally protected “Forest Preserve.” Centuries earlier, common uses of forests were proclaimed as fundamental human rights in *Carta de Foresta* of 1217, a key provision for the rule of law under *Magna Carta*. To attain SDG 15, an abrupt end to forest annihilation is required, to allow space for afforestation.



4. Food Insecurity & Agriculture

Food Production in the Face of Increasingly Unpredictable Environmental Stress

Jan W. Low⁶⁷

After three decades of progress in reducing world hunger, the 3 Cs—climate change, COVID-19, and conflict -- conspired to turn the tables, with over 820 million people now food insecure and, according to the UN, nine countries in at high risk of famine. Seven of those countries are in Africa—the continent least responsible for causing climate change. The unsustainable nature of the global food system has been starkly revealed, and a multitude of organizations have called for transforming the way in which food is produced, processed, and transported within and between nations. The desire is to provide healthy, nutritious food access to all. Yet while scientific advances are enabling COVID-19 to be brought under control, the environmental stresses induced by climate change on people and agricultural systems across the globe show no signs of abating.

There is no doubt that the agricultural sector contributes to environmental stress while in turn being deeply affected by increasing environmental stresses. Globally, agriculture is estimated to use 70% of the fresh water supply. The global food system is estimated to produce 21-37% of greenhouse gas emissions; methane and nitrous oxides are the dominant gases from food production and carbon dioxide emissions caused by clearing land for production and pasture. More severe and more frequent droughts and floods destroy crops, and in the case of flooding, the roads and infrastructure that support the sector. In rainfed agriculture environments, where smallholder farming

systems dominate in many parts of Africa and Asia, the growing unpredictability of the start of the rainy season and its duration negatively impacts yields, forcing farmers to switch to crops with shorter maturity periods and household members to seek employment off-farm. Water shortage and the battle over water rights may lead to increased risk of conflict between users within the same country and between countries. Forty percent of the world's population already lives under water-scarce conditions.

Increasing CO₂ levels will impact crops differently, depending on how they photosynthesize. Some crops may see increased yields with increasing CO₂ levels, but that yield increase will mainly be in the form of enhanced carbohydrate concentration, with a lowering of micronutrient density and subsequent food quality. Typically, high temperatures stress most crops, with resultant yield reduction. In some locations, however, an increase in average temperatures will open up windows of opportunities for growing different crops.

The bottom line is if agricultural productivity on existing land cannot be sustainably increased or even maintained, continuing to feed the world's growing population will result in increased land clearing, often resulting in deforestation and biodiversity reduction. Less diverse landscapes will no doubt negatively impact ecosystem resilience.

With strategic investments and innovative policy making, however, the agriculture sector can be part of the solution and many of the negative effects of climate change on food production mitigated. A focus on improving soil fertility and more sustainable climate-smart agriculture practices (for example, no-till grain

⁶⁷ Dr. Jan Low is Principal Scientist based in Nairobi, Kenya at Centro Internacional de la Papa (CIP), where she works primarily with orange-fleshed sweet potatoes as a means of combatting vitamin A deficiency. Jan was awarded the 2016 World Food Prize for her work on biofortification.

production) that sequester carbon into soils is critical both for environmental and productivity goals. Employing water saving technologies, expanding the use of precision agriculture techniques so there is no nutrient wastage, and improving animal feeding systems are other high priority interventions. Subsidized solar-powered storage and equipment are no-brainer investments in many countries. Long-term commitments to crop breeding, combining accelerated conventional breeding and gene editing advances, for drought-tolerant, disease-resistant crops with enhanced nutrient contents, particularly by the public sector, should be the norm. Such transitions require significant resources over time to ensure impact at scale, especially to ensure that small-holder farmers are not left by the wayside, but are part of the solution.

There are three additional actions that can assist the transition to more a more sustainable global food system. First, expanded support for True Cost Accounting of different value chains and food systems so that the true value of producing and delivering a food in different contexts is understood, which will encourage more environmentally sound, health-enhancing investments. Second, the remaining quality land in agricultural production must be protected from being switched into urban housing development or other non-agriculture use. And finally, world leaders must not shy away from addressing the need to slow population growth and perhaps consider a model of societal development not inherently driven by continued population growth.

Genetic Engineering and Food

Carol Mallory-Smith⁶⁸

The crops initially produced using genetic engineering (GE) failed to deliver on promises to reduce global hunger by increasing food production or improving nutrition. Many factors contributed to the failure including the choice of crops and traits, but also the failure to achieve widespread acceptance of GE crops in many parts of the world. More than 25 years after the commercialization of GE crops, there remains a mistrust of the science surrounding techniques used in GE, including synthetic biology, and of the companies developing GE crops. There has been a great deal of misinformation, but there also has been a lack of understanding and acceptance of the underlying reasons for the negative responses. If the same mistakes are repeated, the introduction of new generation GE crops into developing countries will fail.

Further, the belief that there is lack of oversight or that new GE techniques may bypass regulations will not increase trust or acceptance of the science. The introduction and acceptance of the next generation of GE crops in developing countries, where they could have the most impact, will likely be too slow to address hunger and environmental destruction. Recognition of the importance of food sovereignty is critical and could lead to increased food production and food security; perhaps if developing countries chose the crops and traits themselves, some of the angst might be alleviated.

⁶⁸ Dr. Carol Mallory-Smith is a Weed Scientist and Professor Emeritus at Oregon State University. She conducts research on gene flow issues surrounding the introduction of GE crops and herbicide resistance in crops and weeds. She has authored numerous papers on these topics. She has served in leadership roles with national and international weed science societies.



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The newer biotechnology techniques have potential to change agriculture with an opportunity to address food insecurity and environmental degradation resulting from climate change and limited resources. In the short term, genome editing will deliver new traits to address drought, disease, salt, and temperature stress, and they may increase the nutritional value of crops, but those will likely only provide small changes at local levels. However, the greater global issues will not be diminished by the introduction of a few novel traits. Synthetic biology extends the boundaries of what is now possible, e.g., by creating new pathways that will allow plants to fix nitrogen to reduce fertilizer inputs or redesign photosynthetic pathways to increase yield. The goals and promises of synthetic biology are lofty, but it will be many years, if ever, before it can significantly influence global hunger and environmental disasters.

The unintended consequences of the introduction of herbicide and insect resistant GE crops have been minimal, with the major negative results being the selection of resistant weeds and insects -- an outcome that was predicted and has had limited environmental impact. However, as positive as some of the changes could be with reengineering crop species, it is hard to imagine the unintended consequences that might accompany them versus the change in a single or few genes. Claims that synthetic biology could be the next "Green Revolution" may be true, but not all outcomes of that revolution were positive in developing countries because of the need for increased inputs, e.g., fertilizer and water, which were unavailable. New technologies can help increase the resilience of food production and protect the environment, but will not solve the underlying problems. We need to quit repeating the mistake of thinking a new technology will help

us outrun problems caused by socioeconomic and political policies.

5. Freshwater Scarcity

Human Rights and Freshwater

*Attila M. Tanzi*⁶⁹

The right of access to water and sanitation has acquired full recognition within the body of international human rights law at a relatively late stage. Building on the evolutionary interpretation of the right to an adequate standard of living in combination with the right to health - as enshrined in Articles 11 and 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - the process reached its climax with the adoption of UN General Assembly resolution 64/292 in 2010.

Given the human right dimension of this right, the scope of application of the corresponding international State obligations has a purely domestic reach. However, social concerns have long been embedded into international transboundary water law. This is especially relevant given that most of freshwater on the globe is to be found in transboundary surface and ground waters.

Consideration for vital human needs has been an integral part of the body of international water law since its inception, originally, in its water quantity dimension, and later, in relation also to the water quality dimension. Given the entanglement between water quantity and quality issues, both aspects bear on the environmental dimension of water basins. The international law integrated approach to both dimensions was boosted by Agenda 21 adopted at the 1992 Rio Conference. Its Chapter 18, which is devoted

to the “Protection of the quality and supply of freshwater resources”, emphasizes that “[i]n developing and using water resources, priority has to be given to the satisfaction of basic needs and the safeguarding of ecosystems [...]” (para. 168.8).

The priority of vital human needs in contemporary international water law is epitomized by its combined consolidation in the two UN water conventions, namely, the 1992 Helsinki Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes – whose Preamble expressly refers to “the pertinent provisions and principles of the Declaration of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment” - and the 1997 New York Convention on the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses. Not only does the latter codify the equitable and reasonable utilization principle in relation to the economic and social needs of the States concerned by reference to the “population dependent on the watercourse in each riparian State” (Art.6), it also provides that, when applying such principle in combination with the no-harm rule, “[i]n the event of a conflict between uses of an international watercourse, [...] special regard [will be] given to the requirements of vital human needs” (Art. 10). The former has been separately complemented by the 1999 London Protocol on Water and Health.

The consideration of the future legal discourse on human rights and freshwater will be inevitably put under combined stress by climate change, demographic growth and the energy crisis. Given the due diligence nature of the human rights and water law State obligations in point – *i.e.* conditional upon their technological, financial, legal and administrative capacity – common domestic standards should in-

⁶⁹ Dr. Attila Tanzi is full Professor of International Law, University of Bologna; Chairman, Implementation Committee, 1992 UNECE Transboundary Waters Convention; and President, Italian Branch of the International Law Association.

creasingly be drawn from the best practices in the transboundary water discourse geared towards enhanced efficiency and sustainability. To that end, inspiration should especially be drawn from the enhanced multilateral institutional context, such as that of the 1992 Helsinki Convention, which in 2016 has been opened up for accession to all UN Member States.

6. Ignoring Science

The Hidden World of Fungi is Essential to Life on Earth

*Merlin Sheldrake*⁷⁰

Reprinted above in Part II.B.1.

7. Misinformation & Disinformation

The Right to Science

*Marcos Orellana*⁷¹

Science informs the world community about the dangers and consequences of hazardous substances to human health and the environment, allowing for the development of evidence-based policies to address these concerns.

The right to science requires that governments adopt and align measures to prevent exposure to hazardous substances on the basis of the best available scientific evidence. Scientific breakthroughs regarding harmful substances or processes should lead governments to adopt effective and timely measures to provide protection to their populations

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the right to the benefits of scientific development and its applications (Article 27). The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights expands on this fundamental right (Article 15). The right to science implies that scientific information be available and accessible, and it enables the development of evidence-based policies to address threats posed by hazardous substances.

In practice, however, misinformation and, especially, the dissemination of disinformation about scientific evidence threatens society's ability to benefit from scientific knowledge. Disinformation about scientific evidence on hazardous substances has become a powerful tool for manipulating public understanding and debate, generating confusion and doubt and resulting in mistrust in science. Certain businesses specialize in purposefully sowing uncertainty and misunderstanding in society, in direct violation of the right to science.

Effective channels connecting science and policymaking are critical to advancing scientific knowledge's contribution to human rights protection. Politics, ideology, lack of transparency, vested economic interests, and other conflicts of interest frequently undermine science-policy interface platforms, where they exist. Governments' failure to correct disinformation or ensure the avoidance of conflicts of interest in science-policy interface mechanisms often add to societal confusion.

⁷⁰ Merlin Sheldrake is a biologist and author of the award-winning best-seller, *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds, and Shape Our Futures*. Merlin is a research associate of the Vrije University Amsterdam, and works with the Society for the Protection of Underground Networks and the Fungi Foundation.

⁷¹ Dr. Marcos A Orellana is the UN Special Rapporteur on Toxics and Human Rights and a professor of law. His experience includes diverse roles as an academic, climate negotiator, and legal adviser to governments and international organizations. He also has extensive experience working with civil society and indigenous peoples around the world on issues concerning global environmental justice.

Scientists themselves are frequently the target of campaigns that malign, harass, discredit, threaten, or otherwise undermine them if they question, publish, or speak out about the risks and harms of hazardous substances.

When such conflicts result in the concealment of scientific evidence or the manipulation of scientific conclusions, the integrity and efficacy on the right to science are harmed, and human rights and environmental health are jeopardized.

Whistle-blower protections and existing national and international tools for protecting human rights defenders can be used to support and protect scientists who speak out against bad practices in the private or public sector, sound the alarm on the risks and harms of hazardous substances or raise awareness about existing or potential human rights violations.

The 5th Session of the UN Environmental Assembly in February 2022 moved to establish a global science-policy interface platform on chemicals, wastes and pollution. Such a platform could raise global awareness of the serious toxification of the planet, which could help generate political momentum to reversing the toxic tide. The platform is expected to identify emerging issues of concern and produce authoritative scientific assessments to prevent exposure to harmful chemicals and waste. Ensuring that it can operate free of conflicts of interest is critical to secure its legitimacy and credibility.

The up-to-date and relevant information provided by this platform could also enable technology companies to curb the flow of disin-

formation. At this time, the thirst for profit of social media companies drive the online disinformation machinery. But some companies are establishing review panels and fact checkers to avoid become witting or unwitting accomplices in the disinformation assault against the right to science. It may well be that as artificial intelligence further develops, it may offer tools to facilitate information sharing and communication, and to confront misinformation.

In the specific context of toxic substances, the right to science provides humanity with tools to confront the severe toxification of the planet and overcome the triple environmental crisis of pollution, climate change and loss of nature.

The Future of Transnational Advocacy Networks: Defending Environmental Activism

Dafne Carletti⁷²

Today's international society is interconnected, multi-layered, and diffused, including economically and socially; and so also is the essence of environmental threats such as climate change, biodiversity loss, toxification of the planet and water scarcity. This situation is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. As a result, there is a rise of players with transnational reach, fit to engage with, and effectively face, the multi-level complexity that characterizes transboundary environmental challenges. These actors are transnational advocacy networks (TANs) – more generally transnational activism. TANs are understood as a diversified ensemble of interdependent State and non-State actors, sharing interests, concerns and information beyond borders, who engage in a collective effort to fight for the cause that unites them. They are

⁷² Dafne Carletti has a Masters degree from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and a second Masters in Geopolitics and Economic Security from the Italian Society for International Organizations (SIOI). Dafne is a research and communication officer working in the fields of peacebuilding and international relations, with a focus on the Mediterranean region. She is passionate about social movements and transnational advocacy networks in the digital era.



Stockholm+50 Youth Protest at Venue © UNEP / Duncan Moore

characterized by horizontal and diffused governance, a flexible structure, and open access, thus embracing the new international setting that challenges the vertical hierarchy of power.

States bear significant responsibility for the failure to deal with urgent environmental threats, hence, particularly after the 1972 Stockholm Conference, impetus for bottom-up empowerment and participation comes as no surprise. In addition, not only civil society demands a seat at the table, but TANs are increasingly recognized as agents of change, participating in normative processes involving setting standards and in demonstrating good practices. A recent example of a hybrid, informal and effective TAN is the effort to achieve universal recognition of the human right to a healthy environment.

The importance and effectiveness of TANs lie in their ability to exchange knowledge and information. The advent of information and

communication technology (ICT) supported and promoted information and power sharing through instantaneous and cross-border connections, thus enabling the emergence of robust transnational activism. However, ICT also contains opportunities for top-down control and repression, which many governments are engaging in. To better grasp this two-fold aspect of the digitalization era, technological innovation can be visualized as a cycle, tangled in a cat-and-mouse struggle between autocrats seeking to exploit ICT for political gain, and civic and opposition members leveraging the same tools against these regimes. The consequence is that both online and offline spaces and liberties have been restricted.

Some aspects of this situation suggest that social networks are a threat to democracies. Firstly, tech companies' growing power without regulation could supersede that of governments. This must change. In the mean-

time Denmark has appointed an Ambassador to the tech industry. Secondly, social networks have unrestricted access to content with very few checks. Any message, idea, or piece of information resonates and is amplified, including conspiracy theories and disinformation. Yet at the same time, open, horizontal and widely distributed data available to the general public unleashed information from the monopoly of specific sets of individuals, notably national intelligence services.

Given these realities, it is imperative to consider the human rights implications of ICT in the context of TANs. The rights to freedom of expression, freedom of opinion, access to information, freedom of assembly and association, and privacy are all affected by ITC. The advertisement-driven business model, gathering of personal data on a massive scale and use of algorithms and artificial intelligence raise particularly serious threats for freedom of opinion (which is being impermissibly influenced and manipulated) and privacy (which is disappearing at an alarming rate). This confluence of factors gives rise to new human rights to connectivity and to net neutrality. There might also be a right to be forgotten. The future will see new technological developments, new possibilities for transnational activism, new responses by governments and industry, and new threats to human rights – threats that must be identified and countered.



8. Oceans -- Overfishing

Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing in Our Oceans

*Alicia Cate*⁷³

Overfishing, i.e., fishing at rates too high for species to repopulate, is driving the severe decline of fish populations in our oceans. Due in great part to the rapid rise of large industrial fishing operations in the mid-20th century, high levels of bycatch (40% of the global catch is non-target species) and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, one third of global fish stocks are overfished.

IUU fishing occurs when fishers violate laws of a fishery or nation by operating without a license, fishing in protected areas, using illegal gear, catching protected species, failing to report catch, or taking more fish than allowed. Up to one in five fish sold is caught illegally in our oceans. About 26 million tons of fish annually worth over \$23 billion are illegally caught; 1,800 fish stolen every *second*. IUU fishing will continue in the future unless effective action is taken.

IUU fishing threatens the economic and food security of millions who depend on fish for their livelihood, a meal, or both. Up to 10% of the global population – primarily in the global South – relies on fishing and fishing related activities for their livelihood, and over 3 billion people depend on fish as an important source of protein. As fish stocks decline due to overfishing, IUU fishing exacerbates food shortages and diminishes the economic viability of small-scale fishers in coastal communities.

⁷³ Alicia Cate is an advocacy professional leveraging over decades of expertise to advise private sector, public sector, and civil society clients on U.S. domestic and international environmental law and policy, thereby fulfilling her passion for protecting this beautiful blue planet and all of its inhabitants.



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In addition to fishing law violations, IUU fishers often engage in human rights violations. Documented human rights abuses by IUU fishing vessels include exploitation, forced labor, debt bondage, human trafficking, and modern slavery. Vessel crews can be trapped at sea for months or years at a time, working in grueling conditions for long hours without clean water or adequate food. Wages have been withheld or never paid. Crew members have been physically assaulted and even murdered.

Solutions to stop IUU fishing in our oceans are available and must be implemented to avoid further degradation of the marine environment and to prevent human rights abuses. Examples include:

- Transparency Requirements for All Fishing Vessels: All fishing vessels should be required to have an International Maritime Organization identification number and to maintain a vessel tracking system on board and functional *at all times*.
- Enhanced Enforcement, Including Use of Advanced Technology: States should bolster national and regional enforcement efforts to hold IUU fishing vessels accountable. Tracking of fishing vessels using satellite systems (e.g., Global Fishing Watch) and other technological means can enhance enforcement.

- Full-Chain Traceability for Seafood: Similar to systems often in place for beef, poultry, and produce, all seafood should be traceable – from boat to plate, so consumers can avoid purchasing IUU fish.

- International Legal Mechanisms:

- The Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (PSMA) combats IUU fishing by preventing vessels engaged in IUU fishing from using ports and landing their catches. The PSMA has 70 Parties; its full implementation by all coastal, flag, and port States is important to end IUU fishing.

- As national waters are depleted, far too many governments are providing harmful subsidies to the fishing industry – over \$22 billion in 2018 – to finance the fishing industry, including distant water fleets. Widespread adoption and implementation of a provision at the World Trade Organization to eliminate those subsidies would help stop the flow of funding for IUU fishing.

By ending IUU fishing in our oceans, the win-win proposition set forth in Principle 1 of the Stockholm Declaration of protecting both the environment and human rights can be realized.

9. Outer Space Debris

Intergenerational Equity in Outer Space

*Steve Mirmina*⁷⁴

Reprinted above in Part II.A.3.

10. Pollution & Toxification of the Planet, including by Plastic

Plastics and Human Rights: The Landscape and the Road Ahead

*Carroll Muffett*⁷⁵ & *David Azoulay*⁷⁶

In 1972, as leaders prepared for the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, scientists reported the widespread presence of plastic particles in the Sargasso Sea, and warned that increasing production and disposal of plastics would lead to a corresponding increase in plastic pollution. Fifty years later, that pollution has grown so pervasive that the presence of plastics in soils is considered a defining marker of the Anthropocene epoch - the geological era in which humanity is transforming Earth at a planetary scale.

Plastic debris, particles, and microfibers have been documented not only in oceans and estuaries, but in freshwater streams far above human habitations. Plastic pollutants rain down on mountaintops in the Alps, and into the depths of the Marianas Trench. Plastic is accumulating in agricultural soils, drinking water, fish and shellfish, in food crops, and in the human body itself.

In July 2021, the UN Special Rapporteur on Toxics affirmed what communities around the world have understood for years— that the plastic lifecycle's impacts on human rights are as pervasive as its impacts on global ecosystems. The production of plastics and the fossil fuels from which they derive affects air and water quality in frontline communities with direct and significant implications for the rights to health and life. The concentration of these facilities within vulnerable and marginalized communities, including communities of color, deepens the impacts of systemic racism and intergenerational injustice. Incineration of plastic waste releases highly hazardous toxins into surrounding communities, with vulnerable and marginalized communities again disproportionately affected. And the escape of plastics into the global environment threatens water supplies, fisheries, agricultural productivity, and livelihoods across large parts of the world with the most acute impacts in the Global South.

Plastics also pose poorly understood but potentially significant toxic risks. An estimated 10,000 chemicals are used globally in the production of plastic. Still other potential toxins are produced as byproducts in plastic manufacturing processes or accumulated by plastics from the larger environment. Amidst mounting evidence of plastic contamination not only in water and food supplies, but in human stool samples, human lungs, and even human blood, humankind must work to understand the leg-

⁷⁴ Steve Mirmina is currently teaching Space Law at Georgetown, UCONN, and Vanderbilt Law Schools. He has spoken widely and published numerous articles in the field of space law. Outside of his teaching, he practices law in the International Law Division of NASA Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

⁷⁵ Carroll Muffett (he/him) is President of the Center for International Environmental Law, a not-for-profit organization which uses the power of law to protect the environment, promote human rights, and ensure a just and sustainable society. Carroll is based in Washington, D.C.

⁷⁶ David Azoulay (he/him) is the Managing Attorney of CIEL's Geneva office and the Director of CIEL's Environmental Health Program. David is a French attorney who leads CIEL's work on global chemical policy, nanotechnologies and Plastics. He has been actively engaged in strengthening global and EU chemical policy for over 15 years.



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acy of such pollution both for ecosystems and for humanity itself. Given the contamination of plastics with endocrine disrupting chemicals, this legacy will almost certainly confront not only the present generation, but generations yet to come.

So too do the mounting climate impacts of ever growing production, use, and disposal of plastics. On its present trajectory, plastic production and use threatens to add 56 gigatons of carbon to the global atmosphere by 2050–13% of the earth’s remaining carbon budget. Moreover, emerging evidence suggests that pervasive ocean plastics have the potential to interfere with the phytoplankton and zooplankton that form the basis of both marine food chains and the biological carbon pump critical to the ocean’s role as a natural carbon

sink. This adds a new and urgent dimension to the human rights challenges plastics pose, both to this and future generations.

Addressing and redressing these impacts will demand not only reversing the plastics crisis in the critical years ahead, but resolving fundamental questions of State responsibility, corporate accountability, and access to justice in the decades to come.

C. Cross-Cutting Issues

The multiple environmental crises mentioned above will affect humans and nature in innumerable ways that cut across society. The essays below examine some of the likely effects, as well as pathways that could help deal with those and other effects.

1. Art, Entertainment & Sports

Human Rights, Environmental Justice and Culture:

The Role of Arts and Entertainment in Creating a Stable and Sustainable Future

Leila Chennoufi⁷⁷ & Becca Cecil-Wright⁷⁸

At their essence, all cultural endeavors and indeed human needs and rights are uniquely dependent upon the stability of our natural ecosystems. Now as groundwaters deplete, forests ignite, islands drown, and food systems falter, the impacts are felt across societies: there is not yet a term for an entire society wiped out by climate change, but it is happening before our eyes, as painfully depicted by the latest IPCC and IPBES reports.

In this new age of upheaval and instability, the arts will be vital for future generations, as they have been throughout human history.

As human beings we respond to both visual and narrative entertainment. From stories told around prehistoric campfires to cave paintings and rock carvings found the world over, vital, life-saving information, and cultural traditions have passed down the generations for over 50,000 years. It is through these oral and visual narratives that we make sense of the world, still today. Contemporary research reveals the high efficacy of these communication tools in increasing understanding, creating emotional connection, and promoting behavioral change.

What role can these cultural communication tools play in helping our societies meet the challenges of the future? We consider here both a future close at hand in a world we fully recognize and then another further away and slipping into a virtual future.

The role of Arts and Entertainment in a tangible future close at hand

Facilitating education and facing harsh realities - As societal disruption and environmental migration undermine access to education for large swathes of the global population, arts and entertainment are key to knowledge transfer and community learning. Indeed, they require less infrastructure and finance and they nurture humans' natural way of learning.

Furthermore, the human mind is often overwhelmed when dealing with long-term, big picture problems. Arts and entertainment provide a lens to reach audiences in a way that is non-threatening, whilst still giving a voice to human suffering and environmental damage. This artistic "soft power" provides safety and space to explore uncomfortable issues, and develop solutions.

Fostering freedom of expression - The right to express yourself freely, is at the center of the artistic experience. Artists constantly push at the boundary of what is permissible in the public sphere, protecting these freedoms for all of society in the process. Art also gives voice to

⁷⁷ Leila Chennoufi is Board Chair and co-founder of EnviroFest International (EFI), an organization setting up environmental film and impact festivals in the Global South. An international environmental and social professional for the past 30 years, Leila has experienced first-hand, time and again, the disconnect between environmental knowledge and the world's citizens. She is determined to help close that gap.

⁷⁸ Becca Cecil-Wright is the Executive Director and co-founder of EnviroFest International, an organization setting up environmental film and impact festivals in the global south. An award-winning documentary filmmaker and environmental educator, Becca's focus lies in using entertainment to engage citizens and societies with the environmental and climate agenda.

the downtrodden and forgotten, the controversial and provocative. As the challenges we face become more extreme so will the range of our lived experiences. Artists and entertainers act as sentinels of these experiences, whose successes and failures contain vital lessons for society.

Safeguarding our cultural future - In times of stress, the arts serve as collective cultural memory banks. From paintings depicting landscapes, to documenting ways of life once taken for granted, to music or soundscapes, these salvaged experiences are key drivers to recovery in our futures. They strengthen community resilience, engendering a sense of belonging. They also serve as benchmarks to compare how societies, environments, and freedoms evolve.

Art and entertainment have proven strengths in the world as we recognise it today, but if modern societies continue along their current paths the future of our societies could look very different.

A Virtual Future and our right to a clean, healthy and stable environment

In both developed and developing countries we are entering an “Age of Entertainment”. Among ever expanding tech savvy populations, people are increasingly disconnected from their natural environments, a factor compounded by the rising urbanisation of the global population. Instead, people crave digital distraction, experiencing much of their lives through screens which deliver primarily entertainment, but also work and social connection in a manner that creates dependency. People are often more focussed on their virtual world than the real one: “attending” pop concerts with 3D avatar friends on Fortnite or playing FIFA 22 competitively rather than playing football on a field. And this is just the beginning.

As the boundaries between fact/fantasy, and the digital/physical worlds blur, the emergence

of a new, all-consuming metaverse becomes not only a futuristic possibility but a reality not far beyond the horizon. The children of tomorrow may not play in parks and gardens; instead, they often will be natives of this addictive, entertainment-driven, virtual world. It will become their “natural” environment.

But what of the real world? The air we breathe? The food we eat? Who will be paying attention to this? Who will care about our environment or the social and political systems that regulate it? As the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change pile one upon the other with dire warnings of the environmental and humanitarian catastrophes to come, who will fight for our futures, giving the time, effort, will and money needed to protect our precious and fragile human and environmental rights?

Given this direction of travel across many societies, we need to harness this Age of Entertainment rather than rail against it. Indeed, a growing body of research indicates that arts and entertainment are largely untapped resources in the promotion of the environmental and climate agenda, and function as effectively in the virtual world as they do in the real world. Where scientific findings, legislative structures, and political will have fallen short, arts and entertainment have the cultural reach and the “soft power” necessary to engage citizens and communities with the transition to net zero-carbon, and a sustainable future.

If virtual arts and entertainment can restore peoples’ emotional connections with the natural world and “inform effectively”, “build agency”, “instill a sense of urgency” and “empower action”, then they can foster innovative solutions, generating opportunities for free, blue sky thinking and creativity. They can be used to inspire people to become the active, focused, determined citizens we need, ready to promote and protect our rights, stepping out of the virtual world and back into the real one. The arts and entertainment industry have started

rising to the challenge, but is it enough? Can these life-changing issues cut through our addictive desire for fantasy, denial, and path of least resistance?

Sports, The Environment and Rights

*Kendra Magraw*⁷⁹

Sports relate to human rights and the environment in many ways. For example, sports provide an avenue for self-expression, and professional sports are a means to a livelihood. In addition, the outdoor or indoor environments in which sports occur affect athletes' performance and health; and sports, sporting venues and sport events can affect the environment.

International sport broadly speaking is governed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and its Charter addresses issues related to sports, the environment and human rights. Principle 4 of the 2021 Olympic Charter, for example, provides: "The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practicing sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit . . ." Rule 2(14) states that the mission and role of the IOC are "to encourage and support a responsible concern for environmental issues, to promote sustainable development in sport and to require that the Olympic Games are held accordingly."

Several human rights-and environment concerns with respect to sport can be anticipated to arise – or in some cases, have already arisen and will be exacerbated – if climate change continues largely unabated and air pollution and water scarcity increase. Such issues include:

- Athletes at every level may need to compete in conditions where the natural environment poses an elevated risk to them, such as heightened air or water pollution levels, extreme weather events occurring without warning with increased frequency during competitions, or extreme heat due to rising global temperatures.
- Reduced availability, modification or eradication of certain sports due to inter alia changing environmental conditions, or the inability to hold or participate in sports at all, not only at the professional but also at the amateur level, due to conditions linked to climate change such as changes in the range of disease vectors and civil unrest linked to climate change events.
- Curtailment of sports that utilize high amounts of petrol, such as car racing (NASCAR, Formula 1, etc.), snowmobiling, boat-based sports (wakeboarding, waterskiing, etc.), off-road vehicle use, and airplane- or helicopter-based sports (skydiving or heliskiing), which have an outsized environmental impact, thus affecting the right to a healthy environment and the rights of nature (assuming they are recognized over coming decades), or changes in how events are held depending on technological developments.
- Changes in other sports with a high environmental impact, such as golf, downhill skiing and snowboarding, and sport events that are held in big arenas.
- Modification of treatment of animals involved in sports if rights of nature are recognized.

Based on current trajectories, which foresee an acceleration of climate change-related events and increased pollution and water scarcity, the

⁷⁹ Kendra Magraw specializes in international dispute settlement (particularly investment, commercial and sports arbitration), as well public international law issues such as environmental, human rights, economic and international sports law. She has worked in varying capacities in private practice, international organizations and dispute settlement bodies and has published widely.



Professional athletes are flagged off by **Achim Steiner**, Executive Director, UNEP, and scuttle over the starting line for the 10 kilometers race for World Environment Day. Bangalore, India. 2011 © UNEP

issues identified above will likely occur or be exacerbated, and the right to practice sport, as well as the right to a healthy environment and other rights, will likely be negatively impacted.

itably require scientific and technological innovations, including biotechnologies. What is often overlooked, however, is that social innovations are as important as the scientific and technological innovations.

2. Biotechnology

Biotechnology, Intellectual Property Rights, and Human Rights

Leland Glenna⁸⁰

Climate change, biodiversity loss, toxic pollution and water scarcity present looming crises to agriculture and food systems around the world. Addressing these crises will inevitably

Many of the controversies related to agriculture and food biotechnologies can be understood as conflicts over the application of negative rights (i.e., rights that protect a person from interference by others), particularly intellectual property protections. Greater sophistication in biotechnologies, from transgenic engineering to gene editing, has been accompanied by more restrictive intellectual proper-

80 Dr. Leland Glenna is a Professor of Rural Sociology and Science, Technology & Society at the Pennsylvania State University. His teaching and research interests focus on the social, ethical, and environmental impacts of scientific and technological innovations in agriculture and food.

ty protections. For example, those who develop transgenic or gene-edited crops can now secure utility patents, which prohibits others from making, using, or selling the invention without authorization. In contrast, older forms of plant modification, such as cross breeding and radiation or chemical mutagenesis, were eligible for less restrictive protections, such as through the USA's Plant Variety Protection Act or the international Union pour la Protection des Obtentions Végétales (UPOV), which allow farmers to save part of the crop for replanting the next season and allow breeders to build innovations on existing crops. After a 2001 ruling by the United States' Supreme Court, even breeders who use the older versions of crop breeding can now apply for utility patents.

These intellectual property rights that limit farmers' and scientists' access to resources have generated struggles at national and international levels around the world. The case of the yellow bean illustrates the challenge. In 1999, a company in the United States secured a patent on a yellow bean variety after claiming that it had introduced an innovation, and the company then used that patent to limit the sale of yellow beans from Mexico. Although the patent was revoked after researchers demonstrated that the bean was not different from a bean that had been produced and eaten in Latin America for over a century, the case indicates that opponents of agricultural biotechnology are justified in being concerned about biopiracy and how biotechnology in a context of negative rights can be used to limit people's access to resources for innovation in agricultural production and food.

Developing agricultural biotechnology in the context of positive rights could alter the controversy. An approach based on peoples' right to food could offer the foundation for reforming the intellectual property laws surrounding agricultural biotechnology applications. If those holding patents on crop innovations were not able to prevent farmers from saving and replanting seeds and not able to prevent crop breeders from developing and distributing new crops from an existing variety, and if those innovations were instead directed at enhancing the food supply, some of the controversies over agricultural biotechnology would be resolved. The emerging agricultural and food biotechnologies could then be applied to solving substantial environmental and agonomic problems with reduced concern about contributing to greater political and economic injustice.

Genetic Engineering and Food

Carol Mallory-Smith⁸¹

Reprinted above in Part II.B.4.

3. Business & Trade

No More Time for Business as Usual

Nina Gardner⁸²

I must have been one of the youngest attendees at the Stockholm Conference. My father, Richard Gardner, was on the United States delegation at the time and smuggled me into the peanut gallery. I was 12. I remember little from the proceedings, but Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's presence impressed me, as did the motto from that conference— *Only One Earth*.

81 Dr. Carol Mallory-Smith is a Weed Scientist and Professor Emeritus at Oregon State University. She conducts research on gene flow issues surrounding the introduction of GE crops and herbicide resistance in crops and weeds. She has authored numerous papers on these topics. She has served in leadership roles with national and international weed science societies.

82 Nina Luzzatto Gardner, is the director of Strategy International, a corporate sustainability advisory firm she founded to work with investors and companies on ESG issues. She has been teaching Corporate Sustainability, Business and Human rights as an Adjunct Professor at Johns Hopkins SAIS since 2013. She is a graduate of Harvard and Columbia Law School.

The challenge of sustainable development (although using different terminology) was very much in the minds of the participants in Stockholm. Nevertheless, it took another 40 years to crystalize a working due diligence and stakeholder engagement framework for business with the unanimous passage of the UN Guiding Principles for *Business and Human Rights* in the UN Human Rights Council in June 2011.

The Guiding Principles outline the corporate responsibility to respect human rights (including environmental rights though they are not explicitly mentioned) and exhort companies to undertake due diligence to identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for any human rights harms they are linked to. The Guiding Principles also reiterate the international law concept that the State has a duty to protect the human rights of its citizens from adverse impacts. Although not legally binding, the Guiding Principles -- along with the OECD's *Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises* -- are now accepted by governments and major companies as the way businesses are expected to operate globally. Unfortunately, voluntary frameworks only go so far. In view of this, some governments -- notably the French and German -- have established due diligence requirements and the beginnings of some oversight and penalties.

The key legislation being proposed now in the European Union is the *Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive* (CSRD), which mandates large companies to conduct environmental and human rights due diligence throughout their entire supply chain. Enactment of the CSRD would be historic, but it should not have taken so long to mandate companies to publicly report adverse impacts to stakeholders, ensure Board oversight for these risks, set up appropriate grievance mechanisms, require companies to produce a corrective action plan for affected communities, and levy real penalties for non-compliance. The current draft en-

tails a fine up to 2% of average annual revenue for large companies and up to 3-year exclusion from participation in public tenders. On the United States side, such legislation is not even contemplated, although mandatory climate reporting provisions proposed by the Securities and Exchange Commission will require all companies to report on their scope 1 and 2 emissions; for all oil and gas companies (and other sectors where greenhouse gas emissions are significant) reporting scope 3 emissions (e.g., emissions throughout their value chain) would also be required.

A question for the future is whether the increased transparency required by the CSRD and the SEC's proposed rule will cause more companies to apply greater due diligence and engagement on environmental and human rights, which are key to a long-term sustainable business model. Another question is whether business will start looking beyond just the immediate risks to their bottom line and consider adverse impacts on communities where they do business.

I look forward to watching the legal community make inroads against both governments and companies for failure to adequately protect the environment, and to ongoing "name and shame" activism from civil society. On the financial front, I expect ongoing engagement and a continued rise in environmentally oriented shareholder proposals from the sustainable investment community -- and penalties for banks who finance companies that fail to protect the environment and human rights. Most important is that governments impose criminal and meaningful financial sanctions on corporations for environmental and human rights malfeasance (including for excessive lobbying against relevant regulations).

Companies must move from a do-no-harm approach to a do-good model NOW. To quote former Irish Prime Minister and former High Commission for Human Rights, Mary Robinson,

at a Rio+20 meeting, “F**k business as usual.” Time is running out, and the patience of that extraordinary leader and of that 12-year-old girl in the rafters is wearing thin.

Investment and Trade

*Sergio Puig*⁸³

Governments around the world face mounting pressure to “green” their economies by transitioning away from reliance on fossil fuels and to protect human health and the environment in other ways. Yet, government continue to subsidize transnational oil companies, and international investment law offers the fossil fuel industry a way to fight regulatory change. Under current investor-State dispute settlement (ISDS) rules, wealthy energy firms regularly allege that governments’ environmental standards are discriminatory or unfair. Prohibiting subsidies—in a format similar to the World Trade Organization (WTO)—and reforming ISDS can promote sustainability. These two measures can positively impact the environment and human rights.

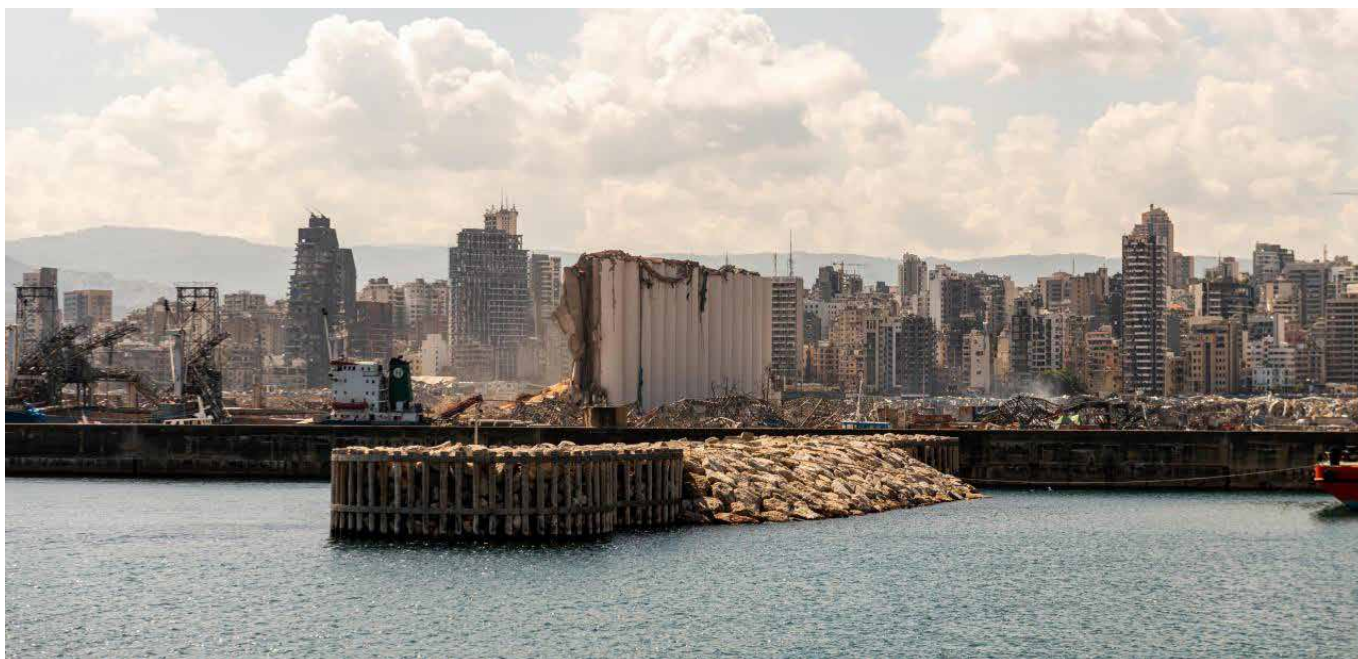
While much has been said about limiting oil subsidies, ISDS reform is especially relevant for developing countries that lack the resources required to defend themselves under the law. These countries are more likely to face lawsuits that have a chilling effect on domestic regulation. The history of ISDS litigation, a legal regime created during the age of fossil fuel energy, lays bare the vast power disparity between wealthy fossil fuel firms and poorer economies. Roughly one-third of all investment disputes involve the energy and utilities sectors. These firms tend to sue governments for larger sums of money—and they win more often—than investors in other industries. Investors generally

win 42% of the disputes with formal decisions (212 of 502); in contrast, energy sector investors win 52% of the time. Most of these wins are against developing markets.

The international community is aware of this problem. The United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) are actively debating reforms that would empower poorer nations and promote sustainability. One of the leading proposals is the creation of an appeals process under which governments could challenge unfavorable arbitration rulings. That would not suffice. Reform efforts should rethink the role of ISDS on normative grounds and create space for green policy innovation. One idea is the creation of carbon-intensive industry carve-outs similar to the Trans-Pacific Partnership’s (TPP) rules on tobacco. The TPP carve-out allowed States to block tobacco companies from using ISDS to target tobacco control measures, an approach they have embraced as evidenced by Phillip Morris’ ISDS case against Uruguay and the tobacco-industry-financed WTO cases against Australia by the Dominican Republic, Ukraine, Honduras, Cuba, and Indonesia. These rules were justified largely on public health grounds. A similar argument can be made for energy-related investments contributing to climate change. Given the environmental—and health—impacts of oil investments, there are strong reasons to consider these kinds of constraints on ISDS use.

To be sure, a compact limiting subsidies by governments to oil companies must precede any reform effort. However, reformers should look beyond purely ideal institutional types in favor of more practical considerations. Recent world

⁸³ Dr. Sergio Puig is the Evo DeConcini Professor of Law at the University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law, and Co-Editor in Chief of the Journal of International Economic Law. Sergio is the author of *At the Margins of Globalization: Indigenous Peoples and International Economic Law* and many articles and book chapters.



Lebanese authorities say the Beirut port explosion occurred when a fire at a warehouse -Hangar 12- on the city's waterfront ignited a cache of ammonium nitrate, an explosive material that had been stored at the site for more than six years © IISD

events raise fundamental questions about the strength of international law. Reforms to the ISDS system must consider real world institutional pathologies that come with allowing large oil companies to sue governments for damages for trying to implement green agendas. Instituting limits on the ability of oil companies to use ISDS would promote sustainability.

4. Environmental Disasters

Rights-based Approach to Disaster Risk Reduction

Hari Srinivas⁸⁴

Disasters have been, and will continue to be, an intrinsic part of our lives. According to the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) disasters killed 1.19 million people between 1980

and 1999. This number reached 1.23 million in 2000-2018. The global annual loss from disasters is expected to be US\$415 billion by 2030.

Over the past 70 years, the world's population has risen by 87%, but the population living in flood-prone river basins has increased by 114% and typhoon-exposed coastlines by 192%. More than half of the world's urban populations are lying in seismic zones.

Disasters happen when people living in vulnerable areas are exposed to a natural (or man-made) hazard. Disasters are an indicator of developmental and environmental failures. Such events are also influenced by other factors such as poverty and inequality, unsustainable production and consumption patterns, or poorly managed cities.

⁸⁴ Hari Srinivas is a global environmental policy expert who spent more than 20 years in the UN System, first at the UN University in Tokyo, and later at the UN Environment Programme in Osaka. He is coordinator of the Global Development Research Center, a policy think-tank in Kobe, Japan.

Land use changes that are eroding natural buffers protecting communities from hazards also affect their capacity to recover from disasters. Other environmental changes, such as water scarcity, climate change, biodiversity loss and chemical pollution increase the future risk of disasters and create new challenges for vulnerable communities, emphasizing the need for disaster *risk reduction* (DRR).

The genesis for a rights-based approach to DRR began with the Hyogo Framework of Action, adopted in Kobe, Japan (2005) that advocated a shift from disaster management to DRR: “Disaster risk is increasingly a global concern and its impact and actions point to a future where disasters could threaten global economic growth.” Advancing this concept, the Sendai Framework of Action, adopted in Sendai, Japan (2015), includes, for the first time, an explicit reference to human rights, calling for DRR activities to be implemented while promoting and protecting all human rights.

Human rights are concerned with people's critical freedoms. They require both protecting people from disaster risks and empowering them to take charge of their own lives. Rule of law and democratic governance implies a “top-down approach”, while empowerment underscores the role of people as key actors and implies a “bottom-up” approach. Both approaches emphasize that people must be protected when facing disasters.

Often, disaster impacts also result in serious infringements of human rights, such as access to aid. DRR issues are also influenced by legal systems that protect human rights and this imposes positive obligations on governments to

undertake legislative and governance measures to prevent harm from disasters.

DRR policies, strategies and programmes should target inequality and exclusion and be guided by a human rights-based approach, since disasters are consequences of natural hazards interacting with vulnerable socio-environmental conditions. It calls for communities to be *empowered* to build a resilient life, while holding governments *accountable*, and obliging them to provide the necessary aid and assistance before and after a disaster.

But challenges remain – we need to ensure DRR initiatives are implemented through a rights-based approach and clarify how human rights relevant to DRR are implemented in practice. Such an approach reminds us that increased accountability and empowerment for DRR will remain a priority for the future.

5. Environmental Peacebuilding & Conflict

Focus on Conflict

Jan Eliasson⁸⁵ & Jannie Lilja⁸⁶

The future is already here. Climate change and environmental degradation are currently threatening peace through food insecurity, forced displacement, and contestation over scarce resources.ⁱ (Malin Mobjörk, Florian Krampe & Kheira Tarif, “Pathways of Climate Insecurity” SIPRI Policy Brief (2020).) The Sahel is experiencing some of its driest conditions in recent years with the number of people facing starvation skyrocketing from 3.6 to 10.5 million in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.ⁱⁱ (United Nations (2022) “Africa's Sahel region facing ‘horrendous food crisis’” ,

85 H.E. Ambassador Jan Eliasson, is Chair of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute| SIPRI Governing Board, and former Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations.

86 Dr. Jannie Lilja, is Director of Studies, Peace and Development Research, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute|SIPRI.

at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/02/1112122>.) It is not a coincidence that these geographic areas are on the frontline of the expansion of violent extremism where militants are exploiting people's pre-existing grievances. Of the ten countries in the world that are most vulnerable to climatic hazards, nine are located in sub-Saharan Africa. All have an ongoing or recent history of armed conflict.ⁱⁱⁱ (Notre Dame-Global Adaptation Index (2020). University of Notre Dame's Environmental Change Initiative. Available at <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings>.)

Going forward, current conflict trends are expected to worsen as areas become uninhabitable due to high temperatures, floods, and fires. By the middle of the century, a global warming rate of two degrees will be met by a four-degrees increase in southwestern Africa, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Parts of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region risk becoming uninhabitable before 2100 if greenhouse emissions are not significantly cut.^{iv} (Douglas Broom, "How the Middle East is suffering on the front lines of climate change", World Economic Forum (2019).) While effects will be felt everywhere, the changes will play out differently in different places ranging from inflows of forced displaced populations to escalating violence or full-scale conflict.

As the rights to life,^v to water, and to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment are being critically challenged by environmental degradation, any attempt to separate- or sequence between different human rights is artificial and counterproductive. ((United Nations (2022) "Africa's Sahel region facing 'horrendous food crisis'" <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/02/1112122>.) The problems of environ-

mental destruction and climate change, and the societal tensions in their wake will not be solved by reverting to totalitarianism, by crack-downs on indigenous peoples and minorities, or by silencing voices of dissent. Beyond affecting the entire range of economic, social and cultural rights, the climate crisis has now also made it to the UN Security Council agenda in recognition of its impact on security.

Governments have a central role to play in dealing with present and coming threats to human security caused by environmental destruction. Governance will be put to the test. Visionary leadership grounded in knowledge of our planetary boundaries may not be popular in the short term. But it will be essential for the long term. On the environmental side, large pro-active investments, new law making, and rule setting are needed to steer firms and people towards sustainable behavior. On the peace side, different approaches to inclusive and respectful co-existence and social innovation are needed. New realities must be acknowledged and dealt with constructively rather than clinging to the past. Leadership beyond government is also critical. A society's full potential, resilience, and strength cannot be unleashed in the absence of free civil society

The world needs leadership in pursuit and defense of preventive action.

Environmental Peacebuilding

Carl Bruch⁸⁷

Environmental peacebuilding is an emerging field of research and practice that seeks to manage the environment for a sustainable peace. As such, it cuts across and informs conflict prevention, mitigation, resolution, and recovery. Integrating environment, conflict, and

⁸⁷ Carl Bruch is the Director of International Programs at the Environmental Law Institute, the founding President of the Environmental Peacebuilding Association, and an Adjunct Professor at American University School of International Service.

peace, environmental peacebuilding includes both the environmental dimensions of peace and the peace and conflict dimensions of environmental governance.

Environmental peacebuilding seeks to understand and address a wide range of environment-and-human rights issues, particularly as it relates to conflict. It seeks to address underlying causes of conflict, including those related to land distribution and dispossession (e.g., Colombia, Nepal), pollution from mining and other extractive industries (e.g., Bougainville, Papua New Guinea), and inequitable allocation of benefits from natural resource extraction (e.g., Sudan/Southern Sudan, Iraq/Kurdistan). It uses the post-conflict peacebuilding window as an opportunity to build forward sustainably, addressing underlying causes of conflict, providing peace dividends, and strengthening gender dimensions of environmental governance.

Environmental peacebuilding is integrative. It works across the conflict life cycle (before, during, and after conflict). It brings together multiple bodies of law. The International Law Commission's Draft Principles on Protection of the Environment in Relation to Armed Conflict, for example, draws upon international humanitarian law, human rights law, criminal law, environmental law and trade law, as well as the law of occupation. It works across scales (international to national to local) and across conflicts (from social conflicts and latent conflicts to episodic violence to war).

To date, there have been many assertions regarding the forthcoming water wars and climate wars. Closer inspection, though, shows that while the conflicts in Darfur and Syria did indeed follow serious droughts, neighboring countries that experienced the same droughts

did not suffer conflict. Climate wars are not inevitable, and environmental peacebuilding can help countries and communities to better navigate climate-related stresses and avoid the horrors of war. Similarly, environmental peacebuilding can help to better understand social inequities and structural violence around natural resources, as well as which approaches are most effective at addressing those inequities.

There are three key pressing challenges. Implementation and enforcement are at the forefront. In recent conflicts – e.g., Syria, Gaza, Yemen, and Ukraine – water infrastructure has been increasingly targeted. This violates international humanitarian, human rights, and criminal law. Enforcement has been problematic.

A second challenge is in convincing environmental organizations to adopt conflict-sensitive approaches. This is particularly a challenge for conservation organizations that have historically viewed local communities as antithetical to conservation.

A third challenge is monitoring and evaluating environmental peacebuilding. With the long time horizons, multiple actors, multiple interventions, and complex operating environments, how do we know if our interventions are having the desired impacts? How can we learn and improve future programming? Related, the Sustainable Development Goals formally recognize peace as indispensable to sustainable development, but there are no relevant targets or indicators.

The coming decades will threaten both nature and societies. Environmental peacebuilding will be essential to not only understanding these threats, but to taking action to prevent, resolve, and recover from them.

The Future of Borders

*Dinah Bear*⁸⁸

Borders between nations are much more than a legal line; they can bring joy, opportunity and freedom or fear, devastation and death. Today, we see a worldwide hardening of borders through infrastructure, technology and harsh policies. Borders are evolving from jurisdictional demarcation to a dark region of intimidation and peril. Walls lead this shift. In 1989, when the Berlin wall fell, there were seven walls between nations. Today the count is seventy-seven walls and growing.

What happened? One word sums it up: fear – fear of masses of people who are perceived as being a threat to a way of life, to a culture, to safety, to political power and even to survival in times of scarcity. When the Berlin wall fell, worldwide migration was estimated to be approximately 150 million. In 2020, the global total was approximately 281 million migrants.

Human migration is a defining characteristic of this century, along with wildlife extinction and climate change. Conflicts, climate and epidemics have always been factors in migration. But as human population expands and climate change intensifies, the imperative for people to move will continue to grow.

Walls divide families and communities, block wildlife and destroy sacred sites. Borders and blockades drive deaths up and shred human rights. Thousands of migrants die each year trying to cross borders (as I write this, news comes of a woman who died hanging on a border wall within driving distance of me). Countries that usually value the rule of law sweep it away to erect walls at enormous economic and ecolog-

ical cost. In the quest to “secure borders” nations discard their own values.

Technology, suggested as an alternative to a physical wall, is more typically added to walls and comes with its own dark side, including robotic “dogs” that can be used to jump on the back of migrants. Wealthier nations that feel besieged shift millions of people to poorer countries.

Borders should not be a road to inhumanity, ecological destruction and death. Our collective obsession with security often blinds us to threats within our own countries. If humanity could muster the courage to overcome its fears, there are better visions for the future. In fact, currently there are more transboundary protected areas than border walls. These areas should be managed and nurtured, not divided. There are visionary proposals for joint community spaces at borders; for example, at the border in California in an area called Friendship Park, considerable talent has been invested in designing a shared bi-national community space. Further, many people would stay in their original countries if they were able to do so safely. They need help.

These ideas are not incompatible with a reasonable approach to security. If we are to reverse course to create borders more welcoming to life than death, we must rethink their character – not to destroy countries and cultures, but to save them. Indeed, by lifting up ecological values, humane treatment and economic opportunities, they would likely increase the overall security of nations and humanity. We need borders that support life.

⁸⁸ Dinah Bear served for 25 years as General Counsel and Deputy General Counsel for both Democratic and Republican administrations at the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), the environmental agency in the Executive Office of the President. CEQ has responsibility for developing environmental policy and coordinating its implementation within the executive branch.

6. Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

The Future of Transnational Advocacy Networks: Defending Environmental Activism

*Dafne Carletti*⁸⁹

Reprinted above in Part II.B.7.

7. Nature-Based Solutions

Nature-Based Solutions

*Elisa Morgera*⁹⁰

Nature-based solutions have emerged in the last decade as a way to focus on the role of biodiversity (particularly ecosystem services) to help respond to climate change and other environmental threats, while producing long-term socio-economic benefits. Hopefully this concept can bring wider appreciation for, and new alliances into, biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, moving away from short-term economic development that benefit only few, and possibly encouraging transdisciplinary research for sustainability. Without an agreed definition, however, the term nature-based solutions is used to describe and justify a wide range of approaches, from protecting and supporting natural processes, to projects that merely take inspiration from nature.

Looking back, experience justifies a serious concern that nature-based solutions could divert from internationally agreed norms at the intersection of the ecosystem approach and

the protection of indigenous peoples' and local communities' human rights. Mistakes from the past, such as human rights violations arising from Clean Development Mechanism and REDD+ projects, must not be repeated.

Looking forward, it is now possible and necessary to build upon the cross-fertilization between the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its consensus decisions adopted by 196 Parties with inputs from indigenous peoples and local communities, and international human rights law. The CBD ecosystem approach entails an integrated response to the inter-connectedness of the "dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit." Accordingly, it calls for integrating the management of land, water and living resources, thereby supporting the holistic notion of indigenous territories, while fundamentally challenging the long-embedded sectoral and fragmented approach to environmental law making and implementation.

The CBD ecosystem approach also calls for integrating western science with indigenous and local knowledge in adaptive management, which may support indigenous peoples' and local communities' control over territories and contribute to protect their tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The CBD ecosystem approach further calls for fair and equitable benefit-sharing, through a co-identified menu of monetary and non-monetary rewards for ecosystem stewardship ranging from the sharing of profit and employment opportunities in conservation and sustain-

89 Dafne Carletti has a Masters degree from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and a second Masters in Geopolitics and Economic Security from the Italian Society for International Organizations (SIOI). Dafne is a research and communication officer working in the fields of peacebuilding and international relations, with a focus on the Mediterranean region. She is passionate about social movements and transnational advocacy networks in the digital era.

90 Elisa Morgera is Professor of Global Environmental Law, Strathclyde University Law School, UK; and Director of the One Ocean Hub (a programme of collaborative research promoting fair and inclusive decision-making for a healthy ocean).

able use, to payments for ecosystem services, technical support to improve the environmental sustainability of community practices, and the proactive identification of complementary livelihoods and better access to markets. Fair and equitable benefit-sharing has been increasingly recognized by international human rights bodies as interconnected to free prior informed consent of indigenous peoples vis-à-vis proposed developments and conservation initiatives on or affecting their territories (see Framework Principle 15 on Human Rights and the Environment). Empirical research, however, continues to reveal instances in which benefit-sharing practices, contrary to intended purposes, support extractivism, undermine communities' cohesion, enable paternalistic approaches, or even put a price tag on human rights. And understanding and implementing these obligations is more advanced on land than at sea: while blue economy and ocean-grabbing initiatives put increasing pressure on indigenous peoples' and small-scale fishers' connections to marine areas, recognition of their past and current marine dispossession lags behind.

We have a crucial opportunity to further develop the nexus of the CBD ecosystem approach and the human rights-based approach, from the microbial to the planetary level. The CBD ecosystem approach requires a decentralised, social process to understand environmental choices in terms of different human rights, as well as intrinsic, tangible and intangible values attached to biodiversity. To that end, integrated and participatory (natural and social) sciences must inform future nature-based solutions. That requires sustained investment both in comprehensive health-biodiversity studies, with disaggregated data for indigenous peo-

ples, children, women, persons with disabilities and older persons, and in ocean science, as our limited knowledge of deep-sea ecosystem services precludes ocean-based solutions.

Nature-, Science-, and Community-Based Solutions

Terry Young⁹¹

Nature is a brilliant engineer, and the world is increasingly turning to natural systems to cope with environmental problems. The challenge is that nature-based solutions are designed by humans, whose record has not been as brilliant in terms of either effectiveness or social justice. The approach taken in California's San Francisco Bay area ("Bay area") in the face of increasing flood risks from sea level rise caused by climate change illustrates that nature-based solutions, when based on science and community involvement, can effectively protect communities as well as restore ecological systems and honor human rights.

For most of the last 50 years, flooding problems at the shoreline have been addressed with man-made seawalls. While effective in the short term, engineered solutions do not adapt well to changing needs. In the Bay area, a collection of three nature-based solutions is being implemented to protect shoreline infrastructure from inundation due to rising seas and storm surges. These are: wetlands restoration; "horizontal levees" (a combination of underwater berms, natural habitat, and setback levees); and mini-floodplains in flood control channels and creeks. Notably, wetlands -- 90% of which were destroyed in the last two centuries -- are now being restored to provide not only flood protection, but also wildlife habitat, pollution

⁹¹ Dr. Terry Young is a consultant specializing in water quality and ecological indicators; former Chair of the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Francisco Bay Region; former Chair of the Ecological Processes and Effects Committee for the US Environmental Protection Agency's Science Advisory Board.

control, carbon sequestration, recreational access and resiliency against future change.

In 1999, a respected scientific study determined that 60,000 acres of wetlands must be restored in the Bay area (to bring the total to 100,000 acres) in order to sustain native biodiversity and the ecological system. Since then, more than 38,000 acres have been or are being restored, which is remarkable in an urban landscape. Equally noteworthy, the residents of the Bay area voted to tax themselves to fund this effort, passing a property tax that generates \$25 million per year. This funding and its associated management infrastructure have helped attract additional state and federal funding for restoration and nature-based adaptation to rising tides.

Two aspects of this effort stand out: first, the science-based, landscape-scale vision upon which it is predicated; and second, the degree to which its design and implementation incorporate community involvement, particularly for underserved communities. As to the first, Bay area wetlands restoration is not just a numbers game about acreage. Rather, the restoration vision incorporates important ecological attributes such as the extent of multiple habitat types, their arrangement on the landscape, and connectivity among them. This is the optimum scenario to provide flood control and other ecosystem services now, as well as to allow natural adaptation and migration of habitats as sea levels rise in the future.

As to the second aspect, each restoration project is subject to California laws requiring extensive environmental studies (including effects on neighboring communities) and public hearings. In order to empower economically disadvantaged communities in this

decision-making process, local restoration funding is used to support the training and inclusion of members of the community in advisory panels; the selection criteria for project funding include justice, equity, and diversity guidelines; projects must provide public access; and there is a special community grants program for projects that serve economically disadvantaged communities.

This example demonstrates that nature-based solutions can be implemented successfully, provide numerous benefits, and respect human rights. The question for the future is: how widely can such nature-based solutions be applied? In the Bay area, there is space to restore wetlands without moving infrastructure or communities. This is fortunate. The potential need to relocate communities hangs over both nature-based and engineered solutions – and may emerge as one of our thorniest challenges.

Rewilding: True Test of Sustainability?

Charles Di Leva⁹²

In the last decade, the planet has lost wilderness the size of Mexico. Some estimate that humans have severely degraded 97% of the planet's land surface. These losses threaten extinction to vast amounts of the world's biodiversity and ecosystems, threatening our very survival.

The concept of rewilding emerged twenty years ago to help reverse this trend and restore nature to its essential state, allowing biodiversity to re-flourish.

Is rewilding fantasy or reality? Clearly, the conquest of wilderness is the stark manifestation of

92 Former World Bank Chief Counsel, Environmental and International Law and Chief Officer, Environmental and Social Standards. Currently, Partner at Sustainability Frameworks LLP, and Adjunct Professor at George Washington University School of Law.



Global South-South Development Expo 2013. Solution Forum 4 - Sustainable Development and Decent Work © UNEP / Kire Godal

what humans have long seen as our destiny. To truly rewild large spaces means to reverse the human addiction to dominate nature. It also requires patience, as resurrecting wilderness will not occur quickly even disregarding the fact that climate change is dynamically affecting what species can flourish in a given location; rewilded wildernesses may look quite different than the ones initially destroyed by humans.

Almost a century ago, Teddy Roosevelt, the American President known by many as a great naturalist, commented, “During the past three centuries the spread of... peoples over the world’s waste spaces has been... the event of all others most far-reaching in its effects and its importance”.

Perhaps human “spread” confused the biblical aspiration that we be “stewards of the

earth” with “supreme masters of the universe”. Despite biblical sanctity, only the human species has continually and deliberately destroyed its habitat, whether salting the earth during the Punic Wars, engaging in centuries of deforestation, or turning Florida’s nourishing rivers of grass into monocultural, polluting sugar plantations.

Thus, human nature poses obstacles to restoring “waste spaces”. At this time of global economic challenges it may be even harder to stop rain forest conversion for oil palm. Indeed, is rewilding likely to find support among both rich and poor, or will it be seen a luxury of the rich who can forego resource rent in exchange for mindful meditation in old growth forest? Too often, conservation of charismatic species has led to local revolt and even the death of park rangers.

But there is hope, even assuming humans do not realize the intrinsic value of rewilding. Done properly, conservation efforts can generate investments in forests and soils as carbon sinks, thereby providing funds to keep an area wild. In any event, rewilding, like other nature-based approaches, requires legal tools to ensure perpetuity, proper incentives to keep endemic species' diversity, active engagement of local communities and their support, and effective monitoring.

Rewilding minerals-rich areas will be even more challenging given the demand for rare earth metals for new technologies. Key incentives include becoming a circular economy through reuse of metals and natural resources, as exemplified by indications that we can improve on the impressive fact that 75% of all aluminum ever produced is still in use today. Also hopeful is the UN decision to draft a treaty addressing the life-cycle of plastics, against intense lobbying that sought to limit its scope.

Nature-based solutions can re-create wetlands and help retain water and reverse the long-term trend to build grey infrastructure. Promising wireless technology may help displace transmission lines and restore interrupted wildlife corridors. Moving solar and wind technology offshore may limit impact on terrestrial biodiversity. Nature-based tourism is increasing at 4% a year and may win over opponents by creating new sources of income for local communities. Reducing pesticides may succeed over time because they enhance production, for example, by the return of pollinators.

While encouraging, getting investments to support rewilding continues to hinge on a conventional economic return. Tomorrow's lead-

ers must understand that the valuation of such returns needs to evolve with what we now understand to be existential threats to our planet. Thus, the sustainability of our future also depends on allowing Mother Nature to provide us her essential benefits at her own pace.

Nature

Nature, nature, always nature
Wilderness will prevail
Humankind - invasive creature
In most cases - inclined to fail

We will try - establish order
Make the nature work our way
Human efforts cross the border
Even good - won't pave the way

Beavers, birds and beetles be there
Go to work every day
They are unpaid civil servants
Keeping us alive today

How to manage or not manage
That's the riddle to be solved
We try hard not to damage
What the nature has evolved

*Music Beethoven Symphony No. 9,
Lyrics Åsa Norrman⁹³*

⁹³ Åsa Norrman is an experienced leader, strategic thinker and international lawyer within the broad field of environment and sustainability. Åsa started her own consultancy in 2019 after nearly 20 years as Director in the Government offices of Sweden. The lyrics were composed at the Conference on Wilderness and Large Natural Habitat Areas 2009 during the Czech EU Presidency.

8. Occupational Health & Safety

The Future World of Work: A Rights-Based Paradigm Shift for Occupational Safety and Health?

Halshka Graczyk⁹⁴ & Lacye Groening⁹⁵

Reprinted above in Part II.A.1.

9. Population

The More the Merrier? How the Right to a Healthy Environment Can Guide Decision-Makers in Tackling Population Growth

Miriam Siemes⁹⁶

Global population is growing quickly, a trend that could have disastrous implications for the four interlinked environmental crises facing humanity: climate change, biodiversity loss, toxification, and the depletion of other resources such as water. The math is simple. More people will require energy, generating more greenhouse gas emissions. More people will cause pollution and waste, increasing the exposure to toxic chemicals. More people need food and living spaces, likely causing further overexploitation and deforestation. More people will compete for scarce resources, accelerating their depletion. All of these will increase pressure on biodiversity.

The bad news does not end there. Many developed countries' populations will shrink, meaning that smaller economies and fewer taxpay-

ers must pay for aging societies. This may put strains on funds available for environmental protection and development aid. Most growth will happen in developing countries that already struggle to grow their economies at a fast enough rate to avoid mass (youth) unemployment. That could lead to increasingly aggressive economic development strategies at the cost of sustainable development.

Uncertainty abounds, however. Calculating population growth is notoriously difficult. A widely cited projection of the United Nations predicts that we will pass the 8 billion mark this November, the world's population might stand at 9.7 billion in 2050, and in 2100 at 10.4 billion. In contrast, a forecast by Stein Vollset et al. (2020) predicts that global population will peak as early as 2064 at 9.73 billion and decline to 8.79 billion by 2100. The difference is partly due to a lower predicted fertility rate due to better female education and access to contraception.

This uncertainty complicates decision making. Already facing the "horizon problem" (actions that will reap benefits only in the future must be paid for by today's voters), the uncertainty makes it harder to justify future-oriented action and pushes decision makers towards using conservative projections that may underestimate problems or misdirect resources. Others may invoke the uncertainty to discredit all projections, question proposed priorities, or bet on hoped-for technological advances to solve the problems.

94 Dr. Halshka Graczyk is an occupational safety and health (OSH) professional and currently working as a Technical Specialist on OSH at the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva, Switzerland.

95 Lacye Groening is a Junior Technical Officer on occupational safety and health at the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva, Switzerland.

96 Miriam Siemes works for the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Nairobi, Kenya. Previously, she worked for the University of Bonn and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). As a Fulbright Scholar, she received a M.A. from Johns Hopkins SAIS. This essay was written by Ms. Siemes in her personal capacity and does not necessarily represent the views of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung or anyone else.

Uncertainty, however, cannot justify inaction in the face of the rights of future generations. Moreover, even if one were to disregard future generations' rights, over 1 billion people are alive today who are projected to be alive in 2100. Those people have human rights that may not be ignored under any set of arguments.

The question then becomes, how to protect those peoples' rights while also respecting the rights of future generations? A frequent criticism of trying to protect rights in the future is that it is impossible to determine what the needs and preferences of people will be in the future. After all, the argument goes, 120 years ago States fought wars over salt; now wars are fought over oil.

Fortunately, an answer is readily at hand. Because nature and the ecosystem services it provides form the infrastructure of human society, it is perfectly clear that both people already alive and future generations will need and want a healthy environment. The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (R2HE) recognized by the UN General Assembly thus provides a framework for moving forward to protect the rights of both current and future generations. Indeed, the R2HE is an unspoken assumption of the rights of future generations, just as it is of environmental justice. The effort to respect, protect and pro-

mote R2HE will inevitably involve tradeoffs, but that is to be expected and there is no reason to conclude that challenge will be unmanageable.

Global demographic change comes with a lot of uncertainty, but humanity's need for a healthy environment is not one of them, nor is the imperative of protecting the rights of current and future generations by moving forward on the basis of R2HE.

Extreme Heat, Health, and Global Warming

Walter Weiss⁹⁷ & Susan Okie⁹⁸

Reprinted above in Part II.B.2.

Food Production in the Face of Increasingly Unpredictable Environmental Stress

Jan W. Low⁹⁹

Reprinted above in Part II.B.4.

10. Renewable Energy

Energy and Future Generations

Seth Grae¹⁰⁰ & Sweta Chakraborty¹⁰¹

Reprinted above in Part II.A.3.

97 Walter Weiss MD MPH is a Tropical Disease researcher and a climate activist. He is a graduate of Harvard Medical School, and the Bloomberg School of Public Health. He lives in Bethesda Maryland USA.

98 Susan Okie is a former Washington Post medical reporter and science editor, a physician, and a poet. Her poems have appeared in various literary journals and a chapbook, *Let You Fly*, was published in 2018. She teaches small group classes on patient-inter-viewing and ethics at Georgetown University School of Medicine.

99 Dr. Jan Low is Principal Scientist based in Nairobi, Kenya at Centro Internacional de la Papa (CIP), where she works primarily with orange-fleshed sweet potatoes as a means of combatting vitamin A deficiency. Jan was awarded the 2016 World Food Prize for her work on biofortification.

100 Seth Grae is CEO of Lightbridge Corp. He is a member of the Civil Nuclear Trade Advisory Committee to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce and is a member of the Nuclear Energy Institute's board of directors.

101 Dr. Sweta Chakraborty is president for U.S. operations for We Don't Have Time, the world's largest review platform for climate solutions. Sweta chairs the ESG committee of the board of directors of Lightbridge Corp.

11. Transparency & Dialogue

At Every Level – Connecting Local Voices and Global Action

Peter Lallas¹⁰²

The preamble to the 1972 Stockholm Declaration carries an almost hidden plea, expressing “**the need for a common outlook**” to inspire and guide peoples to preserve and enhance the human environment.

The sixth and seventh points cut more sharply:

*A point has been reached in history when **we must shape our actions throughout the world** with a more prudent care for their environmental consequences... To defend and improve the human environment **for present and future generations** has become an imperative goal...*

*To achieve this environmental goal will demand the acceptance of responsibility by citizens and communities and by enterprises and institutions **at every level, all sharing equitably in common efforts**. Individuals in all walks of life as well as organization.” (emphasis added)*

A common outlook. For present and future generations. At every level. Sharing equitably.

This essay considers two trends in the field of international cooperation that can aptly be traced back to this call, 50 years ago, to join efforts to protect our common home, and to address challenges that persist. It also reflects an underlying view of the importance of environmental multilateralism and global cooper-

ation, particularly with the many global challenges we face today – from environmental loss to poverty and inequity to hard extreme nationalism all the way to war.

The first of these trends is an evolution in the basic ground-rules of international law: who participates, who shapes it, who has rights and who has responsibilities.

Traditionally, States were the “subjects” of international law, the actors on its stage. The source story told what the textbooks repeated, that they held the vested powers for treaty negotiations, implementation, and settlement of disputes. Individuals and local communities had little rights, roles or even responsibilities at *this* level. It was a State-to-State affair.

But with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and especially since Stockholm and its 20th anniversary at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, there have been multiple actions to change this paradigm, to bring greater access and transparency to the halls of negotiations and international cooperation, especially in environmental work. To do more to *empower affected people and communities* in decisions that affect them at the multilateral level. To open the doors to “the room where it happens”.

An example is citizen-based accountability mechanisms at international organizations, including multilateral development banks and UN organizations. These mechanisms offer affected people and local communities a formal avenue of recourse and redress in response to decisions and actions at the international level. To hold the institutions accountable for their policy commitments to safeguard

¹⁰² Peter Lallas is Advisor and Conflict Resolution Commissioner at the Secretariat of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Previously he was Executive Secretary of the World Bank Inspection Panel, a Visiting Expert at the UN FAO, and Director of International Environmental Law at the U.S. EPA. He’s also spent time seeking to learn about these fields in other settings, as part of a life-long passion. Views expressed are in a personal capacity.

against harms to people and the environment, to ensure stakeholder engagement and gender equality, and to act with integrity and without corruption.

In this way, the indigenous Pygmy Peoples in DRC could bring their concerns directly to the Board of the World Bank, rightly claiming that they were left out of decisions on forest-law reforms affecting their lands, and that the value of the living forest was inestimably beyond cut logs. And rural communities in Cambodia, whose livelihoods depended on resin trees and healthy forests. And girls and women in a community in Uganda, who suffered sexual exploitation and abuse from an influx of road workers.

The importance of this work, at its full promise, is high. It recognizes rights for people and communities to raise concerns and seek redress for actions that affect them. It recognizes and provides an opportunity to learn from their deep knowledge and expertise. And it *empowers decision-makers* with a real chance to join forces with them, for better results. Connecting local communities in urgent work at international levels to reverse the dangerous trends of environmental loss.

But the work can be very tough. The threat of retaliation and reprisal for speaking out is real in this world, and there are so many tragic stories. Accountability systems strive to prevent this. But it continues to happen. And the systems need continuing attention to live up to their promise, including to ensure and maintain full independence in doing their job wherever the facts and story may lead.

More broadly, this type of accountability mechanism could also have high value at other organizations inter-connected to the immense effort needed to tackle global environmental threats. These include banks and other private

businesses, national funding agencies, foundations, and sovereign wealth funds. In support of the call at Stockholm, all sharing equitably in common efforts.

The second trend is an exciting evolution in the policies and norms governing the nuts-and-bolts work of environmental cooperation. Organizations like the Global Environment Facility (GEF), for example, have adopted ground-breaking new policies in the areas mentioned above, with a core emphasis on joining forces at all levels, equitably, in the fight for the global environment. The Policy on Gender Equality, for example, sets out concrete actions to achieve gender equality and responsiveness in GEF's work, both as a fundamental right and value *per se* and as a critical pre-requisite to protecting and safeguarding the global environment. In support of the call at Stockholm, to build on going forward.

These actions tell of a larger effort toward greater *inclusion* of individuals, non-governmental organizations, local communities, women, youth and many other "stakeholders", with equity, in the fight for people and nature together. At every level.

The signs all around us say that it's not enough. We cannot fool ourselves. But while the challenges are high, the 50th anniversary of the Stockholm Declaration is a good occasion to celebrate this work, and to re-commit to its high ideal to join forces in the common cause.





Local workers at the launch of UN Environment's Clean Seas campaign in Bali, Indonesia
© UNEP / Shawn Heinrichs

Climate Change & Hoodoos

Annette Magnusson¹⁰³

In Bryce Canyon National Park in the United States, irregular eroded spires of rock, called hoodoos, tower over an extraordinary landscape carved into the edge of a high plateau. Visitors are offered access via scenic overviews or hiking trails between the hoodoos at the bottom of a huge amphitheater. The image of the hoodoos springs to mind as I seek to connect the pieces of environmental justice, human rights, environmental rights and climate change.

My background is international law, climate change and international disputes, often with a bearing on energy. Each area is distinct and carries its own narrative, which is advocated by its own set of experts. They are all important and carry keys to unlock the future, but the more I listen the stronger I sense a disconnect.

Like climbers perched on top of different hoodoos, experts are all shouting out their own version of the view. All specialists in what the world

¹⁰³ Annette Magnusson is Co-Founder of Climate Change Counsel, a think-and-do-tank with a mission to mobilize the law and lawyers for climate action, and to advocate for amendment and reinterpretation of international investment law to align with and support global climate goals. Annette is the immediate past Secretary General of the Arbitration Institute of the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce.

look likes from where they are standing, they do not necessarily appreciate the perspectives from the surrounding hoodoos.

In this imaginary version of Bryce Canyon, on several hoodoos we see experts of public international law: international investment law, climate change law and human rights. There they are, waving their arms and raising their voices to attract attention to the necessity of sustainable investments, the Paris Agreement targets, the right to a healthy environment.

On another hoodoo we hear a clear voice proclaiming environmental justice as a priority in the energy transition. Achieving a just transition, removing inequities and addressing climate migration are urgent.

The energy expert on the next hoodoo tries to override the others with facts about the three billion people globally with no or not enough access to energy -- energy desperately needed to lift them out of poverty, or to enable their children to do their homework after sunset.

On yet another hoodoo, an expert decries the hierarchical relationship that humans assume vis-à-vis nature, points out that almost all environmental indicators are in free-fall, and demands that we give nature the respect and rights it deserves, if not for moral grounds than at least to better ensure humankind's survival.

They are all right, all the voices from the hoodoos. These are all dire issues that need to be addressed with a sense of urgency. And from where I am standing in this imaginary landscape, it becomes quite clear that we need to stop the shouting and start talking *with* - and not *at* - each other.

Revisiting the language of the Stockholm Declaration provides an energizing starting point. It demonstrates that we have come a

long way since 1972, when climate change was not an independent topic on the agenda. And the expansion of voices is a positive development, albeit challenging.

A new breed of international law has developed. Its household names include the Kyoto Protocol, Paris Agreement and Glasgow Climate Pact.

International human rights have made headway as a surge of international and domestic courts apply human rights law, including environmental harms as related to climate change.

The junction between international investment protections standards and States' international climate law obligations is soon likely to be examined by international arbitral tribunals as at least two cases under the European Energy Charter have been filed following government decisions to phase out fossil fuel. In these cases, fundamental conflicts between different hoodoo climbers' views are expected to be fully exposed.

The proliferation of the climate change perspective in policy, business and literally all areas of law give cause for optimism. For true success in the next fifty years, we now need to aim for convergence. Climb down, listen and accept that although the bottom of the canyon can be filled with a fluid darkness, navigating between the hoodoos it is the only way forward and that we must do it together.

Human Privilege
Peter Adams

Printed in Part II.A.2, *supra*.

Intergenerational Dialogue – the Key to Building a Future for Nature

*Vania Olmos Lau*¹⁰⁴

World Environment Day was established by the United Nations General Assembly on the first day of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972. Twenty years later, I was born on June 5th 1992, the same day World Environment Day was being celebrated at the famous Rio Summit.

I got curious about what was happening at the Summit on that day. I googled and I found a picture that caught my attention. A white wall with blue writing where the leaders of the world were making pledges for a better world. A commitment to make the best decisions to take care of Earth for the future of the babies, who like me, were being born that day.

It's been nearly thirty years since, and a lot has happened. We stopped the hole in the ozone layer, we built solid environmental institutions, we've recovered species on the brink of extinction. A beautiful success story that gives me strength when I am down is that of humpback whales. When my mom was in primary school her teacher told her that her children would not get to know whales because they would be extinct. Happily, I can say this was not the case. Thanks to the push of civil society, the will of governments and the compromise of the private sector, in 2021 I was able to see humpback whales happily jumping off the coast of Oaxaca.

Although stories like this set an example and warm the heart, we must acknowledge that

today it is nearly impossible for the youth of the world to find a clean river, friends are suffering from climate anxiety and fear knowing that defending nature could mean being assassinated, to mention just a few examples. I have no doubt that thanks to fifty years of efforts my generation's present is not as bad as it could be, but it is certainly not as good as it should be.

The youth movement is a sign of hope, strength, and resilience. Young people all over the world are investing their scarce resources and time to protect and restore the environment for their communities. If a generation that has been bombarded with news on the demise of our natural world can still see hope in the future, the older generations have the duty to pass along the tools and lessons learned that built the successes that make our current present better than what the scenarios said fifty years ago.

So as we move forward, we need to build on what has been done right and we need to be brave enough to recognize, speak about and discuss about what has been done wrong, down to the very small details – which often are the ones to make a difference. History tends to repeat itself and if we don't learn from it, we are cursed to go through the wrong path again.

I welcome all who come across these words to find someone with whom you can begin an intergenerational dialogue and start the conversation. Remember a dialogue is not a monologue, be sure to go in with open ears, open minds, and open hearts.

¹⁰⁴ Vania Olmos is a Mexican conservation biologist; MSc in Agroecology & Organic Agriculture. Vania has field experience with rural communities and on-the-ground nature conservation NGOs, and with international environmental organizations. She believes in the power of youth to create change and leads and collaborates with multiple youth networks at the global, regional and local levels.

D. Technological & Social Innovations

Future technological and social innovations will both offer new or improved solutions to environmental threats and create new environmental risks. It is unclear, of course, what those solutions or risks will be, or when they will be manifested. The essays below address some aspects of technological and social innovations. Other aspects are addressed in Part III.D.

Carbon-Based Technology

*Andrew Chang*¹⁰⁵

In 1882, when Thomas Edison built Pearl Street Station, the first centralized power plant in the world, he didn't know that burning fossil fuels to produce electricity would create the current climate crisis, but he did recognize that the excess heat produced as a by-product of electricity generation was a valuable resource. He captured and piped it to nearby manufacturing plants and buildings.

Today, innovators who are focused on decarbonizing everything from electricity production to manufacturing are likewise developing systems to turn waste—carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions—into resources for an emerging industry that's able to recycle captured CO₂ into our carbon-based economy. As the IPCC has made clear, a livable planet depends on our ability to decarbonize society by mid-century—and that means not just reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but also permanently removing emissions we've already released. The changing climate is already harming vulnerable communities.

Carbon Transformation

The element carbon is one of the key building blocks of our world. Combined with hydrogen, it forms hydrocarbons that are ingredients found in products from consumer goods to industrial commodities. The emerging carbon tech industry is developing new pathways to produce these essential goods without relying on fossil fuels. Instead, they are using electrochemical processes to recycle CO₂ into new chemicals, fertilizers and aviation fuel. Additionally, new technologies in synthetic biology are being developed to transform CO₂ into biomaterials, pharmaceuticals and food compounds. This will reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.

Carbon Removal

Scientists and entrepreneurs are also inventing ways to capture and permanently remove carbon dioxide, either from smokestacks or directly from the atmosphere. Some are developing systems that pull CO₂ into natural systems such as through a process known as enhanced weatherization - where minerals naturally trap CO₂ and permanently store it in more stable forms of bicarbonate and mineralized rock. Other companies are inventing new membrane technologies and sorbents (materials that can absorb or adsorb gases or liquids) that can bind to CO₂ from industrial flues. While today it may be uneconomical, these pathways are quickly becoming more efficient and economical.

As we transition from drilling underground for our carbon calories, I am hopeful that - like in

¹⁰⁵ Andrew Chang is a Managing Director at Activate.org, an entrepreneurial fellowship program that empowers scientists to reinvent the world by bringing their research to market.



Children planing a tree at Karura during World Environmental Day celebrations on 3rd June 2017
© UNEP / Josephat Kariuki

1882 when Thomas Edison utilized waste heat, the next generation of inventors will continue to develop ways to capture and convert our carbon emissions into useful products, or remove it from the atmosphere permanently. Our future depends on it.

Biotechnology, Intellectual Property Rights, and Human Rights

Leland Glenna¹⁰⁶

Reprinted above in Part II.C.2.

Extreme Event Attribution, Climate Change, and Human Rights

John Lee¹⁰⁷

The climate is changing and extreme weather events are becoming more common. As documented in the recent IPCC AR6 Working Group reports, impacts on vulnerable populations due to extreme weather events are increasing. These impacts, coupled with specific socio-political circumstances, could lead to a particular type of human rights abuse – those related to

¹⁰⁶ Leland Glenna is a Professor of Rural Sociology and Science, Technology & Society at the Pennsylvania State University. His teaching and research interests focus on the social, ethical, and environmental impacts of scientific and technological innovations in agriculture and food.

¹⁰⁷ John Lee is a meteorologist and an attorney focusing on environmental and international human rights issues. Currently he teaches climate change courses as an Adjunct Professor at Loyola University in Chicago.

anthropogenic (i.e., human induced) climate change. But how can we know that a triggering climate event for a human rights violation is anthropogenic in nature? The science of extreme event attribution (EEA) increasingly provides the answer. So, what is EEA?

EEA is an evolving scientific technique that uses both observational and modeling techniques to compare the likelihood that a weather event would have happened without human influences against the likelihood of the event happening with human influences. An EEA investigation generally begins with an analysis of some observed phenomena, a drought for example, and then compares the probability of such an event occurring in today's climate to its probability of occurrence in an earlier time when the concentration of greenhouse gasses were less. In theory, this type of analysis can provide both the probability of occurrence for the event and the probability of its observed magnitude.

In practice, however, historical observations often are not available for a sufficiently long period to enable a reliable statistical analysis. Historical analyses also are subject to other limitations that can affect the reliability of the results, such as the chosen boundaries of the study area, the number of observation stations chosen, and the homogeneity of the data.

Additionally, even if an observational study directly points to an anthropogenic component for a particular event, this is not conclusive. The event should be reproducible through numerical modeling techniques. Depending on the exact event under study, coupled atmosphere-ocean climate models, regional models, or models that incorporate specific atmospheric components can be used. Importantly, such models also are predictive in nature, identifying the regional return period for a specific event. In the human rights context, such predictive information could be very useful in identifying

potential regions of the globe where future human rights abuses might occur.

Thus, EEA provides a *necessary* condition for an anthropogenic climate change-induced human rights violation, but not a *sufficient* condition - the proper socio-political conditions also must be in place for the anthropogenic event to be a primary or peripheral trigger to the human rights abuse.

The 1972 Stockholm Conference set forth a collaborative agenda with science in the human rights context that continues today. EEA is a powerful tool that furthers this collaboration, providing a technique to solidify the basis for a human right to a healthy environment, supplying a diagnostic tool to understand the roots of a human rights violation, and offering a predictive method to help identify and prepare for potential future events. What EEA does is offer us the ability to understand the true effects of anthropogenic climate change in the spirit of the Stockholm Conference.

III. Reflections on the Future

Imagining the future is necessary not only because the legacy of the Stockholm Conference lives on, but also because humanity and the planet require renewed efforts to protect the environment, nature and rights. Part II above approaches thinking about the future through the eyes of 52 people involved in protecting human and environmental rights. The present Part III consists of our thoughts about the future, based on those essays, research, and our own perspectives and experiences. We don't claim any special wisdom, and we do not purport to cover all the developments likely to occur. Neither have we attempted to capture all the nuances in the essays; they should be read for their power and messages, and we cite them via footnotes in relevant passages below.

We hope our thoughts inspire you in your efforts to think about the future and thus to better prepare for it. Above all, we invite you to imagine future challenges to nature and to human and environmental rights and constructive ways of approaching them, particularly ones that you, as an agent of change, can participate in. We don't have time to delay.

A. Right to a Healthy Environment, Environmental Rights, Environmental Justice & Humans' Relationship with Nature

1. Right to a Healthy Environment (R2HE) & the Addition of Occupational Health and Safety to the International Labour Organization's Framework of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work

The UN General Assembly's (2022) and UN Human Rights Council's (2021) recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (R2HE) provide a significant challenge as well as an enormous opportunity. The universal recognition of R2HE transformed the pantheon of human rights, filling a gap that has existed since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the General Assembly in 1948.

The challenge is to make R2HE real and effective, which is also the opportunity. General Assembly recognition adds strength to R2HE. Through a normative cascade akin to a trophic cascade, we can use this right to develop ideas, plans, and actions in different contexts, countries, and societies to strengthen human rights, environmental rights and environmental protection efforts, including those undertaken to effectuate domestic constitutional and statutory environmental rights to a healthy environ-

ment. This union of international human rights law and international environmental law forms a mighty alliance that focuses on people who suffer the most and provides an approach that safeguards accountability for governments and businesses.¹⁰⁸

Efforts must be made to ensure that R2HE means people have clean air, safe and sufficient water, healthy and sustainably produced food, non-toxic environments where they can live, work, study and play, healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, and a safe climate. In addition, achieving R2HE requires that people have access to environmental information, public participation in environmental decision making and access to justice if R2HE is violated or threatened. Particularly as population increases or economic and social injustices grow, ensuring public access to resources such as seashores is likely to become a more pressing need.

As explained above, R2HE is an essential element of environmental justice. It offers a seamless approach to protecting the rights of future generations. And it provides a conceptual basis for the doctrine of *in dubio pro natura* and the precautionary principle. These realities and the importance of R2HE considered alone should stimulate analysis and work in these areas. At a minimum, the Human Rights Council and each of the 15 UN agencies that signed the 2021 declaration supporting universal recognition of R2HE should immediately place R2HE on their work programs. So also should other global intergovernmental organizations, relevant regional intergovernmental organizations, domestic and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs.), and charitable organizations; and businesses should commit to respecting R2HE. Work is needed to ensure R2HE is included in the post-2020

¹⁰⁸ This topic is addressed in the essay by David Boyd, The Transformative Potential of the Right to a Healthy Environment, in Part II.A.1.

Global Biodiversity Framework, the new plastic pollution treaty, the proposed pandemic prevention and preparedness treaty, and the draft UN treaty on transnational businesses and human rights. R2HE should be systematically included in the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review process, as well as future General Comments and Concluding Observations published by UN treaty bodies. People Those involved in elaborating the implications of climate change for human rights should also keep this R2HE very much in mind.

The nearly simultaneous addition in 2022 by the International Labour Organization of occupational health and safety (R2OHS) to its Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work is an element of the broader R2HE. This addition makes it clear that R2HE applies in the workplace and that environmental health and safety are as important as the other fundamental principles and rights in the Declaration; and it has the potential to harness the ILO's considerable processes and institutions to ensure it is effectuated. Coordinating actions to achieve R2HE and R2OHS would strengthen both efforts.¹⁰⁹

Duties generated by R2HE and R2OHS prescribe that human activities that pollute the environment, threaten human health, restrict access to environmental amenities or unsustainably use resources should be limited and mitigated. These duties are sure to have different levels of specificity. Some will be fairly broad in order to cover all countries and long

time periods.¹¹⁰ Others will be much more specific. Focusing on elaborating these duties should yield important benefits.

2. Rebalancing Humans' Relationship to Nature¹¹¹

The hierarchical and utilitarian relationship of humans to nature has caused the horrendous brew of environmental crises that faces humanity and nature (the subject of the essays in Part II.B, above). Powerful ethical reasons also exist for rebalancing the relationship between human and nature, particularly as we learn how similar other species are to humans. It is urgent that humans reset our relationship with nature, which means a shift away from systemic human supremacism to an ecocentric way of thinking.¹¹²

The basic truth of the Anthropocene is that humans are doing harm to the integrity and resilience of the planet with destructive forces that vastly outweigh the contributions of all the other species. Systemic human supremacism encourages overexploitation of natural resources, overconsumption, and violence against other species. At the same time, the blatant disregard for beings other than human ultimately undermines human rights. Non-humans have an intrinsic value separate from human agency, with the healthy whole being greater than the sum of its parts. To create a sustainable future, efforts must be undertaken to redefine the relationship between humans and nature.¹¹³ Education at all levels will be required.

109 This topic is addressed in the essay by Halshka Graczyk & Lacye Groening, *The Future World of Work: A Rights-Based Paradigm Shift for Occupational Safety and Health?*, in Part II.A.1.

110 This topic is addressed in the essay by James Nickel, *Duties Under the International Right to a Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment*, in Part II.A.3.

111 This topic is addressed in the poem by Susan Okie, *Once in Madagascar*, and the essay by Sara Svensson, *We Are One: Relationship of Humans and Nature*, both in Part II.A.2.

112 This topic is addressed in the essay by Bruce Byers, *Toward an Ecocentric Worldview and Rights for All Species*, in Part II.A.6.

113 These issues are addressed in Part II.A.2 in the essays by: Edith Brown Weiss, *Human Rights and the Environment in the*

3. Duties to Future Generations & Inter-generational Equity

Humans must engage in a robust intergenerational dialogue for the future of our youth. Acknowledging rights of future generations in relation to the human environment would be a start. While one cannot know their values in advance, we can identify certain requirements, such as diversity and quality of resources and access to them. These concepts need to be further developed and effectuated, including through the creation of appropriate institutions.¹¹⁴ The United Nations has recently undertaken steps to do this; these need to be continued and strengthened.

As explained in Part I.A, R2HE provides a seamless approach to protecting future generations.

We must expand our use of clean energy sources or future generations will suffer irreparably. We must also maintain long-term sustainability of the outer space environment, meaning conducting space activities to meet the needs of the present generation, while preserving outer space for future generations.¹¹⁵

Today's youth movement is a sign of hope, strength, and resilience. If a generation that has been bombarded with news of the demise of our natural world can still see hope in the future, the older generations have the duty to pass along the tools and lessons learned that built the successes that make our current present better than what was predicted fifty years ago.

4. Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous peoples rely on their natural environment for their identity, culture and lifestyles. They rely directly on the products of the forests, rivers, lakes and oceans for their food, fuel, medicine, and spiritual life. The rights of indigenous peoples around the world, however, are often already endangered and are likely to be increasingly pressured by the combined forces of population growth, efforts to improve standards of living based on economic growth, and already existing environmental threats. It is imperative that these rights be respected, protected and promoted. Indigenous peoples must be allowed to use and develop their resources as they choose, even if this does not match the preferences of surrounding non-indigenous populations. States must facilitate the participation of indigenous peoples in decisions that concern them. Development or other activities should not take place within the territories of indigenous peoples without their free, prior and informed consent.

Indigenous people are prominent stakeholders in protecting the planet. They enrich the human montage with their experience and knowledge in environmental stewardship. The world can learn from them the sustainable and ethical practices of land management, preservation of critical carbon sinks and biodiversity, conservation and restoration of natural resources. Ways must be found to alleviate poverty and fuel modern society that do not involve sacrificing the rights and interests of indigenous peoples, as well as those of other communities that are dependent on natu-

Anthropocene; Peter Adams, *Human Privilege*; Sara Svensson, *We Are One -- Relationship of Humans and Nature*; and Susan Okie, *Once in Madagascar*.

¹¹⁴ Kim Stanley Robinson explores various implications of such an approach in *The Ministry for the Future* (2020). Perhaps the most challenging idea in that book is that an institution with the mandate to protect the interests of future generations would necessarily be driven to engage in self-defense in the face of inaction to effectively deal with today's environmental crises.

¹¹⁵ This topic is addressed in the essay by Seth Grae & Sweta Chakraborty, *Energy and Future Generations*, in Part II.A.3.

ral resources for their well-being, and to learn from their experience and perspective.¹¹⁶

5. Environmental Justice & Environmental Human Rights Defenders

Serious issues and injustice appear throughout today's world, both within countries and among countries. On average, four environmental human rights defenders (EHDRs) are murdered every week around the globe. Governments should implement appropriate legal and institutional measures to ensure that EHDRs are not harassed by governments or businesses and are protected when plausible threats to them arise. Harassment of EHRD should be actively investigated and prosecuted.¹¹⁷

Environmental policy promulgated by States and international organizations must recognize the social and human impacts of both environmental degradation and actions to protect the environment. States must fulfill their international legal obligations in a way that promotes all aspects of sustainable development for all climate migrants.

No individuals or communities, especially marginalized ones, should suffer environmental injustice. Current political, economic and social power dynamics unfortunately assure that threats to Environmental Justice (EJ) will continue to arise. EJ requires that: no group or community (particularly disadvantaged or vulnerable ones) bear a disproportionate burden of environmental harm; all have equal access to environmental amenities such as clean drinking water, sanitation and parks; all have equal and effective active access to decision making; and the right to a clean, healthy and sustain-

able environment (R2HE) be realized. R2HE is the (often unspoken) basis of EJ: without it, there can be no justice. We are at a crossroads: concerted efforts are needed around the world to achieve EJ, though the details of the threats to EJ and the appropriate steps needed to achieve it often vary by society.¹¹⁸

Issues such as "climate justice" and "loss and damage" also deserve close attention, though they do not strictly speaking involve human or environmental rights. The preference of developed countries to write off the relevance of past pollution (and even the ongoing effects of past pollution) is clear, but it leaves justice in the dust.

6. Environmental Rights and Rights of Nature

It is essential that humans' relationship to nature be rebalanced. One approach is to recognize that nature, or elements of nature, have rights. These are not human rights, because nature is not human, and they may need to be recognized by human action, e.g., legislation to allow standing to the Whanganui River in New Zealand or to prevent cruelty to animals. Similarly, their expression may necessitate human involvement, e.g., the four-person commission created to protect the interests of the Whanganui River. It is imperative that work be done to explore mechanisms for recognizing and protecting rights of nature.¹¹⁹

Myriad questions will be relevant to those efforts, including: if nature or components of nature are to have rights, what is the source and substance of those rights?; how can those rights be conceptualized, articulated, and im-

116 This topic is addressed in the essay by S. James Anaya, Indigenous Peoples: Contributing to Protecting the Earth and Its Rich Human Mosaic, in Part II.A.4.

117 See generally John H. Knox, Environmental Human Rights Defenders: A global crisis (Universal Rights Group 2017).

118 This topic is addressed in the essay by Samia Shell, Crossroads for Justice and the Environment, in Part II.A.5.

119 This topic is addressed in the essay by Christina Voigt, Rights of Nature, in Part II.B.6.



Tribute to Women Human Rights and Environmental Defenders at UNEA 3. Nairobi, Kenya. 2017
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plemented?; and how do they relate to human rights? If natural elements are seen as subjects of rights - and no longer as legal objects - the integrity and diversity of nature could be conserved in more effective ways. It would also enable the defense of nature and ecosystems in court – not only for the benefit of people, but for the sake of nature itself.

Nature-based solutions that are also science-based and community-based offer important avenues for protecting human rights and nature, including biodiversity.¹²⁰ Rewilding, which emerged conceptually twenty years ago

to help reverse the trend of ecosystem degradation and restore nature to its essential state and allow biodiversity to re-flourish, presents such an opportunity.¹²¹ Yet obtaining investment to support rewilding currently depends on achieving economic return – an unsustainable situation given the failure of the free market system to take account of externalities and the tragedy of the commons. In the future, the valuation of returns needs to evolve in order to incorporate the rights and welfare of all beings on the planet. Recognizing the rights of nature could be a start.

¹²⁰ Nature-based solutions are addressed in essays by Elisa Morgera, *Nature-Based Solutions*, and Terry Young, *Nature, Science and Community-Based Solutions*, and in a song by Åsa Norrman, all in Part II.C.7.

¹²¹ Rewilding is addressed in an essay by Charles di Leva, *Rewilding: True Test of Sustainability?* in Part II.C.7.

B. Current Environmental Crises

Specific environmental threats are likely to continue and even worsen unless urgent action is taken, including: antimicrobial resistance; biodiversity and species loss; climate change; deforestation; food insecurity; freshwater scarcity; ignoring science; misinformation and disinformation; pollution and toxification of the planet; outer space debris; and overfishing and plasticization in the ocean. And of course there are other threats that we don't know about yet. As the UN World Development Report states, "Humans have always had power to inflict much harm on each other and on nature, but only in the Anthropocene have they reached the potential to kill much of the global population and destroy the potential of future societies." Even the known threats can cause debilitating psychological pressures and can be paralyzing. Research and counseling services are needed to deal with this. Effective, collective action needs to be taken urgently to counter existing threats, as well as to identify, monitor and combat new threats as they emerge.

Nature is forever dynamic. The forces of nature are constantly rearranging the details of the biosphere. Our understanding of nature and environmental governance needs to be enriched. It is critical that we continually monitor human health and the environment, curb misinformation and disinformation, and keep solving our unrelenting ecological conundrum on the basis of science, public participation, and environmental education at all levels.

Comments on some current and impending problems appear below in alphabetical order.

1. Antimicrobial Resistance

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is the ability of microorganisms to persist or grow in the presence of drugs designed to inhibit or kill them. It occurs when microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites, change over time so that they no longer respond to medicines, making infections harder to treat and increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death. AMR threatens the effective prevention and treatment of an ever-increasing range of infections and is a major global threat of increasing concern to human and animal health. It also has implications for both food safety and food security and the economic well-being of millions of farming households.¹²² An estimated 5 million deaths per year are attributable to AMR.¹²³ Effective, collective action is urgently needed.

2. Biodiversity & Species Loss – Fauna, Flora & Fungi

The Earth's biodiversity is on the decline at an alarming rate as a result of human activities such as damaging or destroying ecosystems and polluting the biosphere. Both the existence of species and the number of organisms are in danger.¹²⁴ The full enjoyment of human rights, including the rights to life, health, food and water, depends on the services provided by ecosystems. It is estimated that nearly one mil

¹²² Codex Alimentarius, at <https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/thematic-areas/antimicrobial-resistance/en/>.

¹²³ Antimicrobial Resistance Collaborators (Christopher JL Murray et al.), Global burden of bacterial antimicrobial resistance in 2019: a systematic analysis, 399 *The Lancet* (Issue 10325), pp. 629 (Feb. 12, 2022) (concluding that 4.95 million deaths occurred in 2019 from AMR).

¹²⁴ See, e.g., Sarah Kaplan, Sweeping study of U.S. trees finds many near extinction, *Wash. Post*, Aug. 24, 2022, at A3; Mary Jane Angelo & Megan Lancaster, The Insect Apocalypse: Legal solutions for Protecting Life on Earth, 49 *Ecology L.Q.* 1 (2022); .

lion species risk becoming extinct within the next decade,¹²⁵ including fauna, flora and fungi. The number of birds in North America has decreased by 29% (about 3 billion birds) since 1970.¹²⁶ We should restore ecological connectivity and reduce emissions to reverse the downward trends of biodiversity and species loss.¹²⁷ This includes protecting and restoring wetlands of all types.

3. Climate Change & Geoengineering

Immediate action to mitigate and adapt to climate change is needed. One aspect relates to changing ranges of disease vectors; already viruses appear to be on the increase.¹²⁸ Another aspect concerns adapting to changes in habitable ranges for flora, fauna and fungi, including with respect to the location and preservation of protected areas relating to them. Yet another aspect relates to sea level rise; measures to protect population centers and discourage settlement in low coastal areas should be put in place.

International trade law may present barriers to some measures designed to combat climate change. Border tax adjustments and export subsidies designed to even the playing field for domestic producers for the higher costs they bear as a result of climate change-related regulation may run afoul of trade disciplines

such as those in the World Trade Organization's General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).¹²⁹ Adjusting import or export rules to account for embodied carbon (i.e., the amount of carbon emitted into the atmosphere during the life cycle of a good or service) may encounter similar issues. If either is the case, the trade rules should be reformed.

Heat presents another set of concerns. Expanding areas of extreme heat and rising sea levels will reduce the inland areas where people can survive. Children are especially at risk from excessive heat. Even in the most optimistic scenario, 1 billion people will be living in areas of extreme heat by 2072. Recent research indicates that humans are more susceptible to heat than earlier thought.¹³⁰ Low-cost cooling stations, air conditioners and refrigeration systems are needed for everyday usage and heat emergencies; these should all be solar-powered, and governments should incentivize technological development in this regard if necessary. The advisability of developing international energy-efficiency standards for air conditioners is self-evident, as air conditioners will be in increasingly needed demand and will create a huge demand for electric energy. Non-human animals, plants and fungi are also susceptible to extreme heat. Efforts such as studies of heat-resistant coral¹³¹ should be increased. Governments need to prepare heat-emergen-

¹²⁵ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/05/1037941>

¹²⁶ Kenneth V. Rosenberg, et al., *Decline of the North American Avifauna*, *Science*, Sept. 2019.

¹²⁷ John Knox addresses these issues in his essay *Biodiversity and Human Rights*, in Part II.B.1.

¹²⁸ See, e.g., Mark Johnson, *A Summer of Viruses Rings Alarm on Climate*, *Wash. Post*, Setp. 3, 2022, at A1.

¹²⁹ Commentators differ on the WTO-consistency of climate change-based border adjustment taxes. Compare Edith Brown Weiss, *Integrating Environment and Trade*, 19 *J. of Env't L.* 367 (2016) with James Bacchus, *Legal Issues with the European Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism* (CATO Institute, Briefing Paper No. 125 9 August, 2021) and Daniel Magraw & Radhika Venkataraman, *Virtual Water, Embodied Carbon and Trade Law: Conflict or Convergence?*, 10 *Trade L. & Devel.* 270 (2019). James Bacchus, former C\President of the WTO Appellate Body, argues that WTO Member States should issue a formal waiver for climate change-related measures. See James Bacchus, *Special Report: The Case for a WTO Climate Waiver* (CIGI 2017).

¹³⁰ Carolyn Gramling, *How much Heat can we handle?*, *Science News*, Aug. 27, 2022, at 6.

¹³¹ See Reef Knots, *The Economist*, June 4, 2022, at 70.

cy plans, as well as consider migration realities relating to heat stress.¹³² Treating heat waves like other natural disasters, perhaps by naming and rating them, is overdue.¹³³

The likelihood that wind will reduce in the coming decades, as predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and other sources,¹³⁴ has implications for the generation of clean wind power that should be taken into account in planning. The recent temporary cessation of wind in the North Sea may be a harbinger of that.

The extraordinarily rapid temperature rise in the Arctic presents many environmental and human rights challenges. Besides the onslaught on the human rights to life, culture, and property of indigenous peoples in the Arctic region, increases in fishing, oil and gas exploitation and transportation will present major environmental challenges. The fact that most of the water flowing into the Arctic Ocean comes from Russia, where industrial and agricultural activity can be expected to increase because of warming caused by climate change, reminds us of the importance of robust domestic environmental protection regimes. Tree lines will continue to move upward and northward, affecting lifestyles and ecosystems.¹³⁵

Geoengineering, i.e., the deliberate large-scale manipulation of an environmental process that affects Earth's climate, is already being discussed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the U.S. National Academies of Sciences, academics and others as being necessary, at least in the short-term to com-

pensate for shortcomings in mitigating climate change. Geoengineering discussions currently are dominated by two main technological approaches -- carbon-dioxide removal and storage (CCS) and solar radiation modification (SRM). The possibility that geoengineering will be used to combat climate change raises a host of possible risks, in part because many geoengineering proposals do not address the causes of climate change, but at best mask symptoms as emissions continue.

The most immediate risk of geoengineering is that it provides an alibi for industries and governments to avoid reducing carbon emissions now. Timing is critical to mitigating climate change because of the long time that greenhouse gases persist in the atmosphere. Carbon capture and storage currently is very expensive at scale, and a major use of captured storage at present -- i.e., to inject into wells to increase oil and gas production -- perpetuates the use of carbon fuel. Thus CCS is unlikely to have much of a positive impact on climate change anytime soon.

SRM does not remedy many of the harms caused by climate change (e.g., ocean acidification) and in the form of injecting aerosols into the atmosphere to reflect sunlight back into space is extremely risky, most likely adversely affecting agriculture (and thus food security) and increasing global inequity. SRM in the form of covering the surface of the Arctic Ocean and other bodies of water with a reflective substance is also predicted to have undesirable environmental effects.

132 This topic is addressed in the essay by Siobhán McNerney-Lankford & Duygu Çiçek, *Reflections on Climate Migration*, in Part II.B.2.

133 This topic is addressed in the essay by Walter Weiss & Susan Okie, *Extreme Heat, Health, and Global Warming*, in Part II.B.2.

134 See, e.g., Jim Robbins, *Gone with the Winds: What Happens if There Is a "Global Terrestrial Stilling"*, *Yale Environment 360* (2022), at <https://e360.yale.edu/features/global-stilling-is-climate-change-slows-the-worlds-wind>.

135 See, e.g., Ben Rawlence, *The Treeline: The Last Forest and the Future of Life on Earth* (2022).



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Geoengineering thus must be approached extremely carefully: it is a dangerous gamble that risks wasting the short time that we still have to address the root causes of climate change. While engaging in appropriate research over the long-term, we should concentrate our resources on scaling up the many real, social and ecologically sustainable alternatives that already exist.¹³⁶

In these and other respects, a rights-based approach should be taken to climate change and other environmental problems. The hard-fought inclusion of human rights in the Preamble to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change provides a clear basis for talking this approach.

4. Deforestation

Forests are essential to the Earth's hydrologic cycle, for Earth's soils and biological diversity, and in the planet's biogeochemical cycles for carbon and nitrogen. Deforestation continues at a rate of 12.9 million hectares per year. For almost every environmental threat, forests are part of the answer. While persistent degradation of dryland ecosystems affects 30% of the Earth, only 50 countries have ratified the UN Convention to combat desertification. Governments should impose a moratorium on all forest exploitation, until they can enact stewardship laws. The many current tree-planting schemes have significant potential; but depending on how they are operated they also

¹³⁶ This topic is addressed in the essay by Neth Daño & Silvia Ribeiro, Geoengineering, a Tool of Climate Action Delay, in Part II.B.2.

carry environmental risks and are too-often not monitored carefully.¹³⁷ The pressure to deforest should be resisted, as should the pressure to convert wetlands.

5. Food Insecurity & Agriculture

Depending on how it is managed, agriculture can benefit or degrade the environment, contribute to or decrease inequality, and improve or diminish food security. The combination of climate change, COVID-19 and conflict in Ukraine has demonstrated the unsustainability of today's food system. Supply chains need to be strengthened. Agricultural productivity on existing land needs to be maintained or even increased (in terms of quantity and nutritional quality) if the world's growing population is to be fed. Even assuming that is achieved, there will be growing pressure to clear more land, resulting in deforestation, reduced biodiversity and species density, and decreased ecosystem resilience.

Concrete steps should include focusing on improving soil fertility and sequestering carbon through more sustainable climate-smart agriculture practices (e.g., no-till production), employing water-saving technologies, expanding the use of precision agriculture techniques so there is no nutrient wastage, improving animal feeding systems, and subsidizing solar-powered storage and equipment in many countries.

The crops initially produced using genetic engineering (GE) failed to deliver on promises to reduce global hunger. The introduction and acceptance of the next generation of GE crops in developing countries, where they could have the most impact, will likely be too slow to address hunger and environmental destruction.

Newer biotechnological techniques have the potential to change agriculture with an opportunity to address food insecurity and environmental degradation resulting from climate change and limited resources.

Long-term commitments to crop breeding, combining accelerated conventional breeding and gene editing advances, for drought-tolerant, disease-resistant, salt-resistant, and heat-stress-resistant crops with enhanced nutrient contents, particularly by the public sector, should be the norm. It is critical that small-holder farmers not be left out of this process, but rather be part of the solution. Inequities in food distribution and availability must be addressed, as well.

Platforms and Early Warning Systems regarding the impact of weather on food security for communication and information sharing, such as conflict resolution and management, extreme weather forecasts and agricultural advisories, should be established if they do not already exist. Advisory services should be institutionalized whenever possible and potentially linked to location-based insurance coverage.

To improve the global food system, there should be expanded support for accounting of value chains and food systems so that the true value of producing and delivering food in different contexts is understood. This will encourage more environmentally sound, health-enhancing investments. In addition, the remaining quality land in agricultural production must be protected from being converted to urban housing development or other non-agriculture use. Given the need for food, the use of biofuels should cease. The world should not be burning food. Finally, world leaders should consider a model of societal development not inherently

¹³⁷ This topic is addressed in the essay by Nicholas A. Robinson, *Earth's forests*, in Part II.B.3.

driven by continued population growth.¹³⁸

Agriculture and food security depend on freshwater, discussed immediately below.

6. Freshwater Scarcity

Freshwater is unevenly distributed across time and space, with differences in quality. Unlike land, which people can fence off, water moves around. Climate change is increasing the unpredictability of water availability by changing the hydrological cycle, which determines that water flows, seeps, and evaporates. Water also absorbs wastes and pollutants and has strong cultural and social values.

Freshwater availability and food security will inevitably be put under combined stress by climate change, demographic growth and demands for energy, as well as by conflict. Governments should actively assess the availability and demand for water in different sectors, which requires knowledge in the hydrological cycle and its associated ecosystems. Monitoring, including using environmental and human rights impact assessment, the effects of climate change and other environmental stresses is also essential.

Governments should provide policy incentives for people to save and conserve water. Cautious reform in water price should be conducted to reflect the true value of water. Subsidies for low-value, water-intensive crops should be reduced or realigned. Incentives should be provided to encourage the breeding of water-saving and drought-resistant crop varieties. Smart irrigation schedules and efficient irrigation

technologies should be promoted and subsidized for poor farmers.

Because the water often is unpriced and typically does not include externalities when there is a price, countries should consider controlling the export of goods and services based on the amount they “contain” of virtual water, i.e., the amount of water that is used throughout the portions of the life cycle of that good or service that occur in a country before export but is not physically present in the good or service. Depleting groundwater at no cost in Arizona to grow alfalfa for export to feed cattle in Saudi Arabia, which bans growing forage in order to protect its own groundwater, is an example: the exported alfalfa “contains” virtual water.

Demands will grow for seawater desalination. Research will probably reduce the cost and energy-intensity of desalination techniques, and perhaps the damage to marine life done by intake and by discharging brine (though accomplishing the latter may entail significant cost).¹³⁹

7. Ignoring Science

Nature is forever dynamic. The forces of nature are constantly rearranging the details of the biosphere. Our understanding of nature and environmental governance needs to be enriched. For example, studies have been narrowly focused on fauna and flora. Seldom do we think about fungi, for example; yet we are unthinkable without them. This needs to be rectified, and the results of such research included in domestic and international policy and law. It is estimated that among two to three million species of fungi, only a mere 8% of them have

¹³⁸ This topic is addressed in the essay by Jan W. Low, Food Production in the Face of Increasingly Unpredictable Environmental Stress, in Part II.B.4.

¹³⁹ This topic is addressed in the essay by Attila M. Tanzi, Human Rights and Freshwater, in Part II.B.5.

been described. Of these, only 358 have had their conservation priority assessed on the Red List of Threatened Species, constituting a meager 0.2% of our global conservation priorities.¹⁴⁰

8. Misinformation & Disinformation

Governments should regulate information and communication technology (ICT) in ways that protect the rights to participate in decision making, free expression, freedom of opinion and privacy – each of which is now under direct assault by a combination of the surveillance economy and the advertising-driven business model of ICT companies, government weakness in regulating, and (conversely) over-control by governments of access to the Internet or its equivalent and use of various ICT. A related problem is that misinformation and disinformation spread via ICT (including by governments) impedes proper policy formation and implementation, while at the same time hampering civil society's ability to fulfil the roles necessary to protect the environment and human and environmental rights.

9. Oceans -- Overfishing

Oceans will continue to be subject to numerous environmental insults from climate change and other threats. Overfishing – including illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) -- will likely continue unless the international legal regime is strengthened to (1) require full transparency regarding fishing vessels and full-chain traceability for seafood, and (2) prohibit subsidizing the fisheries industry, which distorts trade as well as causing environmental harm.¹⁴¹

10. Outer Space Debris

Space debris consists of defunct human-made objects in space that no longer serve a useful function. Space debris includes whole or parts of derelict spacecraft, mission-related artifacts, frozen coolants expelled from nuclear-powered spacecraft, unburned particles of solid fuel, flakes of paint, and fragments from the collision of larger space debris. As of 2021, there were at least 125,000,000 pieces of debris smaller than 1 cm (0.4 inches), 1,000,000 pieces between 1 – 10 cm (0.4 – 3.9 inches), and 35,000 pieces larger than 10 cm orbiting Earth. Some space debris is deliberately created, as by a 2007 anti-satellite weapons test, which occurred at an altitude of 535 miles (865 kilometers) and produced a debris field of some 3,000 objects that will linger in space for decades.

Although outer space is infinite, the orbit around the Earth is a finite resource. Space debris presents a serious hazard to spacecraft. Even the smallest debris can sandblast optical telescopes and solar panels. Larger debris can destroy spacecraft and, for example, have caused the International Space Station to change its altitude several times.

Space debris above a certain size is tracked, and some countries have taken mitigation measures to reduce the likelihood that space debris will be created. The International Telecommunications Union now requires that any satellite include means of moving itself out of its orbit, and satellites are increasingly being moved to so-called graveyard orbits. Data are insufficient to determine the effectiveness of these efforts or the success of voluntary efforts involving the International Standards Organization and other entities.

¹⁴⁰ This topic is addressed in the essay by Merlin Sheldrake, *The Hidden World of Fungi Is Essential to Life on Earth*, in Part II.B.1.

¹⁴¹ This topic is addressed in the essay by Alicia Cate, *Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing in Our Oceans*, in Part II.B.8.



Monitoring programs are essential for understanding the quality and quantity of fresh water © IISD

The incidence of space debris fragments being created by the collision of larger pieces of space debris is expected to increase via debris cascade, with the result that portions of Earth orbit are expected to become unusable to orbiting spacecraft. Estimates of when this will occur vary. A respected study reported widespread agreement that two bands of LEO space—900 to 1,000 km (620 miles) and 1,500 km (930 miles)—are already past critical density.

There is no international treaty governing space debris, including its minimization. Because of the importance of maintaining orbital space around Earth, this gap should be remedied.

More generally, avoiding conflict in outer space (and on Earth) will occur through strengthen-

ing mutual understanding, increasing transparency, and having due regard for the interests of others. Measures regarding the safety and stability of outer space operations need to be established.¹⁴²

11. Pollution & Toxification of the Planet, including by Plastic

Plastic is now ubiquitous in the environment. It has grown so pervasive that the presence of plastics in soils is considered a defining marker of the Anthropocene epoch. The production facilities of plastics are often concentrated in vulnerable communities. Incineration of plastic waste disproportionately harms marginalized communities. The escape of plastics into the global environment threatens water supplies, fisheries, agricultural productivity, and

¹⁴² Outer space issues are addressed in the essay by Steve Mirmina, *Intergenerational Equity in Outer Space*, in Part II.A.3. Regarding conflict, see also the essays in Part II.C.5 by: Jan Eliasson & Jannie Lilja, *Focus on Conflict*; Carl Bruch, *Environmental Peacebuilding*; and Dinah Bear, *The Future of Borders*.

livelihoods across large parts of the world, with the most acute impacts in the Global South. Plastics (including microplastics) and other forms of land-based pollution will continue to plague the ocean and its inhabitants unless strong preventive measures are instituted.

Microplastics are revealed in the placentas of unborn babies,¹⁴³ as well as in many liquids, foods, ocean water and organisms, and soils. The most contaminated food in the United States is human breast milk, though breastfeeding is nevertheless advisable. Babies around the world are born 'pre-polluted'¹⁴⁴ as a result of exposure to toxic chemicals from pesticides to consumption of foods such as mercury-laden tuna and toxin-accumulated crops during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Bioaccumulation of persistent organic pollutants is rampant and can be expected to increase unless stronger measures are taken.¹⁴⁵

Plastics must be controlled at their source and strong limits placed on single-use plastics; attempting to deal with the problem by preventing littering or cleaning up will not suffice. The negotiations of a plastics convention that began in 2022 should focus on the full range of issues raised by plastics, including the toxicity and other environmental implications of chemicals used to produce chemicals.

As noted above, the inclusion by the ILO of Occupational Safety and Health as a Fundamental Principle and Right at Work has enormous possibilities for improving global chemicals management. This could not only

protect workers but could also improve the health and safety of families and communities worldwide, as well the promotion of a healthy environment – and a healthy planet – for generations to come.

C. Cross-Cutting issues

1. Art, Entertainment & Sports

Young people are at risk of becoming increasingly separated from the natural world. The power of art and entertainment should be engaged to counter this, and to affirmatively build agency regarding the environment and human rights, especially under the context of the emergence of the metaverse, where the boundary of reality and fantasy are blurred. Where scientific findings, legislative structures, and politics will have fallen short, arts and entertainment have the cultural reach and the “soft power” necessary to engage citizens and communities with the transition to a net zero-carbon, and a sustainable future.¹⁴⁶

Sports also provide an avenue for self-expression; but sports, sporting venues, and sport events can affect the environment, and vice versa. Heightened air or water pollution levels, extreme weather events or extreme heat are making sports less accessible. Actions should be taken to curtail sports that utilize high amounts of petrol, change sports that have high environmental impacts, and improve the treatment of animals involved in sports.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/dec/22/microplastics-revealed-in-placentas-unborn-babies>

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6663094/>

¹⁴⁵ This topic is addressed in the essay by Carroll Muffett & David Azoulay, Plastics and Human Rights: The Landscape and the Road Ahead, in Part II.B.10.

¹⁴⁶ Art and entertainment are addressed in the essay by Leila Chennoufi & Becca Cecil-Wright, Human Rights, Environmental Justice and Culture: The Role of Arts and Entertainment in Creating a Stable and Sustainable Future, in Part II.C.1.

¹⁴⁷ Issues involving sports are addressed in the essay by Kendra Magraw, Sports, the Environment and Rights, in Part II.C.1.

2. Biotechnology

Developments in biotechnology, including more accurate gene editing, synthetic biology and increased knowledge about proteomics, epigenomics, transcriptomics, and metabolomics will continue to offer opportunities relating to protecting the environment and health.¹⁴⁸ They will also require careful regulation based on the characteristics of the new organism.¹⁴⁹ Recent use of artificial intelligence (AI) to predict the structure of more than 200 million proteins exemplifies development that will facilitate research and application.¹⁵⁰ Future AI work regarding protein interaction and RNA structure is expected.

Today's international trade regime focus on protecting the holders of intellectual property against use by others. This has it backwards. Trade rules should be reformed to prioritize human rights such as the rights to food, health, medicine.

Robust involvement of the public in the development and implementation of regulatory regimes is crucial.¹⁵¹

3. Business & Trade

Combined with the power inequities described above (Part III.A.7), the greed at the core of capitalism constitutes a formidable obstacle to successfully dealing with today's

environmental crises, to respecting, protecting and promoting human and environmental rights, and to rebalancing humans' relation to nature. Reforming capitalism is beyond the remit of this report, but the situation cannot be ignored, particularly when designing and implementing measures to respect rights and protect the environment.¹⁵²

Prohibiting subsidies—in a format similar to the World Trade Organization (WTO)—and reforming the investor-State dispute settlement (ISDS) can promote sustainability as governments continue to subsidize transnational oil companies, and energy firms constantly fight governments' environmental standards using Investor-State Dispute Settlement.¹⁵³

Wildlife trafficking disrupts local ecosystems, causes species endangerment, and disease transmission. The global poaching crisis should be addressed through regulations and supervision.

Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategies should be enhanced to include all three scopes and scrutinized carefully to ensure accuracy in reporting and avoid greenwashing.¹⁵⁴ Although we hesitate to enter into the political arena, the current crisis mandates a limited foray: businesses should cease altogether making contributions to politicians who

¹⁴⁸ This topic is addressed in the essay by Carol Mallory-Smith, Genetic Engineering and Food, in Part II.B.4.

¹⁴⁹ See Fred Gould et al., Toward product-based regulation of crops: Current process-based approaches to regulation are no longer fit for purpose, 377 *Science* 1051-53 (1 Sept. 2022), at <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abo3034#con1>.

¹⁵⁰ Tina Hesman Saey, Protein Origami, *Science news*, Sept. 24, 2022, at 16.

¹⁵¹ This topic is addressed in the essay by Leland Glenna, Biotechnology, Intellectual Property Rights, and Human Rights, in Part II.C.2.

¹⁵² This topic is addressed in the essay by a. Nina Gardner, No More Time for Business as Usual, in Part II.C.3.

¹⁵³ This set of issues is addressed in the essay by Sergio Puig, Investment and Trade, in Part II.C.3.

¹⁵⁴ See, e.g., *The Economist*, July 23rd, 2022, at 9 & 44ff. 4

hinder action to counter climate change and other environmental threats.¹⁵⁵ Similarly, because of the critical role civil society plays regarding protecting rights and the environment in democracies, businesses should cease contributing to politicians who threaten democracy. Businesses have contributed to politicians in the United States who deny the legitimacy of the 2020 presidential election, many of whom also voted against the 2022 legislation to combat climate change.¹⁵⁶ A business that does this forfeits its social license, and consumers and other businesses should react.

4. Education

Effective environmental education will prepare individuals and communities with the necessary awareness, knowledge and skillsets to undertake constructive environmental protection commitments. Governments should encourage environmental education within the school system, and institutions should make efforts to educate the public through different channels. This is explored more thoroughly in a separate section of this publication.

5. Environmental Disasters

According to the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), disasters killed 1.19 million people between 1980 and 1999. This number reached 1.23 million in 2000-2018. The global annual loss from disasters is expected to be US\$415 billion by 2030. Disasters are an indicator of developmental and environmental failures. The world needs leadership

in pursuit and defense of preventative actions. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies, strategies, and programs should target inequality and exclusion. DRR should be guided by a human rights-based approach, since disasters are consequences of natural hazards interacting with vulnerable socio-environmental conditions.¹⁵⁷

As pointed out in Part III.B.3, heat waves should be treated as are other natural disasters.

6. Environmental Peacebuilding & Conflict

The physical harm caused by conflict typically involves serious harm to the environment and human rights and environmental rights. Moreover, conflict is an inequity multiplier, so it easily leads to environmental injustice.

The current rise of nationalism and ethnic tensions, combined with the de-liberalization and questioning of the global institutional structure created after World War II and internal and external migratory pressures from environmental stresses, suggest that domestic and international conflicts will increase, with untold effects on human health and the environment. Efforts to institutionalize environmental peacebuilding are necessary. Environmental peacebuilding informs conflict prevention, mitigation, resolution, and recovery. The grim possibility of future water wars and contestation over other scarce natural resources calls for governments and institutions to better understand structural violence around natural resources and address the underlying causes of

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Bre Badham, Andre Tartar & Hayley Warren, American Politicians Who Vote Against Climate Get More Corporate Cash, Bloomberg US Edition, October 23, 2020.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Bill Allison, Election Deniers Got Nearly \$2 Million in May from Corporate PACs, Bloomberg US Edition, July 7, 2022, at <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-07-07/corporate-pacs-gave-big-to-election-deniers-in-may-study-shows>.

¹⁵⁷ This topic is addressed in the essay by Hari Srinivas, A Rights-Based Approach to Disaster Risk Reduction, in Part II.C.4.



Through education children in Watamu, Kenya, help releasing sea turtles into the ocean. 2017
© UNEP / Cyril Villemain

conflicts through environmental peacebuilding. The world needs leadership in pursuit and defense of preventive action.¹⁵⁸

On a related matter, border walls lead to human rights violations and environmental harm. Unfortunately, border walls are becoming much more common around the world, a growing problem that needs to be confronted. The international community should work together more to build peace, not walls against each other.¹⁵⁹

7. Information & Communication Technology

Information and communication technologies (ICT) and the metaverse can create opportunities for civil society interaction and the possibility of engaging art and entertainment in pursuit of a healthy environment. They also raise the possibility of serious risks to human rights and environmental protection. ICT on the one hand may support information and knowledge sharing through instantaneous and cross-border connections, enabling robust transnation

¹⁵⁸ This topic is addressed in the essay by Carl Bruch, Environmental Peacebuilding, and Jan Eliasson & Jannie Lilja, Focus on Conflict, both in Part II.C.5.

¹⁵⁹ This topic is addressed in the essay by Dinah Bear, The Future of Borders, in Part II.C.5.

al activism. However, ICT can also allow countries to manipulate access to the Internet or its equivalent, impose other rights-reducing controls, and spread information through top-down means, thus violating a vast range of human and environmental rights and interfering with environmental advocacy.¹⁶⁰

The right to freedom of opinion must be protected because the dominant advertising-driven business model of tech giants determines the way they feed materials to their customers, which unduly manipulates opinions. The surveillance economy has deeply undercut our right to privacy, which also must be remedied. Misinformation and disinformation also pose threats that must be countered.

Government restrictions on civil society's ability to gather information, communicate and participate can be expected to increase, at least in some countries. That tendency will be enabled by technology such as face-recognition. This must be countered if rights and the environment – indeed the future of humanity – are to be protected.

In addition to ensuring that basic rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly are respected, new rights of connectivity and net neutrality should be institutionalized.

8. International Law

The international legal system will face major challenges over the next 50 years, even putting aside the weaknesses revealed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. All aspects of the international legal system should give full effect to the hu-

man right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (as recognized by the UN General Assembly) and explore its potential roles with respect to environmental justice, intergenerational equity and the precautionary principle, as described in Part III.A above. Environmental rights should be explored and, in any event, all elements of the international legal system should participate as appropriate in rebalancing humans' relation to nature.

States and intergovernmental organizations should embrace solutions to existing and new challenges to rights and the environment, using international law, institutions and processes as appropriate. Increased transparency and opportunity for meaningful public participation are needed in most parts of the system. The International Court of Justice, for example, should release party memorials well in advance of oral argument and should allow *amicus curiae* briefs in contested cases; and additional transparency should occur in investor-State dispute settlement countries, which could be attained if more countries would ratify the UN Convention on Transparency in Treaty-Based Investor-State Arbitration (the Mauritius Convention).

Accountability for harming rights or the environment is extremely low and ineffective and must be improved.

Greater use should be made of the doctrine of inter-temporal law, as applied by the International Court of Justice¹⁶¹, including by incorporating Principle 21 of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, sustainable development, and R2HE and

¹⁶⁰ This topic is addressed in the essay by Dafne Carletti, *The Future of Transnational Advocacy Networks: Defending Environmental Activism*, in Part IIB.7.

¹⁶¹ See, e.g., *Case Concerning the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Project* (Hungary/Slovakia), International Court of Justice, 1997 ICJ Rep. 7, 78, Judgment of September 25, 1997.

other human rights into consideration of existing treaties.

9. Nature-Based Solutions

Nature-based solutions have emerged in the last decade regarding preserving biodiversity (particularly ecosystem services). It could also help respond to climate change and other environmental threats, while producing long-term socio-economic benefits¹⁶².

The potential need to relocate communities hangs over both nature-based and engineered solutions; it may emerge as one of our thorniest challenges. In any event, such solutions should be based not only on nature, but also on robust science and community involvement.¹⁶³ Rewilding is a type of nature-based solution that typically relies on nature's own resilience and wiles. Hopefully rewilding will become more common.¹⁶⁴

A question for the future is: how widely can such nature-based solutions be applied?¹⁶⁵

10. Population

Global population growth, most of which will occur in developing nations, will have profound implications in coming decades. Growing population will require more energy (thus generating greenhouse gases under current conditions), and place greater demands on resources such as water, food and living space. These demands will be intensified by the need to alleviate poverty and improve standards of living around the world.

If the agricultural productivity on existing land cannot be sustainably increased or maintained, continuing to feed the world's growing population will result in increased land clearing, often resulting in deforestation and losses in biodiversity, the number of organisms, and ecosystem resiliency.

Population growth in the hottest areas on Earth will expose residents of those areas to increased heat stress from climate change. Policy responses are needed; at a minimum such measures should include advance planning for heat emergencies. Some possible measures, such as facilitating migration from those areas or focusing on the provision of reproductive health resources (e.g., health education and contraceptives) in extreme-heat regions, could raise serious political, religious, or ethical issues. In many situations, the right to enjoy culture may be endangered, which must be guarded against.

Population decreases in some countries may cause financial stress that results in fewer resources being available for protecting the environment and rights.

The situation is complicated by uncertainties in calculating population growth. But uncertainty should not create paralysis in the face of these realities and the imperative to respect the rights of current and future generations and environmental rights. Educating women will be increasingly important in this and other respects.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² This topic is addressed in the essay by Elisa Morgera, Nature-Based Solutions, in Part II.C.7.

¹⁶³ This topic is addressed in the essay by Terry Young, Nature, Science and Community-Based Solutions, in Part II.C.7.

¹⁶⁴ This topic is addressed in the essay by Charles di Leva, Rewilding: True Test of Sustainability?

¹⁶⁵ This question is raised by the song by Åsa Norrman, Nature, in Part II. C.7.

¹⁶⁶ Population is addressed in the essay by Miriam Siemes, The More the Merrier? How the Right to a Healthy Environment Can Guide Decision-Makers in Tackling Population Growth, in Part II.C.9.

11. Renewable Energy

Due to booming technological advancements, increasing policy support, and growing customer engagement, the traditional vertically integrated utility model is transitioning into a cleaner, more reliable, affordable, and personalized services provider. Distributed energy resources (DERs) include rooftop solar PV, battery storage, and demand-response schemes may increase grid resiliency and lower households' cost of electricity. Countries should seek for ways to increase the proportion of renewable energy in their power mix to decarbonize the economy and reduce the negative environmental impacts. Nuclear energy using advanced safer and more efficient technology should be considered as a means of meeting baseload requirements.¹⁶⁷

12. Science

The right to science implies that scientific information be available and accessible, and it enables the development of evidence-based policies to address threats¹⁶⁸. Science gives us powerful tools such as extreme event attribution (EEA) that supplies a diagnostic tool to understand the roots of a human rights violation and offers a predictive method to help identify and prepare for potential future events with observational and modeling techniques.¹⁶⁹

Science should be better integrated with policy and law, along with resuscitation of belief in facts and verifiable truth. We need a new form of scientific diplomacy. Addressing crises such

as climate change, biodiversity loss, water scarcity and food security inevitably require scientific and technological innovations.

13. Transparency & Dialogue

In addressing the environmental threats identified above, there should be increased transparency, traceability, and enhanced enforcement for governments, businesses, and intergovernmental organizations. Meaningful opportunities for public participation will continue to be essential and imperiled.

In terms of decision making, environmental and human rights expertise should be integrated with other fields to ensure that economic and social decisions are well-founded. The proliferation of the climate change perspective in policy, business, and literally all areas of law gives cause for optimism. For true success in the next fifty years, we now need to aim for convergence, cooperation with greater inclusion of individuals, non-governmental organizations, local communities, women, youth, and many other "stakeholders", with equity, in the fight for people and nature together.¹⁷⁰

D. Technological & Social Innovations

Technological and social innovations will continue, in part stimulated by environmental incentives. In addition to innovations in green energy and electric vehicles, examples of re-

¹⁶⁷ One of the authors (Magraw) is on the Board of Directors of Lightbridge LLC, a nuclear energy company testing a new nuclear fuel that it believes is safer, non-proliferative and more efficient.

¹⁶⁸ This topic is addressed in the essay by Marcos Orellana, The Right to Science, in Part II.B.7.

¹⁶⁹ This topic is addressed in the essay by John Lee, Extreme Event Attribution, Climate Change, and Human Rights, in Part II.D.3

¹⁷⁰ This topic is addressed in the essay by Peter Lallas, At Every Level – Connecting Local Voices and Global Action, and Annette Magnusson, Climate Change & Hoodoos, and Vania Olmos Lau, Intergenerational Dialogue – the Key to Building a Future for Nature, all in Part II.C.10



Biodiversity of the Western Ghats Exhibition at the Institute of Wood Science and Technology, Bengaluru, India © UNEP

cent developments include announcements that: artificial intelligence can easily design new forms of chemical poisons¹⁷¹; techniques exist for sensing proximity to, and identifying, life forms by sampling air; new technology for additive manufacturing (3D printing) may soon revolutionize manufacturing techniques¹⁷²; rapid evolution of information and communications technology and regulation thereof; advances in nuclear and other energy production; and changes in social attitudes and behavior. These, of course, are just an inkling of what is possible over the next half century.

Whether or not the pace of innovations will match the recent rapid pace, it is certain that

some new technologies and social changes will exacerbate environmental threats or create new ones, and that others will benefit the environment and human rights, environmental rights and environmental justice. The discussion below includes ideas that our contributors raised, as well as others raised in literature.

1. Overview

A livable planet depends on our ability to decarbonize society by the mid-century—and that means not just reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but also permanently removing emissions we’ve already released. Our future depends on us discovering systems and ways

¹⁷¹

¹⁷²

to capture and convert our carbon emissions into useful products and remove it from the atmosphere permanently. At the same time, other environmental crises must be attended to – obviously an enormous task that will profoundly challenge humanity.¹⁷³

2. Research & Development and Production

It is likely that energy production will become cleaner through renewable energy, hydrogen, safer and more efficient nuclear fission, and nuclear fusion; food production will become more eco-friendly with the adoption of no-till agriculture, promotion of ideas such as consuming insects for nutrition and the usage of genetic engineering for nutrition-enhanced crops. Research on promising new materials such as synthetic biology, nanomaterials, plant-based plastic and fake meat might all help address the current environmental crisis, although their use may also raise environmental concerns.

Recent discoveries such as that cancer tumors comprise biomes containing bacteria and fungi¹⁷⁴ remind us that there is still plenty that we do not know and may give rise to new methodologies for detection and treatment of various cancers.

3. Storage & Distribution

We hope the clean energy systems will become more effective. We should seek developments in storage technologies such as batteries for local and long-term/long storage. Our electricity grid's modernization depends on transmission system upgrades and developments in storage to incorporate more renewable energy. Greener technologies for air and sea transport will be

developed and should be adopted, which government and civil society action may be necessary to achieve.

More efficient storage can avoid waste. Here and elsewhere, making many small improvements can be important. An example is a recent Improvement in the technique used by Himalayan farmers to create ice towers (called ice stupas) to capture water in winter for later use during the growing season, as a means of coping with shrinking glaciers; the improved technique uses 90% less water and results in more ice being stored.¹⁷⁵

4. Use & Maintenance

We hope that in the future humans will use less energy and material to perform the same tasks. That means the development of AI technology, Internet of things such as smart bulbs, smart sprinklers and green buildings as well as LED light efficiency. Going paperless also helps protect the environment. Humans should also use cleaner energy and material to go about their daily lives, including when appropriate electric vehicles and low-carbon computing.

As knowledge about the medicinal, including disease-preventing, qualities of different foods improves, the medical profession and insurance companies should be encouraged to facilitate the dissemination and use of that information.

5. Reuse & Recycle

We should actively research technologies that promote pollution removal and waste recycling: carbon ink, plastic recycling; plastic-eating mi-

¹⁷³ This topic is addressed in the essay by Andrew Chang, Carbon-Based Technology, in Part II.D.1.

¹⁷⁴ See, e.g., Carl Zimmer, Tumors Host a Community of Bacteria and Fungi, New York Times, Oct. 4, 2022, at D3.

¹⁷⁵ Nikk Ogasa, How to build better ice towers for drinking water and irrigation, Science News, July 2022, at: https://www.sciencenews.org/article/ice-stupa-tower-india-drinking-water-irrigation?utm_source=internal&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=email_share.



crobots and so on; we should also develop circular economy for nitrogen and other chemical elements. Increased utilization of producer responsibility would help achieve those goals. More generally, rules and practices that facilitate a circular economy should be instituted.

6. Optimization

We should also optimize the whole cycle mentioned above. Humans in the future should become more aware of our effect on the planet using more advanced monitoring systems such as environmental sensors, thermal imaging that combats poaching and Artificial Intelligence (AI) monitoring. Humans will also need to share more knowledge and understanding with each other with quantum Internet and/or Web3 blockchain or their equivalents.

7. Life-Style Changes

Our lifestyle should and will likely change, if not by necessity. Our tables may be filled with a new culinary platter, be it insects or soy-based, whether by necessity or not. Our workstations may become permanently virtual, and our commute may not require carbon emissions for transportation. Our transportation methods will switch from combustion engines to that of electricity, hydrogen or wind. Vacations

may be planned so as to be more sustainable. Our memorials and traditions may have to, either by education or by policy, switch to that of a green funeral – with minimal impact on the environment around us as we, too, get recycled.

8. Regulatory Practices

Regulation and other government interventions will continue to be necessary to protect human health, the environment and rights. Among other things, views and practices with respect to cost-benefit analysis will be affected by the increased attention to environmental justice (because justice concerns are be quantifiable or reflected in monetary terms and because valuations of property will continue to favor placing dangerous activities in poorer neighborhoods) and intergenerational equity (because even a modest present discount rate completely disregards the future after a certain point). Efforts to attain net-zero carbon emissions over the near term will also affect the use of cost-benefit analysis, because they represent non-marginal changes in costs and benefits that will not have historical precedent and thus will be impossible accurately to quantify.



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World Environmental Day (WED).
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You have just read a Legacy Paper, one of five, which is an integral element of the report: **The People's Environment Narrative** celebrating 50 years of work between civil society and UNEP to safeguard the environment. The report is created, published and owned by Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future, SF, and can be downloaded in its entirety for free at:

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Section Four: the five Legacy Papers

The Web of Life and Rights: The 1972 Stockholm Conference's Legacy regarding Environmental Rights, Human Rights and Environmental Justice

Authors: Daniel Magraw & Li Lin

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Illustrations and graphic design by María Andrea Miranda Serna

Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future

Company no. 05243470 / Registered in England and Wales and Utrecht, the Netherlands

Registered Office: 2 The Links, Herne Bay, Kent, CT6 7GQ, UK

www.stakeholderforum.org

info@stakeholderforum.org

twitter @stakeholders

linkedin @stakeholderforum





Dr. Bradnee Chambers pictured on the big screen, to whom this Legacy Paper is dedicated, began his UN career in the late 1990s. His last position was as Executive Secretary of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, also known as the Bonn Convention, based in Bonn, Germany. He had a lasting and important influence on several issues that concerned the environment, especially on environmental law and governance © IISD

Connecting the dots – making a forceful canon of the Rio Conventions and the MEAs

by **John E Scanlon** AO¹, with **Aubrey Collins** JD, LL.M.^{2 3}

Download the
complete Legacy
Paper by clicking
on the PDF icon



Dedicated to the memory of **Dr. Bradnee Chambers** 1966-2019.

Executive Secretary, Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
2013-2019

Dr. Bradnee Chambers left us too soon, but not before he left an indelible mark on each of the organizations he served and the people he met. He is sadly missed but not forgotten. His wonderful legacy endures and this Legacy Theme is dedicated to his memory.⁴

1 For biography see LinkedIn profile here <https://www.linkedin.com/in/johnescanlonao/>.

2 For biography see LinkedIn profile here <https://www.linkedin.com/in/aubreyrosecollins/>.

3 The authors would like to thank Alice Pasqualato, Policy Officer at the Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime for her proofreading, edits and comments.

4 John E Scanlon, "Remembering the life and legacy of Dr Bradnee Chambers" LinkedIn, February 17, 2020, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/remembering-life-legacy-dr-bradnee-chambers-john-e-scanlon-ao/>.

Executive Summary

How it all started and where we are heading

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in June 1972 ('the Stockholm Conference'), marked the start of a long chain of global and national initiatives to protect our environment, including our biodiversity.

While international laws preceded the Stockholm Conference, it excited a flurry of law making that some estimate has resulted in 1,400 multilateral environmental agreements being adopted over the past 50 years, with more in the pipeline. Our Legacy Theme explores most of the major environmental conventions of the past 50 years, as well as new, proposed or emerging instruments on the high seas, pandemics, plastics pollution and wildlife trafficking.

Since 1972, we have also seen multiple conferences, meetings and summits, with all of the major ones using the Stockholm Conference as their first point of reference, most notably the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 and the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

Given this flurry of international activity over the past 50 years, our environment must be in good shape, yes? No! In fact, it's quite the opposite. In recent years the world's best scientists have painted a grim picture, with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and multiple others, all clearly showing a degrading environment: the loss of biodiversity, climate change, land degradation, polluted air, plastic pollution, pesticides and hormone-changing chemicals in the water, which are all making our planet an increasingly unhealthy place for people and wildlife.

Reflecting on the past 50 years one cannot help but ask whether all of these mega events and the hundreds of multilateral environmental agreements have made any difference to the state of our planet? Have they served to advance the cause of the environment or sustainable development? These are some of the questions posed 50 years after the historic Stockholm Conference that we grapple with in our Legacy Theme.

We need international conventions, global summits, strategies and targets, but they have their limits. Their success cannot be measured by how many we have, but by how they are impacting what is happening on-the-ground. International agreements can act as a catalyst for national plans, legislation, and action. They can create a positive cascade effect at the national level and enhance cross-border cooperation, as we have seen to varying degrees with conventions addressing biodiversity, climate change, marine pollution, ozone depletion, transboundary movement of waste and wildlife trade to name a few. But we are clearly falling short with implementation and financing, which are inextricably linked, and finding ways to better encourage compliance with international obligations.

In our Legacy Theme we explore the origins and history of UNEP, its successes and failures, as well as its potential. We also look at the process that led to the creation of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and the hope it offers.

Now more than ever we need a strong global anchor institution for the environment, one that can measure how we are lessening or exacerbating the impact we are having on our global environment, where the gaps are and what we must do to fill them. Our Legacy Theme concludes that we need an authoritative State of the Planet Report, setting out the good, the bad and the ugly, to guide our col-



Visit to Dandora Dumpsite with UNEP ED **Inger Andersen** & UNEA 5.2 President **Espen Barth Eide**
© UNEP / Duncan Moore

lective response. The time is ripe, and it's time for UNEP and UNEA to step up and become the global environmental authority it was designed to be.

Over the seven chapters of our Legacy Theme we explore some of the early signs and on-going development of international environmental law, the origins and outcomes of the Stockholm Conference and the major events that have taken place since then, to understand how international laws and related institutions have evolved over the past five decades.

It is incomplete, selective, in places anecdotal, at times opinionated, but for all its possible shortcomings it offers an informed, real-world appraisal of where we are at to-

day and why, with insights into a possible way forward, one that may get us on the path towards securing a harmonious inter-relationship between people and nature.



Entrance of the UN Environment Programme headquarters, Nairobi © UNEP / Nayim Ahmed

Our seven Chapters address:

Chapter 1: Early Signs of International Environmental Law

Chapter 2: Stockholm 1972 – A Catalyst for National and International Law and Policy

Chapter 3: 1970's - Issue Specific MEAs

Chapter 4: 1992 – UN Rio Earth Summit – Thematic Approach to MEAs

Chapter 5: Post 1992 – Clustering of MEAs

Chapter 6: 2012 – UN Rio+20 Conference – Convergence and Implementation

Chapter 7: 2022 – Stockholm+50 and beyond

and national policies and laws, which continue to evolve, backed by a strong and improving science base. It has not been fast enough or effective enough or adequately financed. But it does reflect how humanity has been continually striving to find the ways and means of better responding to environmental threats to our planet's health.

As we take pause to reflect on the 50 years since the Stockholm Conference, it's also timely to look 50 years ahead. What will the state of our planet be like in 2072? Our Legacy Theme draws parallels between what the world was experiencing in the 1960s and the past decade, with highly visible environmental impacts being evident today; the loss of biodiversity, effects of climate change, severe drought, the scale of plastic pollution, and the impacts of toxic chemicals, all resulting in demands for further action, at a time of heightened geopolitical tension and economic challenges.

Our planet's prognosis is not good – can we survive?

It was fitting to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Stockholm Conference at an international meeting held on 2-3 June called 'Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity' ('Stockholm+50').

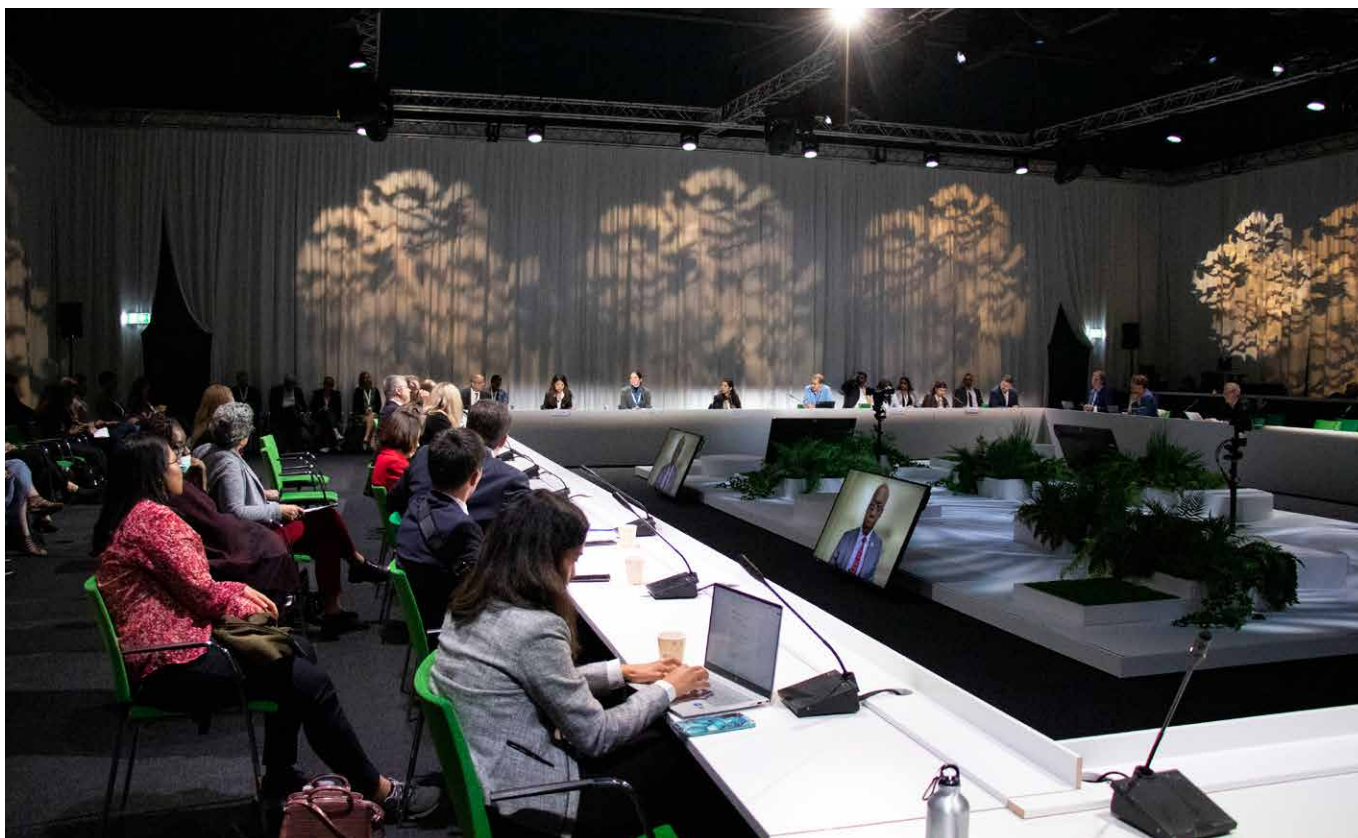
It was the Stockholm Conference that launched an extraordinary amount of global and national environmental law and policy making and scientific endeavor. However, Stockholm+50 lacked ambition. The outcomes of the 2022 meeting were modest at best and will not stand the test of time.

The impact of the Stockholm Conference that was being commemorated this year will endure. Over the past 50 years we have developed a comprehensive body of international

In 2022, the science is unequivocally presenting us with the reality of the environment harm we are inflicting on our planet, and in real time. If we stay on the same trajectory for the next 50 years, the prognosis looks rather grim to say the least. It's easy to feel flat and get depressed. But that won't help anyone, including our planet. So, what do we do?

It's not all bad news. There are glimmers of hope. There are solutions. The science tells us it's still not too late - provided we change course. The need to change course is increasingly recognized across all sectors and our Legacy Theme explores how we can do it.

The future of the planet is in our hands. We know that changing course won't be easy but, come what may, there is no better option than to persist, and if we try hard enough, who knows, we may just succeed! Read on to explore how we can make this happen.



Our Action Plan meeting room at Stockholm+50 © UNEP / Maria Nilsson



Presenting the PEN – **Maria Ivanova, Daniel Magraw, John E. Scanlon, Leida Rijnhout & Ingrid Rostad.**
All authors © ForUM Norway

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Introduction

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in June 1972 ('the Stockholm Conference'), marked the start of a long chain of global and national initiatives to protect our environment, including our biodiversity¹.

While international laws preceded the Stockholm Conference, it excited a flurry of law making that some estimate has resulted in 1,400 multilateral environmental agreements being adopted over the past 50 years, with more in the pipeline. Over this period of time, we have also seen multiple conferences, meetings and summits, with all of the major ones using the Stockholm Conference as their first point of reference².

Given this flurry of international activity over the past 50 years, our environment *must* be in good shape, yes? No!³ In fact, it's quite the opposite. In recent years the world's best scientists have painted a grim picture, with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and multiple others, all clearly showing a degrading environment: the loss of biodiversity, climate change, land degradation, polluted air, plastic pollution, pesticides and hormone-changing chemicals in the water,

which are all making our planet an increasing unhealthy place for people and wildlife.

Reflecting on the past 50 years one cannot help but ask whether all these mega events⁴ and the hundreds of multilateral environmental agreements have made any difference to the state of our planet? Have they served to advance the cause of the environment or sustainable development? These are some of the questions posed 50 years after the historic Stockholm Conference.

We need international conventions, global summits, strategies and targets, but they have their limits. Their success cannot be measured by how many we have, but by how they are impacting what is happening on-the-ground. International agreements can act as a catalyst for national plans, legislation, and action. They can create a positive cascade effect at the national level and enhance cross-border cooperation, as we have seen to varying degrees with conventions addressing biodiversity, climate change, marine pollution, ozone depletion, transboundary movement of waste and wildlife trade to name a few. But we are clearly falling short with implementation and financing, which are inextricably linked, and finding ways to better encourage compliance with international obligations.

1 Co-author Scanlon was there in 1972, not at the Conference but as a young boy visiting his Swedish grandparents. He also attended in person the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development representing the Australian National Environmental Law Association, the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development with IUCN, the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development with CITES and the 2022 Stockholm+50: A Healthy Planet for the Prosperity of All – Our Responsibility, Our Opportunity international meeting representing the EPI Foundation.

2 See for example IISD, "Still Only One Earth: Lessons from 50 years of UN sustainable development policy" <https://www.iisd.org/projects/still-only-one-earth-lessons-50-years-un-sustainable-development-policy>.

3 John E. Scanlon, "Keynote Address by John E. Scanlon AO, Special Envoy African Parks," September 10, 2019, <https://www.linked.com/pulse/saving-wildlife-requires-new-approach-john-e-scanlon-ao/>.

4 Ana-Maria Lebeda and Pamela Chasek, "Do Mega-Conferences Advance Sustainable Development?" *IISD Publication*, June 21, 2021, <https://www.iisd.org/articles/deep-dive/do-mega-conferences-advance-sustainable-development>.

Now more than ever we need a strong global anchor institution for the environment, one that can measure how we are lessening or exacerbating the impact on our global environment, where the gaps are and what we must do to fill them. We need an authoritative State of the Planet Report, setting out the good, the bad and the ugly, to guide our collective response.

Over the coming seven chapters we explore some of the early signs and on-going development of international environmental law, the origins and outcomes of the Stockholm Conference, what came out of the various United Nations Conferences that followed, and then review what is happening right up to 2022 and beyond. We trace the origins and history of UNEP, its successes and failures, as well as its potential. We also look at the process that led to the creation of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and the hope it offers.

It is incomplete, selective, in places anecdotal, at times opinionated, but for all its possible shortcomings it offers an informed, real-world appraisal of where we are at today and why, with insights into a possible way forward, one that may get us on the path towards securing a harmonious interrelationship between people and nature.

Chapter 1: Early Signs of International Environmental Law

The beginnings of international environmental law reflect a strong focus on respecting national sovereignty over natural resources, while recognizing the cross-border nature of some environmental challenges and of the need for

international cooperation in finding solutions to them, something that persists today.

1.1 Bilateral Agreements

An early example of a bilateral agreement is the 1909 “*United States-United Kingdom Boundary Waters Treaty*” relating to the boundary waters between the United States and Canada. It recognized the right to control the use and diversion of all waters on either side of the boundary, while also recognizing the rights of people on the other side.⁵ This early attempt at a bilateral international environmental and water sharing agreement was designed to prevent and resolve disputes over the use of the waters shared by Canada and the United States and to settle other transboundary issues, including to balance the growing demand for hydroelectric power with the interests of navigation on the Niagara River, while safeguarding the unique natural beauty of Niagara Falls.

1.2 Regional Agreements

At the regional level environmental agreements were negotiated, such as on the conservation of nature, including wildlife, across multiple continents.⁶ For example, there were early attempts to create regional environmental agreements covering the African continent by colonial powers through the “*Convention on the Preservation of Wild Animals and Birds and Fish in Africa*” (called ‘the 1900 London Convention’), which never entered into force, but a new text was adopted in Paris in 1933 that entered into force three years later, the “*Convention Relative to the Preservation of Fauna and Flora in their Natural State*”, (also known as ‘the 1933 London Convention’). This was the first legally binding agreement to

5 International Joint Commission, “The Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909” <https://ijc.org/en/boundary-waters-treaty-1909>.

6 One such agreement is the “*Convention on Nature Protection and Wild Life Preservation in the Western Hemisphere*”, which was signed in 1940.

provide for the creation of protected areas in Africa.⁷

‘As African countries gained independence, the need for a new treaty to address nature conservation was expressed in the Arusha Manifesto of 1961 and it led to the adoption of the “African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources” at the Organization of African Unity fifth summit in 1968 in Algiers (known as ‘the Algiers Convention’) that entered into force in 1969. A revised version of the Convention was adopted in 2003 at the second summit of the African Union in Maputo. **It drew inspiration from the 1972 Stockholm Conference,⁸ and entered into force in 2016⁹** *The Algiers Convention* introduced innovative approaches to the conservation of nature calling for the conservation and rational use of natural resources for the welfare of present and future generations, and it was in many ways a precursor to modern international wildlife law.¹⁰ It is interesting to note that the language of this time was about ‘nature’, terminology that was largely abandoned with the adoption of the “*Convention on Biological Diversity*” (CBD) in 1990, but which we are seeing increasingly used today.

1.3 Global Agreements

At a global level, in 1946 the “*International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling*” was signed. It is the International Whaling

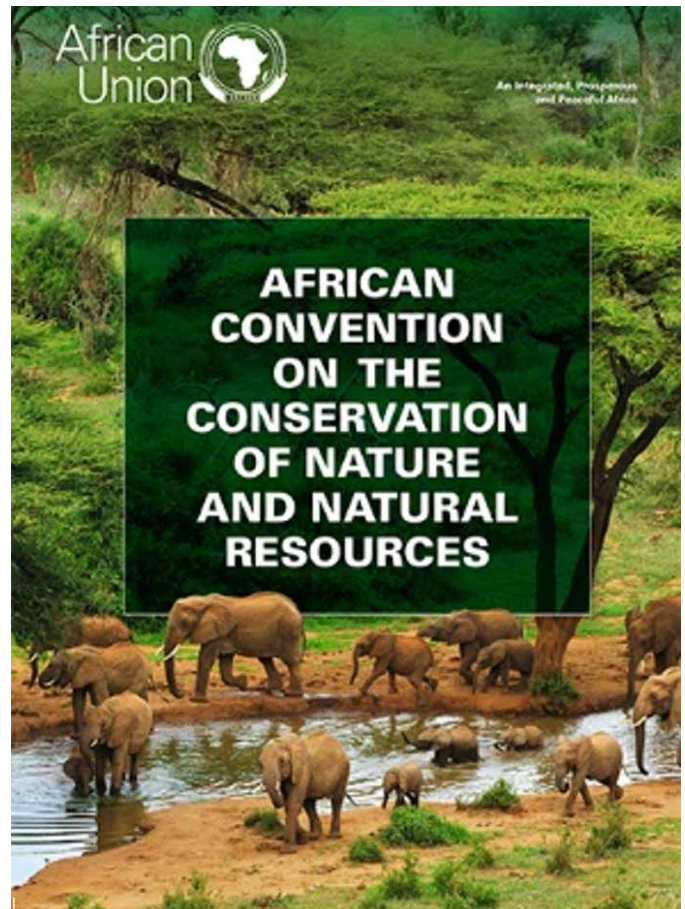


Image is Revised African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources

Commission’s (‘the IWC’) founding document.¹¹ The preamble to the Convention, which entered into force in 1948, states that its purpose is to provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks and thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry.¹² The Convention has a legally binding schedule,

7 “An Introduction to the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources” *IUCN Publication*: 3, <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/EPLP-056.pdf>.

8 “An Introduction to the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources” *IUCN Publication*: 1.

9 Revised African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (adopted July 11, 2013, entered into force July 23, 2016).

10 “An Introduction to the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources” *IUCN Publication*: 4.

11 International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (adopted December 2, 1946, entered into force November 10, 1948) 161 UNTS 72 (Whaling Convention).

12 International Whaling Commission, “History and Purpose”, <https://iwc.int/commission/history-and-purpose>.

which can be updated and amended by the IWC when it meets, that sets catch limits by species and area, designating specified areas as whale sanctuaries, protection of calves and females accompanied by calves, and restrictions on hunting methods. In doing so, the IWC began to encroach on State sovereignty, insofar as it takes measures that apply to a species regardless of whose waters the animals are in, including territorial waters. The United States hosted the conference at which the Convention was adopted, and in the words of the (then) Acting United States Secretary of State, its adoption illustrated 'increasing cooperation among the nations in the solution of international conservation problems.'¹³ Interestingly it provided for voting, by two thirds majority, and for entering reservations as a *quid quo pro*, something we saw included within international agreements of the 1970s, such as the "Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife Fauna and Flora" ('CITES'), that is not reflected in the agreements of the 1990s, such as the CBD.

However, the first truly global multilateral environmental agreement ('MEA') was the "Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat" ('the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands'), which

was adopted in 1971¹⁴ in the city of Ramsar, Iran. It is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.¹⁵ While it was the first truly global MEA to be adopted¹⁶, CITES was the first such MEA to enter into force, with Ramsar following 6 months after.^{17 18}

In 1972, the "Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage" ('the World Heritage Convention') was adopted, and it entered into force in 1975.¹⁹ The Convention seeks to promote cooperation among nations to protect heritage around the world that is of such outstanding universal value that its conservation is important for current and future generations.²⁰ Just one year later, in 1973, CITES was adopted to regulate wildlife trade with the objective of protecting against "over-exploitation through international trade".²¹

1.4. From Issue Specific to a Thematic Focus

These conventions reflected the approach taken throughout the 1970s, and into the 1980s, both pre and post Stockholm, of focusing on very specific environmental issues that required international cooperation to be effectively addressed, be it trade in species, mi-

13 Malgosia Fitzmaurice, "International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling," *United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law*, 2017, https://legal.un.org/avl/pdf/ha/icrw/icrw_e.pdf.

14 Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (adopted February 2, 1971, entered into force December 21, 1975) 996 UNTS 245 (Ramsar Convention).

15 Ramsar Convention.

16 Noting IWC still has only 88 Parties.

17 John E. Scanlon, 'CITES- 40 Years of International Cooperation and National Action' *IISD*, July 2, 2015, <http://sdg.iisd.org/commentary/guest-articles/cites-40-years-of-international-cooperation-and-national-action/>.

18 Ramsar Convention.

19 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (adopted November 16, 1972, entered into force December 17, 1975) 1037 UNTS 151 (World Heritage Convention).

20 World Heritage Convention.

21 Image is CITES Plenipotentiary DC March 1972.



CITES Plenipotentiary Conference, Washington, 3 March 1973

gratory species, ozone depletion, wetlands of international importance or outstanding cultural and natural heritage.

In the 1990s we saw a shift towards more generic umbrella or framework agreements, such as the “*United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification*” (‘UNCCD’), the “*United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*” (‘UNFCCC’) and the CBD.²² And today we see a push to achieve a deeper convergence between these conventions and the thematic issues they were designed to address.

Chapter 2: Stockholm 1972 – A Catalyst for National and International Law and Policy

To this day, the Stockholm Conference remains one of the most significant moments for advancing international cooperation on environmental protection. It led to increased awareness of the environmental impact human society was having on the planet - globally and across every country. Whether due to careful political planning, the power of indi-

vidual personalities, a perfect storm of highly visible environmental crises, or a mix of all of them, the time leading up to the Stockholm Conference created the necessary momentum to encourage world leaders to agree to take global action.

2.1 Growing Awareness and a Changing Environment

During the 1960s, society was increasingly aware of multiple ‘environmental crises’. With the publishing of ‘*Silent Spring*’ in 1962, Rachel Carson encouraged the public to take a critical look at how governments and industries were harming the environment. In the United States, an oil drill platform exploded off the coast of California dumping 100,000 barrels of oil into the ocean. The ocean was not the only natural environment suffering during this time. In 1962, the Cuyahoga River caught fire due to high levels of pollution.²³ The river had caught fire around a dozen times before that year, however, this fire became a notable moment in history after National Geographic featured the fire in a story on ecological harm.²⁴ All of this led to the United States creating the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970.²⁵

22 Convention on Biological Diversity (adopted June 5, 1992, entered into force December 29, 1993) 1760 UNTS 79 (CBD).

23 Lorraine Boissoneault, “The Cuyahoga River Caught Fire at Least a Dozen Times, but No One Cared Until 1969,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, June 19, 2019, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/cuyahoga-river-caught-fire-least-dozen-times-no-one-cared-until-1969-180972444/>.

24 Lorraine Boissoneault, “The Cuyahoga River Caught Fire at Least a Dozen Times, but No One Cared Until 1969”.

25 Lorraine Boissoneault, “The Cuyahoga River Caught Fire at Least a Dozen Times, but No One Cared Until 1969”.

Similarly, off the coast of England, the first super tanker accident occurred, leaking 120,000 tons of oil and killing marine life in both the United Kingdom and France. Of even greater concern was the threat posed by air pollution: in the 1950s, London became home to 'fogs' that choked the city due to the fumes from industries, cars and homes.²⁶ One particular smog in 1952 was so deadly it led to the enactment of a historic piece of legislation, the Clean Air Act of 1956²⁷. Between the 1960s and the 1970s, a significant amount of national environmental policy statements came into effect and some of the most notable environmental organizations were founded.

The world, during 1972, was experiencing significant shockwaves within the political and legal sphere. It was the year that witnessed the start of the infamous Watergate scandal in the United States, which saw the signing of the *Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty* between the United States and the Soviet Union, and the creation of NASA's Space Program. Furthermore, society was impacted by the Cold War and was still feeling the effects of previous environmental disasters, driving a push for global action. During this time the United States was becoming a leader in the environmental space, having created the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Clean Water Act, which not only drastically changed the countries own natural environment but also set new standards for the United States that other countries paid attention to.

In addition, United Nations General Assembly ('UNGA') Resolution 2398, adopted in 1968, set the stage for the Stockholm Conference as it recognized 'the relationship between man and his environment'.²⁸ The resolution sought the creation of a framework for comprehensive consideration of environmental problems to help solve them through international corporation. It set the year of 1972 to convene a conference to address humans and the environment. In 1968, the UNGA produced a second resolution on the United Nations Conference of the Human Environment.

When the UNGA convened in 1972, there had been a level of tension between developed and developing countries, including a degree of suspicion regarding the intentions of developed countries. Tensions remain today and these have implications for making, implementing and financing international environmental law. Notwithstanding, the landmark 1972 Stockholm Conference was, by all accounts, highly successful and it has stood the test of time.

2.2 What Emerged from the Stockholm Conference

Emerging from the Stockholm Conference, the world's first conference on the environment, was the *Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment*, known as 'the Stockholm Declaration' and the *Action Plan for the Human Environment* ('the Action Plan').²⁹ The Declaration, containing 26 principles, focused on a wide range of issues, all

26 Beverley Cook and Alex Werner, "Breathing in London's history: from the Great Stink to the Great Smog," *Museum of London*, August 24, 2017, <https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/discover/londons-past-air>.

27 Unfortunately, despite the passage of the Clean Air Act, air pollution is still recognized as a major cause of premature death in England every year, see Damian Carrington, "The truth about London's air pollution," *The Guardian*, February 5, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/feb/05/the-truth-about-londons-air-pollution>.

28 UNGA Res. 2398 (December 3, 1968).

29 Pamala Chasek, 'Still Only One Earth: Lessons from 50 years of UN sustainable development policy' *IISD* (June 1, 2022).



Images: Forest fire © Pixabay and Plastic debris © Pexels / Catherine Sheila

contributing to the unique and forward-looking nature of the document. For example, Principle 4 recognized *“Man has a special responsibility to safeguard and wisely manage the heritage of wildlife and its habitat, which are now gravely imperiled by a combination of adverse factors. Nature conservation, including wildlife, must therefore receive importance in planning for economic development.”*³⁰ The threat posed by toxic substances was recognized under Principle 6.³¹ Principle 24 set the stage for a new era of law making, noting that:

*“International matters concerning the protection and improvement of the environment should be handled in a co-operative spirit by all countries, big and small, on an equal footing. Cooperation through multilateral or bilateral arrangements or other appropriate means is essential to effectively control, prevent, reduce and eliminate adverse environmental effects resulting from activities conducted in all spheres, in such a way that due account is taken of the sovereignty and interests of all States.”*³²

The Stockholm Conference also recognized the importance of a strong scientific foundation for global environmental policymaking and the Action Plan included establishing Earthwatch (a global assessment program), amongst many other actions.³³ The Action Plan set forth a variety of recommendations aimed primarily towards government action but at times extending to the United Nations and agency action. The recommendations focused on many topics, including management of settlements for environmental quality, natural resource management, control of pollutants, marine pollution, and education on social and cultural issues. Beyond the text of the Stockholm Declaration and Action Plan, the Stockholm Conference set off a chain of key environmental actions and events that have shaped our international landscape today.

2.3 Parallels Between Then and Now

One can see some parallels between the 1960s and the past decade, with highly visible environmental impacts being evident today; the loss of biodiversity, effects of climate change, severe drought, the scale of plastic pollu-

30 Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, UN Doc. A/RES/2994(XXVII).

31 UN Doc. A/RES/2994(XXVII).

32 UN Doc. A/RES/2994(XXVII).

33 Action Plan for the Human Environment (April 2, 1973) UNEP/GC/5.

tion, and the impacts of toxic chemicals, all resulting in demands for further action, at a time of heightened geopolitical tension and economic challenges.

2.4 The Creation and Early Days of UNEP

Following the groundbreaking recommendation of the Stockholm Conference, the United Nations Environment Programme ('UNEP') was created by the UNGA by Resolution 2997 on 15 December 1972. The UNEP Secretariat was established on an old coffee farm in Nairobi, Kenya, which is today the outstanding Gigiri United Nations complex, and the organization now has outposted duty stations around the world.

Six months after the Stockholm Conference, Maurice Strong was elected as the first Executive Director of UNEP and helped the organization get up and running until 1975.³⁴ There have been seven Executive Directors of UNEP since its creation.³⁵ The style, approach and personality of each Executive Director has influenced the priorities of the program. It was Dr Mostafa Tolba who did more than anyone else to advance UNEP's role in making international environmental law. While others, such as Achim Steiner, showed little enthusiasm for adopting new international laws, and were more focused on the 'green economy', the momentum continued unabated, with States advancing a new mercury convention during his term, with the "Minamata Convention on Mercury" being adopted in 2013.³⁶

UNEP had an ambitious mandate, with modest resources, but from the outset, up until today, it has played a major role in the development of international and national environmental law.³⁷ From being highly influential in the 1970s and 1980s, especially with the development of the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, UNEP lost much of its influence in the late 1980s and early 1990s, with major new conventions on climate change and desertification being concluded, largely absent from UNEP's influence, and with decisions taken on the location of convention secretariats, with most to be hosted outside of UNEP, administratively and geographically. While it was agreed that the CBD was to be administered by UNEP, its Secretariat was eventually located in Montreal, Canada.

2.5 The Origins and Success of CITES

Since CITES was adopted on 3 March 1973 in Washington DC, the impact on wildlife trade has been substantial according to former CITES Secretary-General and co-author John Scanlon, speaking at the 40th Anniversary of the signing of the Convention. Before CITES existed *"there were no global controls over international trade in wildlife - and the US government's own figures on imports into the US in 1969, figures that were openly shared at the Plenipotentiary Conference, are nothing short of staggering. They included the import of just under 8,000 leopard skins, close to 1 million live birds and over 1.4 million live reptiles. But these numbers pale in comparison with the import*

34 "Environmental Moments: A UNEP @50 timeline," *United Nations Environment Programme*, <https://www.unep.org/environmental-moments-unep50-timeline#:~:text=Founded%20in%201972%20following%20the,to%20the%20world's%20environmental%20challenges>.

35 See Maria Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty*. Maurice Strong (p.145), Mostafa Tolba (p.152), Elizabeth Dowdeswell (p.161), Klaus Topfer (p.170), Achim Steiner (p.178), Erik Solheim (p.185), Inger Anderson (p.196).

36 Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty*.

37 Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 91.



© Barnaby Phillips



© John E. Scanlon

of almost 99 million live fish”.³⁸ The finalizing of the negotiation of CITES was a recommendation from the Stockholm Conference, with the United States supporting this call by hosting a Plenipotentiary Conference in 1973, which resulted in the adoption of the Convention just one year after the Stockholm Conference.³⁹

While the numbers of wildlife in trade before CITES were staggering, it also served to show how remarkable the achievements of the Convention have been since that time. At the 40th Anniversary event, Ambassador Betty E. King, Permanent Representative of the United States Mission to the United Nations in Geneva stated that, since CITES, no CITES listed species has been driven to extinction due to commercial exploitation and the status of many species in the wild has improved.⁴⁰

Perhaps what makes the outcome of CITES so successful is its limited mandate and, within its mandate, the ability of the Convention to evolve over time and respond to changing circumstances. As John Scanlon noted, “*CITES has continued to evolve over time in response to changing conditions in many ways, including through developing compliance procedures, bringing new marine and timber species under CITES trade controls, making the best use of emerging technologies and strengthening*

cooperative implementation and enforcement efforts”.⁴¹ However, there are limitations to the ability to evolve within the context of the existing mandate of the Convention, as is apparent from CITES inability to address the public and animal health risks associated with the trade, marketing and consumption of certain wild animals.⁴² It would appear to be a step too far for Parties, which have traditionally sought to retain the narrow focus of the Convention.⁴³

2.6 Creating a Convention on Migratory Species and its Relationship to CITES

The “*Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals*” (‘CMS’), also referred to as ‘the Bonn Convention’, after the city in Germany where it was signed in 1979, sought to protect wild animals as they engage in their natural migration cycles across borders.⁴⁴ It is the only global convention specializing in the conservation of migratory species, their habitats and migration routes. This Convention, which was also a recommendation from the Stockholm Conference, is critically important as nature does not recognize human borders or take into account State sovereignty. These species, and their habitats, need protection right across their range.

38 John E. Scanlon, “Remarks by CITES Secretary-General,” *CITES* Updated January 12, 2021, https://cites.org/eng/news/sg/2013/20130216_40US.php.

39 John E. Scanlon, “CITES and wildlife trade – how CITES works and what it is and isn’t,” *CITES* January 12, 2021, https://cites.org/eng/news/sg/keynote_address_cites_secretary_general_ilia_state_university_tbilisi_20102015.

40 Betty E. King, “35th Anniversary of CITES wildlife convention entry into force: remarks by Ambassador Betty E. King” *U.S. Mission Geneva*, July 2, 2010, <https://geneva.usmission.gov/2010/07/02/35th-anniversary-of-cites/>.

41 Scanlon, “CITES and wildlife trade – how CITES works and what it is and isn’t”.

42 Dan Ashe and John E. Scanlon, “A Crucial Step Toward Preventing Wildlife-Related Pandemics,” *Scientific American*, June 15, 2020, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-crucial-step-toward-preventing-wildlife-related-pandemics/>.

43 “Outline of Possible Amending to Wildlife Trade Laws.” *Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime*, <https://endwildlifecrime.org/cites-amendments/>.

44 Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (adopted June 23, 1979, entered into force November 1, 1983) 1651 UNTS 333 (CMS).



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Under the leadership of then Executive Secretary Dr Bradnee Chambers, and co-author, and then CITES Secretary General John Scanlon, the two conventions achieved unprecedented levels of cooperation, which all started with a virtual meeting of the Secretariats in July 2011 that was initiated by Dr Chambers.⁴⁵ The meeting addressed both issues of substance and administration, offering support and sharing best practices, and it reflected a time of great cooperation.⁴⁶

In this context, at CMS Co12, in Manila, Philippines in 2017⁴⁷, John Scanlon observed that *"CITES and the CMS share common origins, have complementary mandates, and enjoy longstanding and ever deepening programmatic collaboration as the world's two wildlife conventions"*.⁴⁸ Some of you may recall, he added, *"that it was IUCN that first called for these two conventions in the early 1960's. This call was heeded and enshrined in recommendations adopted at the UN Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, which led to CITES and the CMS being adopted within the same decade – CITES in 1973 and the CMS in 1979"*.

Scanlon went on to note that *"Common to both conventions is that biological factors coupled with cross border movement are re-*

quired to trigger a species being listed under an Appendix. In the case of the CMS, the migratory species cross borders under their own steam by using their feet, wings or flippers – and under CITES, species cross national borders by plane, boat and truck through human intervention".

2.7 Moves to Protect Oceans from Marine Pollution

Pollution was another topic of interest that is an outcome of the Stockholm Conference.⁴⁹ In 1972 the *"Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter"* (the London Convention) was adopted. It is one of the first global conventions to protect the marine environment from human activities. It contributes to protecting the marine environment by prohibiting the dumping of certain hazardous materials. In addition, a special permit is required prior to dumping of a number of other identified materials and a general permit for other wastes or matter.⁵⁰ In 1996 Parties adopted 'the London Protocol', which has 53 Parties and is meant to eventually replace the 1972 Convention. It represented a major change in approach. Rather than stating which materials may not be dumped, it prohibits all dumping, except for possibly acceptable wastes on the so-called "reverse list", contained

45 "CITES and CMS Secretariats hold first virtual meeting to map out future collaboration," *CITES*, July 9, 2015, https://cites.org/eng/news/sundry/2011/20110304_CITES_CMS.shtml.

46 "CITES and CMS Secretariats hold first virtual meeting to map out future collaboration," *CITES*.

47 "CMS: Highlights and images of main proceedings for 23 October 2017," *IISD*, <https://enb.iisd.org/events/12th-meeting-cms-conference-parties-cop12/highlights-and-images-main-proceedings-23-october>.

48 John E. Scanlon, "Statement by John E. Scanlon, CITES Secretary-General: Twelfth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species," *CITES*, January 12, 2021, https://cites.org/eng/news/sg/CITES_SG_opening_speech_Twelfth_CoP_Convention_on_Migratory_Species_23102017.

49 Pamela Chasek, 'Still Only One Earth: Lessons from 50 years of UN sustainable development policy' *IISD* (June 1, 2022).

50 Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (adopted December 29, 1972, entered into force August 30, 1975) 1046 UNTS 120 (London Convention).



Bradnee Chambers with John Scanlon © CITES Flickr

in an annex to the Protocol.⁵¹ This Protocol represents a good example of the ‘precautionary approach’ as it requires that “*appropriate preventative measures are taken when there is reason to believe that wastes or other matter introduced into the marine environment are likely to cause harm even when there is no conclusive evidence to prove a causal relation between inputs and their effects*”.⁵²

A year after the London Convention, the “*International Convention for the Prevention of*

Pollution from Ships” (‘MARPOL’) was adopted. To this day, MARPOL is the main international convention covering prevention of pollution of the marine environment by ships from operational or accidental causes. A protocol was adopted in 1978 following a spate of tanker accidents from 1976-77, which absorbed the Convention, and both entered into force as one instrument. It contains six annexes covering various forms of pollution including air, garbage, sewage, and noxious liquid substances.⁵³

51 Protocol to the 1972 Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (adopted November 7, 1996, entered into force March 24, 2006) ATS 11 (London Protocol).

52 London Protocol.

53 Protocol Relating to the 1973 International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (adopted February 17, 1978, entered into force October 2, 1983) 1340 UNTS 61 (MARPOL).

2.8 Creating Regional Seas Programmes and the High Seas

One of the most famous marine programs to have been established is known as UNEP's Regional Seas Programme, which consists of three types of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans across 18 different regions. Most regional seas have adopted a Convention for the protection of the marine and coastal environment, or an Action Plan, or both.⁵⁴

One of the Programs goals is to help establish a dedicated convention on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction.⁵⁵ This was initiated by the UNGA in 2015 and negotiations are still ongoing. The final negotiation session was supposed to take place in 2020 but was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. A session occurred in March⁵⁶ of this year, which was not successful, and again in August of this year. Unfortunately, the final round of talks in August did not result in a finalized treaty though States appear to be

relatively positive that they can reach an agreement at their next session, likely to be in 2023.⁵⁷

2.9 Primary Global Conventions

While the immediate period after the Stockholm Conference led the flurry of environmental action discussed above, the 'Golden Area' has continued through today, with negotiations underway in 2022 for a new plastics pollution treaty⁵⁸, with the initial momentum being generated by Executive Director Erik Solheim. The cause has since been enthusiastically embraced and advanced by Inger Andersen, the current Executive Director of UNEP and the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Waste.⁵⁹ From 1972-2022 we have witnessed the creation of around 1,400 MEAs, which includes agreements that are bilateral, regional and global in scope.⁶⁰ Of them, there are about 20 global agreements that are of primary interest according to Dr Maria Ivanova.⁶¹ John Scanlon fully agreed with Dr Ivanova's

54 "Why does working with regional seas matter?" United Nations Environmental Programme, <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/oceans-seas/what-we-do/working-regional-seas/why-does-working-regional-seas-matter>.

55 UNGA Res 70/1 (October 21, 2015) A/RES/70/1.

56 "Protecting half the planet: A new High Seas biodiversity treaty in 2020," High Seas Alliance, October 19, 2020 https://www.highseasalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/HSA_LBTreaty_English_Oct19_web.pdf.

57 Elizabeth Fitt, "Fourth round of U.N. talks fail to finalize a treaty to manage the high seas," *Mongabay News*, March 21, 2022, <https://news.mongabay.com/2022/03/fourth-round-of-u-n-talks-fail-to-finalize-a-treaty-to-manage-the-high-seas/>; see also Esme Stallard, "Efforts to pass global ocean protection treaty fail," *BBC News*, August 27, 2022, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-62680423>.

58 "Convention on Plastic Pollution: Towards a new global agreement to address plastic pollution," *EIA International*, June 2020, <https://reports.eia-international.org/a-new-global-treaty/>.

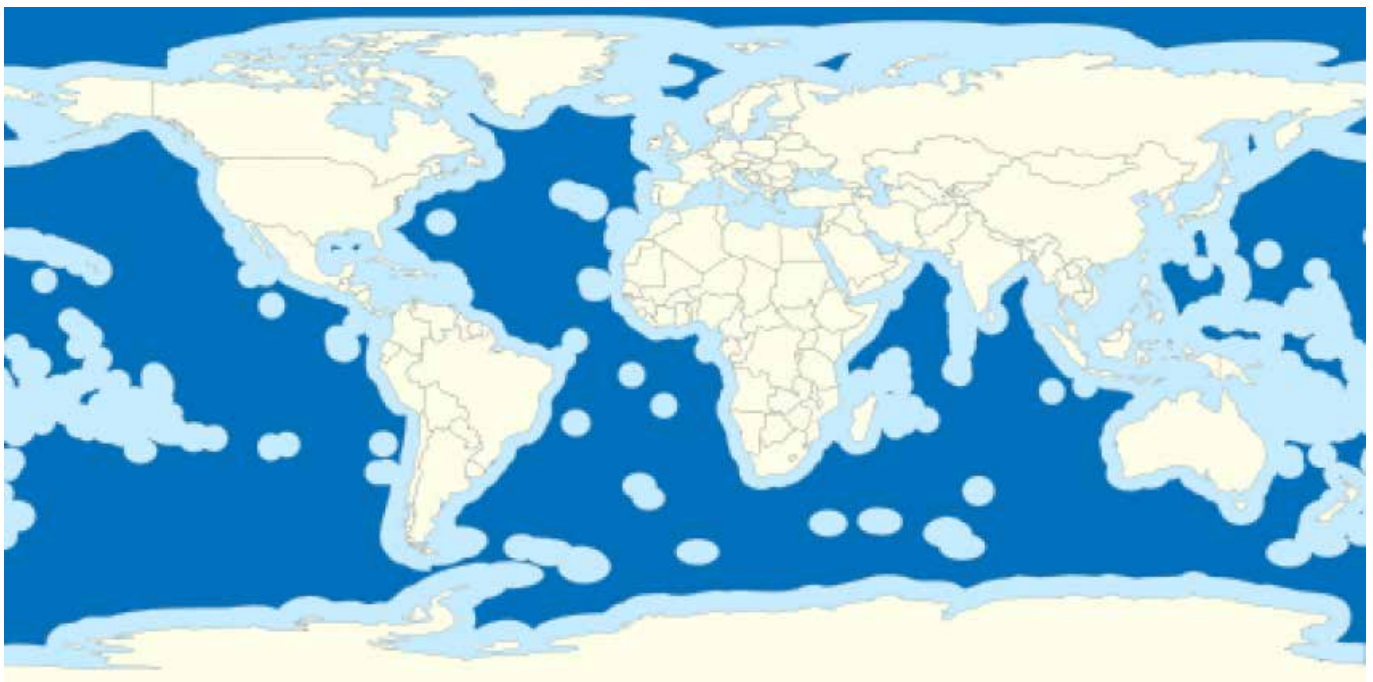
59 "UNEP head responds to questions on global plastics agreement," *United Nations Environmental Programme*, February 25, 2022, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/unep-head-responds-questions-global-plastics-agreement>. High End Coalition to End Plastic Waste, a group of like-minded countries has taken the initiative to form a coalition of ambitious countries following the adoption of resolution 5/14 "End Plastic Pollution: Towards an International Legally Binding Instrument" by the UN Environment Assembly in March 2022. The High Ambition Coalition is Co-Chaired by Norway and Rwanda as announced during UNEA 5.2 <https://hactoendplasticpollution.org/>

60 Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty*.

61 Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty*.



High seas treaty negotiations



The dark blue areas of the map represent areas beyond national jurisdiction © Wikimedia Commons

views when he was interviewed by her as a part of the UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 'UNEP at 50: Reflections from a Former Insider: A Conversation with John E. Scanlon'.⁶²

One such example is the “*Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer*” (known as ‘the Vienna Convention’), which was the first international agreement to be ratified by every country. It eventually led to the adoption of the “*Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer*” (known as ‘the Montreal Protocol’) in 1987. The Montreal Protocol has been successful in slowing and reversing the increase of ozone-depleting gases (halogen source gases) in the atmosphere. As a result, the ozone layer is showing the first signs of recovery. The Protocol has now been amended by the “*Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer*” (known as ‘the Kigali Amendment’) to phase down the production and usage of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). HFCs are man-made chemicals that are primarily used in air conditioning, refrigeration and foam insulation, and are powerful greenhouse gases that can be thousands of times more potent than carbon dioxide in contributing to climate change.⁶³

2.10 Recognizing the Early Movers

It's important to acknowledge the critical role played by IUCN, and most particularly its (then) Commission on Environmental Law (now the World Commission on Environmental Law⁶⁴), and in particular the leadership of Dr Wolfgang Burhenne, first Chair of the Commission, and Dr. Françoise Burhenne-Guilmin, the first Director of the IUCN Environmental Law Centre, together with Commission members, such as Donald Kaniaru, Veit Koester, Professor Edith Brown Weiss, Ambassador Tommy Koh and Professor Alexandre Kiss, in tirelessly advocating for, and often helping to craft, many of the early regional and global agreements.⁶⁵ These individuals had a significant impact on the development of international environmental law from the 1960s to the 1990s.

Chapter 3: 1970s - Issue Specific MEAs

Before and in the aftermath of the Stockholm Conference, we saw a variety of issue-specific MEAs emerge. As we saw last Chapter, these agreements were limited in their scope, addressing a particular environmental issue rather

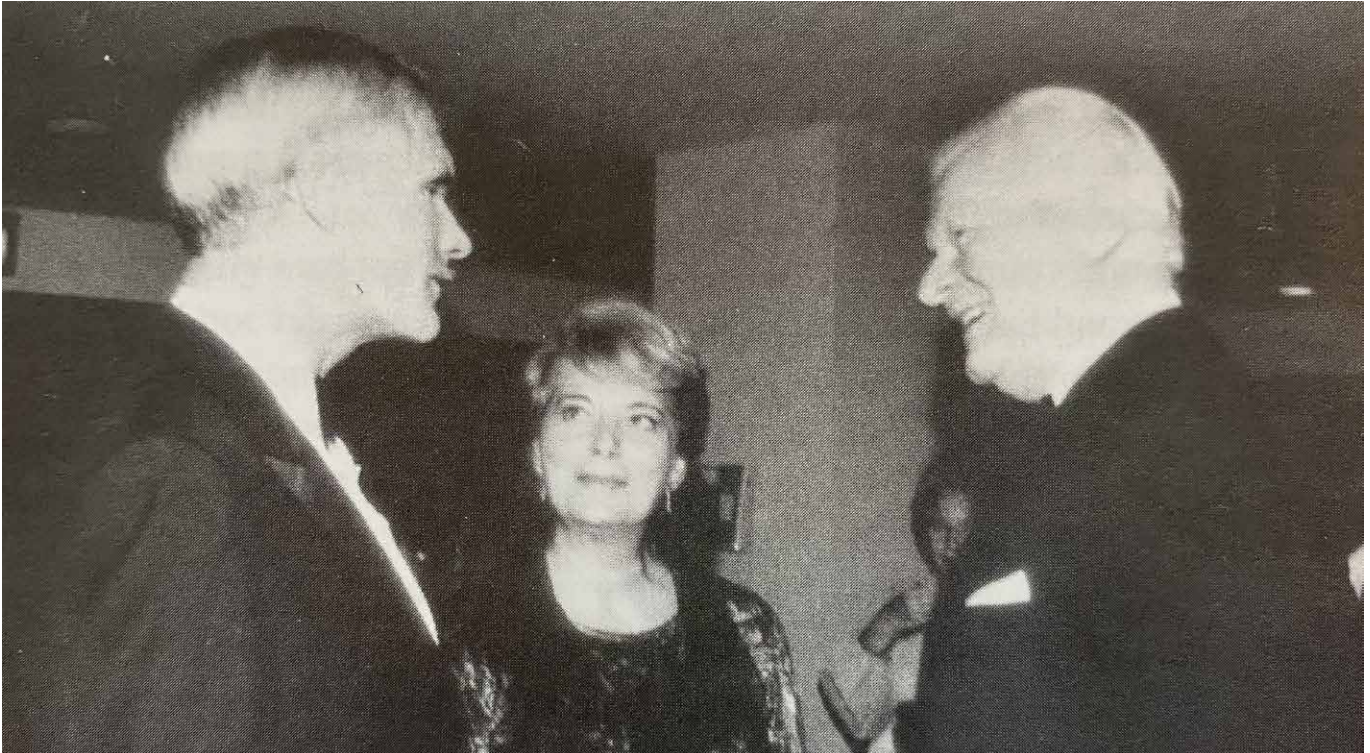
62 Center for Governance and Sustainability, “UNEP at 50: Reflections from a Former Insider: A Conversation with John E. Scanlon” University of Massachusetts <https://www.environmentalgovernance.org/post/reflections-from-a-former-insider-a-conversation-with-john-e-scanlon>.

63 “The Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol: Another Global Commitment to stop climate change,” *United Nations Environmental Programme*, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/kigali-amendment-montreal-protocol-another-global-commitment-stop-climate>.

64 There have been six Commission Chairs, Dr. Wolfgang Burhenne, Parvez Hassan, Professor Nicholas Robinson, Sheila Abed, Judge Antonio Herman Benjamin, and Professor Christina Voigt (the current Chair).

65 Barbara J. Lausche, *Weaving a web of environmental law*, (IUCN 2008). <https://www.iucn.org/resources/publication/weaving-web-environmental-law>.

66 Image from Barbara J Lausche's book: *Weaving a web of environmental law*, (IUCN 2008) 42. <https://www.iucn.org/resources/publication/weaving-web-environmental-law>. It shows Wolfgang Burhenne and Françoise Burhenne with Ted Turner in 1990.



Wolfgang Burhenne and Dr. Françoise Burhenne-Guilmin with Ted Turner in 1990 © Barbara J Lausche's book: *Weaving a web of environmental law*⁷¹

than trying to address a broader topic, such as biodiversity loss or climate change. These agreements focused on a specific issue of international concern, such as international trade in wildlife and migratory species of wild animals, wetlands of international importance, oceans, particular chemicals, the ozone layer, waste disposal in the marine environment, and cultural and natural heritage protection. Below we explore in a little more detail some of the issue specific conventions.

3.1 Wildlife

CITES was first called for in 1963 at the Eighth General Assembly of IUCN in Nairobi, Kenya but it was not finally drafted and adopted until 1973, coming into force just two years later,

on 1 July 1975. It is a legally binding agreement, that States enter voluntarily. Under this international legal framework Parties develop national laws to regulate international trade in the species of wild fauna and flora, including their parts and derivatives, that are included in the CITES Appendices. Today, the Appendices include around 38,000 species of animals and plants, each receiving different levels of protection, as provided for in the Convention text.⁶⁷ CITES is not self-executing. It places obligations on States to ensure CITES-listed species are internationally traded in accordance with the Convention, to enforce the provisions of the Convention and prohibit trade in violation thereof, including to penalize non-compliance.⁶⁸ The Appendices to the Convention is separated into three. Appendix I contains spe-

⁶⁷ "What is CITES?," CITES, <https://cites.org/eng/disc/what.php>.

⁶⁸ Scanlon, "CITES and wildlife trade – how CITES works and what it is and isn't"; Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (adopted March, 3, 1973, entered into force July, 1, 1975) 993 UNTS 243 (CITES) art VIII. Note the distinction between being obliged to penalize and criminalize.

cies that are already threatened with extinction and for which commercial international trade is prohibited.⁶⁹ Appendix II includes species that are not yet necessarily threatened with extinction, but they could be if their trade is not strictly regulated. Commercial international trade in Appendix II listed species allowed, but it is subject to strict regulation in an effort to ensure the trade is legal, sustainable and traceable.⁷⁰ Appendix III is a list of species included at the request of a Party that already regulates trade in the species and that needs the cooperation of other countries to prevent unsustainable or illegal exploitation.⁷¹ Notably, under all three Appendices international trade is allowed to a certain degree.

CMS provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats'.⁷² Like CITES, this Convention focuses on a narrow aspect of wildlife conservation and protection notably the migration of wild animals. CMS works with known range States to coordinate international conservation efforts.⁷³ One of the greatest challenges to wildlife conservation is the ability to protect a species when they move from one country to another, with different countries having varying levels of protection and laws. The CMS, and CITES and other conventions, create a global legal framework to ensure there is a consistency in approach. Such frameworks are vital, as wildlife, like the rest of nature, is not bound by a country's borders. They move to the habitat needed for survival and that is

why international agreements for the use and protection of species are so crucial, so that consistent rules are in place regardless of where a species is located, or decides to migrate to.

3.2 Specific Ecosystems

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands was adopted in 1971. It came into force four years later in 1975. Along with CITES and the World Heritage Convention, it was adopted at the height of the Cold War, showing that geopolitical tensions have not stopped cooperation on issues of conservation. The Convention has a narrowly defined objective of the conservation and wise use of wetlands, with each contracting party recognizing these natural environments are fundamental to supporting a variety of flora and fauna, in particular waterfowl.⁷⁴ Under the "three pillars" of the Convention, the Contracting Parties commit to: work towards the wise use of all their wetlands; designate suitable wetlands for the list of Wetlands of International Importance (the "Ramsar List") and ensure their effective management; and cooperate internationally on transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems and shared species.⁷⁵

3.3 Oceans

Like wetlands, oceans have been the subject of a variety of international agreements, with a primary focus on pollution. This can best be seen in MARPOL, which was adopted

69 CITES Appendix I.

70 CITES Appendix II.

71 CITES Appendix III.

72 CMS.

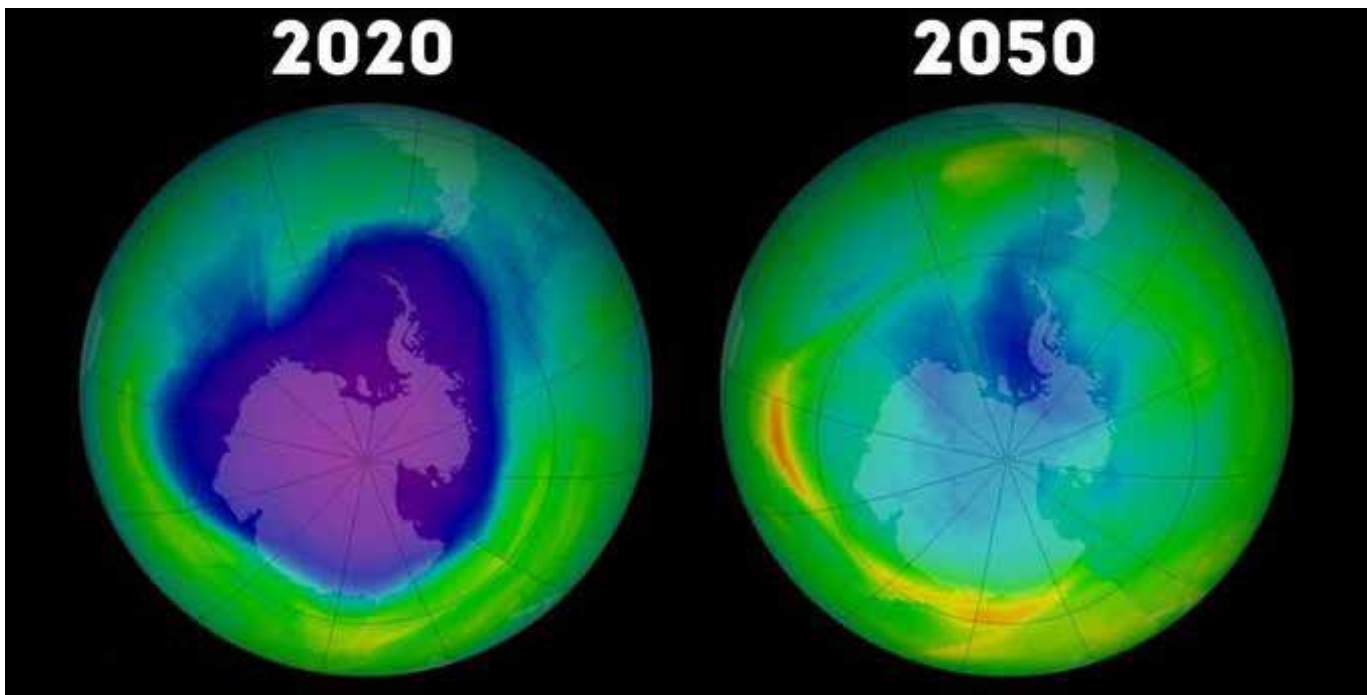
73 CMS.

74 Ramsar Convention.

75 "The Convention on Wetlands and its Mission," <https://www.ramsar.org/about/the-convention-on-wetlands-and-its-mission>.



MARPOL ©



Ozone

in 1973 and entered into force ten years later, in 1983.⁷⁶ Overseen by the International Maritime Organization, the Convention regulates pollution into the sea, primarily from ships, however recently that expanded to air pollution and the reduction of greenhouse gases in 2005.

3.4 Atmosphere: Ozone Protection

The “*Vienna Convention*” took effect in 1988 and by 2009 was ratified by every country. In response to rapid ozone depletion, a framework was created to restrict the use of harmful

⁷⁶ MARPOL.

chemicals that were responsible for the harm. The first of its kind to be signed by every country involved, this Convention is a shining example of how global commitments and action can solve cross border environmental issues. This effort was further bolstered by the Montreal Protocol, adopted in 1987 that has also been ratified by every country. The goal is to regulate around 100 man-made chemicals that are known to damage the stratospheric ozone layer, which protects humans and the environment from ultraviolet radiation.⁷⁷ Similar to the current issue of climate change, the Montreal Protocol and the Vienna Convention address long-term problems caused by current actions but for which the effects may not be evident for decades later. Success required true global cooperation and action. It is estimated that the ozone agreements phased out 98% of ozone-depleting substances and the atmospheric layer will return to pre-1980 levels by 2050.⁷⁸

The Kigali Agreement, an amendment to the Montreal Protocol, recognized that some substances were helpful from an ozone perspective but were harmful to the climate and adopting the Agreement was described as *"the single largest real contribution the world has made so far towards keeping the global tem-*

perature rise 'well below' 2 degrees Celsius".⁷⁹ While it garnered less attention than the Paris Agreement, it includes specific targets and timetables to replace hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).⁸⁰

The Multilateral Fund has had a lot to do with the success in addressing ozone depletion, as it has provided developing countries with the necessary funding to comply, and stay in compliance, with the Montreal Protocol. In December 2021, the funds totaled over \$4.37 billion USD from developed countries and non-Article 5 countries.⁸¹ There are lessons to be learned from the critical importance of the Multilateral Fund and the success of the various agreements on ozone-depleting substances, for biodiversity and climate change.

3.5 The Chemical and Waste Conventions

Often clustered together are the various waste and chemical conventions. The *"Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal"* (known as 'the Basel Convention') was adopted in 1989, coming into force later in 1992.⁸² It was created in response to the developed world dumping their waste into developing countries with weaker regulations and en-

77 "About Montreal Protocol," *United Nations Environment Programme*, <https://www.unep.org/ozonaction/who-we-are/about-montreal-protocol>.

78 Marjorie Mygrants, "Analysis of the Success of the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol," *MJIL* Vol. 36, http://www.mjilonline.org/analysis-of-the-success-of-the-vienna-convention-for-the-protection-of-the-ozone-layer-and-the-montreal-protocol/#_ftn11.

79 "The Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol: Another Global Commitment to stop climate change," *United Nations Environmental Programme*.

80 "Kigali Amendment hits Milestone 100th ratification, boosting climate action," *United Nations Environmental Programme*, July 14, 2020, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/kigali-amendment-hits-milestone-100th-ratification-boosting-climate>. See also, Kate Helfenstein, "Healing the Ozone Layer Through Diplomacy" *IISD*, September 13, 2021, <https://www.iisd.org/articles/healing-ozone-layer>.

81 "Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol" <http://www.multilateralfund.org/default.aspx>.

82 *Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal* (adopted March 22, 1989, entered into force May 5, 1992) 1673 UNTS 5 (Basel Convention).



Logo of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization / World Heritage Convention
© UNESCO

forcement mechanisms. The agreement aims to reduce waste generation, restrict trans-boundary movements, and regulate permissible movements. The *“Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade”* (also known as ‘the Rotterdam Convention’) was adopted in 1998. The Convention recognizes the shared responsibility and cooperative efforts for States to address the impact hazardous chemicals have on human health and the environment.⁸³ Lastly, the *“Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants”* (also called ‘the Stockholm Convention’) came into effect most recently of the three, having entered into force 17 May 2004.⁸⁴ It is a global treaty that aims to protect human health and the environment from

the effects of persistent organic pollutants. In 2013, almost ten years later, the Minamata Convention on Mercury, was adopted.

3.6 Cultural and Natural Heritage Protection

UNESCO, in part inspired by the destruction of World War I, adopted the World Heritage Convention in 1972 and it entered into force in 1975.⁸⁵ This Convention, sets out the duties of State Parties in identifying possible sites of outstanding universal value and how to protect them.⁸⁶ Focusing on credibility, conservation, capacity-building, communication, and communities the Convention aims to preserve national heritage sites.⁸⁷ In order for a site to be listed and protected under the Convention it must meet certain criteria⁸⁸, but the Convention is

83 Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (September 11, 1998) 28 ILM 1 (1999) art 1.

84 Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (May 17, 2004) 40 ILM 531 (Stockholm Convention).

85 “The World Heritage Convention – The Five Cs” UNESCO, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/convention/>.

86 “The World Heritage Convention – The Five Cs” UNESCO.

87 “The World Heritage Convention – The Five Cs” UNESCO.

88 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (adopted November 16, 1972, entered into force December 17, 1975) 1037 UNTS 151 (World Heritage Convention) art. 1- 2.

clear under Article 12 that sites not included should not be interpreted to mean they do 'not have an outstanding universal value'.⁸⁹

3.7 Administrative Hosts and the Locations of MEA Secretariats

Perhaps similar to the method of creating separate MEAs for specific environmental issues, the administrative and physical hosts of the various conventions and their secretariats are spread out amongst different agencies and locations across the globe. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is located in Gland, Switzerland and administered by the IUCN. CITES, CBD, CMS, the Montreal Protocol and Multilateral Fund are administered by UNEP, and are located in Bonn, Geneva, Montreal and Nairobi. The World Heritage Convention is administered by UNESCO in Paris. The UNFCCC and UNCCD are both administered by the United Nations Secretariat and are located in Bonn. Similarly, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) hosts the Secretariat for the "International Plant Protection Convention" (IPPC) in Rome.⁹⁰ The three chemicals and wastes conventions - the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions - are now administratively clustered. They are administered by UNEP and co-located in Geneva, as is the Minamata Convention on Mercury, for now.⁹¹

As a result, UNEP is not pre-eminent in terms of administering MEAs, nor in hosting their Secretariats. It is a rich mosaic of organizations and locations, and it shapes how UNEP can best operate in this space. UNEP has historically been challenged in its role as an administrator, and it has encountered numerous issues

with Parties and Secretariats, perhaps most notably with the CBD, CITES and CMS, amongst others. It has also struggled in providing substantive support. As Maria Ivanova writes:

"UNEP has not been able to provide the kind and scale of assistance necessary for member states to improve delivery on complex environmental concerns. Without such support, countries remain unable to deliver on their international obligations, and the environment continues to be at risk".⁹²

Given the nature of the MEA landscape, UNEP is best placed serving a different function, as a convenor of MEAs, as the entity that seeks to advance programmatic coherence, and to monitor progress with implementation. As co-author John Scanlon stated in 2012:

"UNEP's comparative advantage is not in providing administrative services and perhaps too much emphasis has been placed on this aspect of UNEP's relationship with conventions, distracting attention from where UNEP is needed most and performs best – on programme, financing and UN system-wide support. Maybe it is time to consider liberating UNEP from the role of administering convention secretariats and to have them directly administered by the actual service providers, namely UNON and/or the UN Office at Geneva (UNOG) - thereby allowing UNEP to focus on where it has a comparative advantage, namely with programme, financing and UN system-wide synergies."⁹³

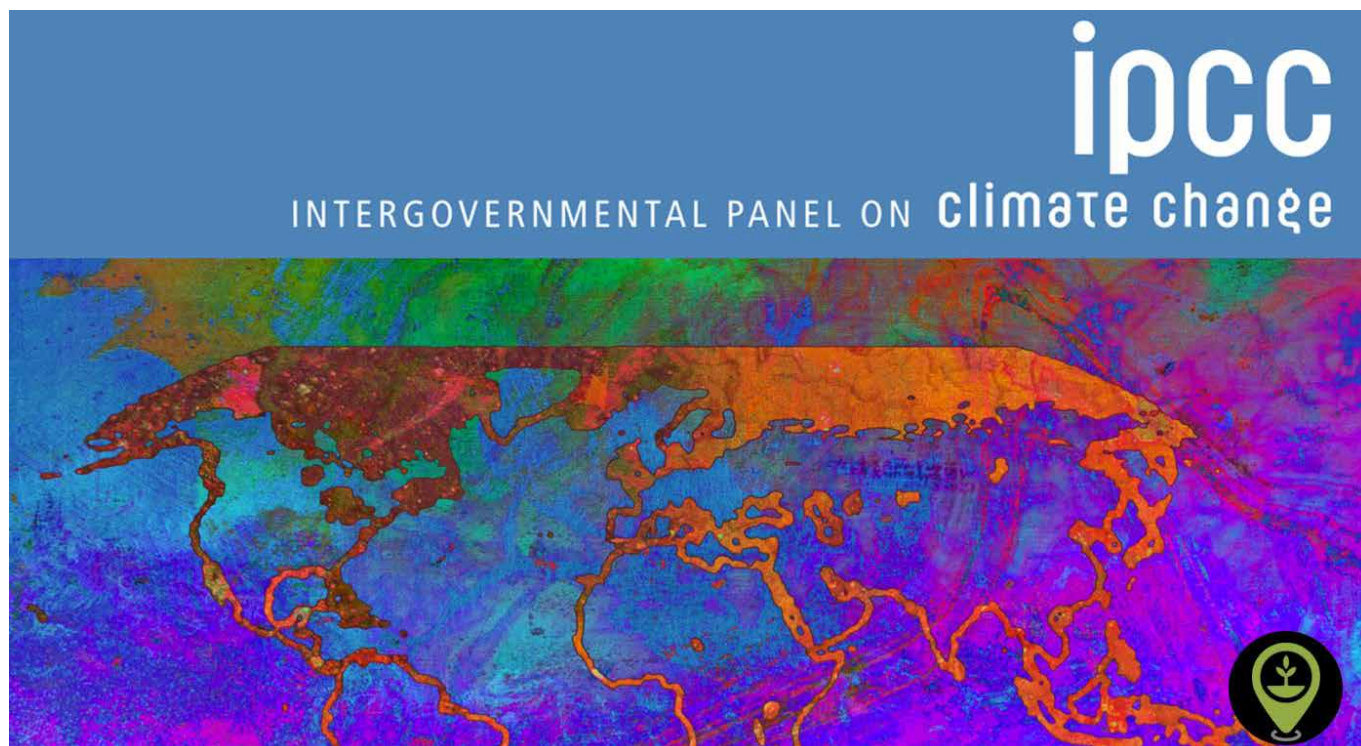
89 World Heritage Convention art. 12.

90 "About FAO," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, <https://www.fao.org/about/en/>.

91 Basel Convention; Rotterdam Convention; Stockholm Convention.

92 Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 87.

93 "Presentation of John E Scanlon, Secretary-General, CITES," CITES, February 21, 2012, <https://cites.org/fra/node/7727>.



Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change © IPCC

This issue arose quite frequently during the course of Dr Ivanova's UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, including interviews with the current Executive Director of UNEP, Inger Andersen, the Executive Secretaries of the CBD, Ms. Elizabeth Mrema, and of the UNCCD, Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, also a former Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, and co-author, John Scanlon, former Secretary-General of CITES.⁹⁴

3.8 Efforts to Strengthen Science and the Science Policy Interface: IPCC, IPBES and UNEP

The creation of the IPCC also led to the UNFCCC which has 197 Parties and acts as the par-

ent treaty to the Paris Agreement and Kyoto Protocol. The Secretariat is located in Bonn, Germany and primarily supports bodies such as the Conference of the Parties. The UNFCCC came into force in 1994 and it sets out the basic legal framework and principles for international climate change cooperation with the aim of stabilizing atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases to avoid "dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system."⁹⁵

The IPCC was created in 1988 by UNEP and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), to integrate science into the policy-making process. Intergovernmental efforts to develop new MEAs needed to be guided by scientific

⁹⁴ "UNEP @50 Dialogue Series," *Center for Governance and Sustainability University of Massachusetts*, <https://www.environmentalgovernance.org/unepdialogue>.

⁹⁵ "What are governing, process management, subsidiary, constituted and concluded Bodies?" United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/bodies/the-big-picture/what-are-governing-process-management-subsidiary-constituted-and-concluded-bodies>; "UN Framework Convention on Climate Change – UNFCCC," *IISD*, <https://enb.iisd.org/negotiations/un-framework-convention-climate-change-unfccc>.

research and evidence, something that was recognized in the outcomes of the Stockholm Conference. This guidance would provide policymakers with regular assessments to inform future action.

Assessments serve as a mechanism to analyse current environmental protection actions and calculate their failures or success. The reports by the IPCC became of particular importance in the creation of various MEAs, notably the UNFCCC itself. Further, the second assessment in 1995 informed the Kyoto Protocol adoption. Most recently, the fifth assessment provided the scientific data that set many of the guidelines in the Paris Agreement.⁹⁶

This creation of a respected global scientific body provided a sound science platform to underpin negotiations for a new international agreement on climate change. As the reports have evolved over the years, they have emphasized scientific consensus and the need for adaptation, as well as mitigation. According to a research paper on the IPCC reports, the first report only mentioned 'consensus' once in the summary but still was considered ground-breaking as it presented the first really accessible, globally agreed, document on understanding climate change.⁹⁷

The authors highlight that over time the reports move towards graphics, visuals, and plain and direct language.⁹⁸ This change of style and accessibility may have contributed to policy makers and the public's understanding of the science behind climate change.

Similar to the IPCC, UNEP, among others, was involved in the creation of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services ('IPBES'), an international organization that was established in 2012 to "*strengthen the role of science in public decision-making on biodiversity and ecosystem services*".⁹⁹ It arose from a United Nations General Assembly Resolution in 2010, and was created at a meeting convened by UNEP, but it is neither part of the United Nations or UNEP. Rather, it was established as "an independent intergovernmental body," with the seat of the Secretariat located in Bonn, Germany.

At its first session in January 2013, the IPBES Plenary requested UNEP to provide the Secretariat of IPBES. Perhaps wary of the experience of UNEP's history of administering MEAs, the Plenary made it clear that the Secretariat would be solely accountable to the IPBES Plenary on policy and programmatic matters.¹⁰⁰

96 "History of the IPCC," IPCC, <https://www.ipcc.ch/about/history/>.

97 Tomas Molina and Ernest Abadal, "The Evolution of Communicating the Uncertainty of Climate Change to Policy Makers: A Study of IPCC Synthesis Reports," *Sustainability* 13(5) (February 25 2021): 5.

98 Tomas Molina and Ernest Abadal, "The Evolution of Communicating the Uncertainty of Climate Change to Policy Makers: A Study of IPCC Synthesis Reports," 6.

99 "About" IPBES, <https://esa.org/ipbes/about/>.

100 "History of the establishment of IPBES" IPBES, <https://ipbes.net/history-establishment>.



The Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

The Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services © IPBES

IPBES currently has close to 140 Member States,¹⁰¹ and has many international partners including UNEP, UNDP, FAO, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, as well as the scientific community, NGOs and business and industry. Each project the organization takes on it must fall under four objectives¹⁰²:

1. Capacity and knowledge foundations
2. Regional and global assessments
3. Thematic and methodological issues
4. Communication and evaluation

Like the IPCC, IPBES has been very successful. In 2019, its first Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services was published and according to Maria Ivanova “*articulates the challenges and urges action to ensure a viable future for humanity and the rest of the species on earth*”.¹⁰³ In his presentation at Stockholm+50 in June 2022, co-author John Scanlon remarked on the extraordinary success of the IPBES in a relatively short period of time, and its influence on policy and policy makers, and contrasted such success to the longstanding, but largely ineffective, UNEP Global Environmental Outlook (GEO) series of reports.¹⁰⁴ He went on to note that UNEP’s ‘Gap Reports’, such as the series of Emissions Gap

¹⁰¹ “About: What is IPBES?” IPBES, <https://ipbes.net/about#:~:text=IPBES%20currently%20has%20close%20to%20140%20member%20States>.

¹⁰² “About” IPBES.

¹⁰³ Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World’s Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 111.

¹⁰⁴ Reflections from Stockholm +50: The Review, <https://towardstockholm50.org/2022/06/>.

Reports, have proven to be far more useful.¹⁰⁵ The IPBES reports take on particular significance as we work towards a Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to be adopted by the 196 Parties to the CBD in December, 2022.

Chapter 4: 1992 –UN Rio Earth Summit – Thematic Approach to MEAs

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development ('the Rio Earth Summit') took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and brought together 179 countries for a conference focused on the human impact on the environment.¹⁰⁶ The Conference highlighted how different social, economic and environmental factors are interdependent and evolve together, and how success in one sector requires action in other sectors to be sustained over time. The primary objective of the Rio Earth Summit was to produce a broad agenda and a new blueprint for international action on environmental and development issues that would help guide international cooperation and development policy in the twenty-first century.¹⁰⁷

Because UNEP chose to not actively engage in the preparations for the Earth Summit, it lost leadership, thereby marginalizing UNEP and leading to a loss of power in the field and loss of influence over environmental narratives.¹⁰⁸ The ramifications of this failure are still felt today, and it has shaped the recent evolution of

the organization. Despite UNEP suffering setbacks during this period of environmental law making, the movement itself picked up speed. This era saw an increase in coordination, integrated efforts, and an agenda focused on sustainable development. UNEP just so happened to no longer be in a position of global leadership at the time of these new changes.¹⁰⁹ This showed that international law making had a momentum that transcended the active involvement of UNEP.

4.1 Outcomes of the Rio Earth Summit

The Rio Earth Summit was a success and had multiple key outcomes. It recognized sustainable development as an attainable goal, balancing economic, social and environmental concerns, which at this time were viewed as three pillars. This view had its origins in the Stockholm Conference, and the report, *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland Report, recognized there must be a balance in how society produces, consumes, lives and makes decisions.¹¹⁰ One of the major outcomes of the Rio Earth Summit was Agenda 21. It was an ambitious program created to lay out strategies for sustainable development. The Agenda had an expansive scope covering economic and social issues, as well as environmental issues, such as poverty eradication, equality though action for women, and addressed financial concerns. Each section of the document was tied back to sustainable development, highlighting the in-

105 UNEP and UNEP-CCC, "The Heat is On: A world of climate promises not yet delivered' Emissions Gap Report" (2021) <https://www.unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2021>.

106 "United Nations Conference on Environment and Development" *United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/environment/rio1992>.

107 "United Nations Conference on Environment and Development" *United Nations*.

108 Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 68.

109 Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 69.

110 "Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future" United Nations, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf>.

OUR COMMON FUTURE

THE WORLD COMMISSION
ON ENVIRONMENT
AND DEVELOPMENT



Our Common Future / Brundtland Report Cover © The World Commission on Environment and Development and the Earth Summit 1992 logo © UN

terconnected nature of these issues.¹¹¹

The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development¹¹², the UNCCD¹¹³ and the UNFCCC are other notable outcomes from the Earth Summit.¹¹⁴ The Summit was also notable as the event where the CBD opened for signa-

ture.¹¹⁵ The Declaration on Principles of Forest Management again recognized the right to development had to be balanced with preserving the needs of present and future generations. The Earth Summit also led to the creation of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which held the first global conference dedicat-

111 "Agenda 21" *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development*, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>.

112 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (adopted June 14, 1992) Un Doc. A/CONF.151/26 (vol. I) (Rio Declaration).

113 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (adopted October 14, 1994, entered into force December 26, 1996) 1954 UNTS 3 (UNCCD).

114 "The Rio Conventions" *Convention on Biological Diversity* <https://www.cbd.int/rio/>.

115 "History of the Convention" *Convention on Biological Diversity*, <https://www.cbd.int/history/>.

ed to the sustainable development of small island nations and led to negotiations for an agreement on straddling stocks and highly migratory fish stocks.¹¹⁶

The 1990s saw a paradigm shift from the rapid development of narrowly focused international environmental laws to a focus on sustainable development. Contributions to the UNEP Environment Fund dropped over 30 percent in five years, which was equal to a drop in funding from \$130 million to \$90 million.¹¹⁷

4.2 Towards a Thematic Approach – the Rio Conventions

Recognizing of the scale and nature of the threats to the environment, and a new focus on sustainable development, was reflected in a change in approach to MEAs, moving away from narrowly focused issues of international concern, to addressing broader thematic issues. This became most clear with the development of the three 'Rio Conventions' on the themes of biodiversity, climate change, and desertification.¹¹⁸ This change from agreements that addressed very specific environmental concerns, reflected a growing understanding of the need for more comprehensive, better coordinated, efforts to effectively address the scale of the environmental challenges and restore societies balance with nature. A focus of this coordination was on land, deemed a common threat uniting the Convention targets. New initiatives were proposed from sustainable land management to resilience capacities and reducing deforestation emissions.

Coordination did not stop with the conventions, indeed the secretariats of each of the Rio Conventions joined together to establish a Joint Liaison Group that aimed to collect and share information on their internal programs and operations. This allows for coordinated efforts by secretariats to tackle problems that are intertwined, share resources, and better allocate funding.¹¹⁹

4.3 What Role for UNEP in a World of MEAs

This new push for international environmental protection was not without its problems. The main concern was that the MEA field was becoming oversaturated. Developing countries in particular would have to choose where to use resources and conventions began to compete instead of working together.¹²⁰ At the same time UNEP started to have less profile and influence than some of these conventions, including their CoPs, which would attract more States, observers and media than the UNEA, or its predecessor, the UNEP Governing Council. The more UNEP's role became that of a 'middle man' the less effective it became. UNEP was not designated as the administrative host of the new conventions on climate change or desertification. Most secretariats hosted by UNEP were located in Bonn, Geneva and Montreal rather than its headquarters in Nairobi. While many MEAs have different entities serving as their administrative hosts, such as those discussed in chapter 3, the climate change and desertification convention secretariats operate under the United Nations Secretariat.

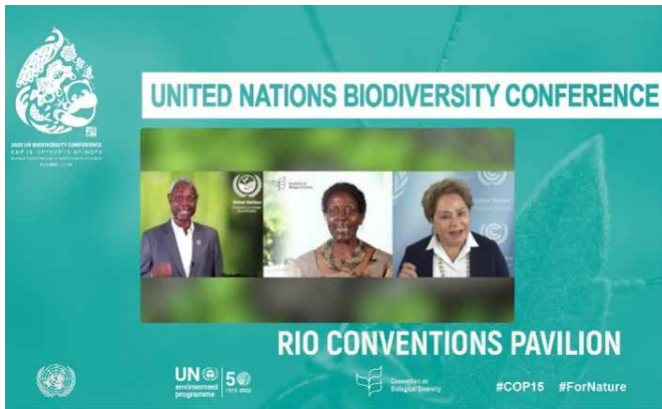
116 "United Nations Conference on Environment and Development" *United Nations*.

117 Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 66.

118 See, CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD.

119 "Rio Conventions: Partners" United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, <https://www.unccd.int/convention/partners/rio-conventions>.

120 Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 83.



United Nations Biodiversity Conference / Rio Conventions Pavillion and the Convention on Biological Diversity logo © UN

Had the Rio Earth Summit turned out differently, with UNEP being the administrative and physical host of the three Rio conventions and their secretariats it would have changed the trajectory of UNEP. It did not happen, and it has had ongoing ramifications.

Chapter 5: Post 1992 – Clustering of MEAs¹²¹

After 1992, discussions on clustering MEAs began to emerge. UNEP had been given the mandate to coordinate environmental initiatives for the entire United Nations system, a task that became increasingly difficult as new conventions continued to emerge. The rapid development of international environmental law combined with issue specific MEAs, with their own independent governance and financing, presented a challenge for UNEP in fulfilling that mandate.

Environmental problems cannot be viewed in isolation, they are complex and interwo-

ven with other societal themes such as human rights, urban development and economic growth. However, the fragmented and specialized approach of MEAs, coupled with having their own independent governance structures, meant an authority tasked with ensuring coordination was necessary, but nearly impossible to achieve.¹²²

In response to this challenge, the move towards clustering became a major focus of UNEP. Clustering sought to combine agreements in various ways in order to improve effectiveness and reduce competition between conventions. The approach can be based on organizational elements, agendas, implementation, or financial needs. Clustering provided UNEP with the chance to advance its goal of delivering coordination within a leadership role.¹²³ The idea of clustering was also followed by the United Nations Environmental Management Group (EMG), continuing the idea of thematically driven actions tackling problems that spanned environmental issues.¹²⁴ EMG was established in

¹²¹ For a deep analysis of clustering and synergies see Bradnee Chambers, "Interlinkages and the Effectiveness of Multilateral Environmental Agreements" *United Nations University Press* (2008).

¹²² Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 69.

¹²³ Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 69.

¹²⁴ Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 70.

2001 in response to UNGA Resolution 53/242 of 1999.¹²⁵ The EMG helps facilitate the collaboration of United Nations agencies and coherence of MEAs by “*programmatic expertise, knowledge, and capacity to provide the foundation for joint programming and to reduce overlap*”.¹²⁶

The common functions of MEAs allow for certain clustering. MEAs have three main functions, enabling Parties to engage in: decision-making processes; dispute settlement; monitoring and compliance, and implementation support.¹²⁷ Reporting is one issue that attracted particular attention, as States that are Party to multiple conventions also have multiple reporting obligations, which can become quite onerous. According to Oberthür this often includes actively writing up detailed reports for each Convention, which become a serious burden for countries with less capacity. Clustering in this instance allows for integrated reporting and can lead to an increase in obligations being fulfilled.¹²⁸ However, conventions and their CoPs are sovereign. For example, the UNGA and the UNEA cannot take decisions that bind any CoP. As such, to implement these ideas requires separate decisions to be taken by each MEA through its CoP.

5.1 The Biodiversity Liaison Group and the Global Biodiversity Framework

In order to advance cooperation, a biodiversity liaison group (BLG) was established between the secretariats of seven biodiversity-related conventions namely, CBD, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, CMS, CITES, the World Heritage Convention, and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.¹²⁹ The first meeting was held in Paris 2004 and has continued to this day. In 2010, the BLG delivered a joint statement to the CBD CoP10 through the CITES Secretary-General on the draft Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, which was a first for the BLG, and is now become standard practice.¹³⁰ In 2011, a new *modus operandi* was agreed upon by all members including stating the group is a platform to exchange information, maximize effectiveness, and avoid duplication of efforts.¹³¹

At the 10th Conference of the Parties in 2010 a ten-year global Strategic Plan for Biodiversity was adopted. The Plan would combat biodiversity loss through 20 targets known as the Aichi targets. The Vision was “*By 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people*” and the Mission, stated, in part, that it was to “*Take effective and urgent action to halt the loss of biodiversity in order to ensure that by 2020 ecosystems are resilient and continue to provide essential services,*

¹²⁵ Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 63.

¹²⁶ Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 63, 70.

¹²⁷ Sebastian Oberthür, “Clustering of Multilateral Environmental Agreements: Potentials and Limitations” United Nations University, <https://archive.unu.edu/inter-linkages/docs/IEG/Oberthur.pdf>.

¹²⁸ Sebastian Oberthür, “Clustering of Multilateral Environmental Agreements: Potentials and Limitations”.

¹²⁹ “Biodiversity Liaison Group” UNESCO, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/blg>.

¹³⁰ “Statement to the High-Level Segment of CBD-COP 10 in Nagoya: Delivered by the Secretary-General of CITES” CITES, April 16, 2014, https://cites.org/eng/news/sg/2010/20101028_sg_statement_nagoya.php.

¹³¹ “Modus Operandi for the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-related Conventions” CBD, September 4, 2011, <https://www.cbd.int/cooperation/doc/blg-modus-operandi-en.pdf>.



© IISD and CBD CoP 10

thereby securing the planet's variety of life, and contributing to human well-being, and poverty eradication." The Aichi Targets were divided around common Strategic Goals, namely to:

- Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society;
- Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use;
- Improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity;
- Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services; and
- Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building.¹³²

This Strategic Plan provided an overarching framework on biodiversity for the biodiversity-related conventions, the United Nations sys-

tem and all other partners engaged in biodiversity management and policy development.

The biodiversity-related convention secretariats actively engaged in the preparatory process, and it was a suggestion from the then Secretary-General of CITES, and co-author, at a pre CoP Retreat of the Biodiversity Liaison Group in Bogis-Bossey, Switzerland that the name of the Strategic Plan was changed from the 'CBD Strategic Plan on Biodiversity', to the 'Strategic Plan on Biodiversity', to make it more inclusive,¹³³ an idea that was enthusiastically embraced by the Executive Secretary of the CBD Secretariat, and then Chair of the BLG Ahmed Djoghla.

This new Strategic Plan sought to align all MEAs, recognizing the unique contribution to be made by each of them towards achieving the Aichi targets.¹³⁴ This approach fully respected the independence of each MEA, while embracing each Convention's contribution to-

¹³² "Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Targets" CBD, <https://www.cbd.int/doc/strategic-plan/2011-2020/Aichi-Targets-EN.pdf>.

¹³³ "Remarks by John Scanlon, Secretary-General of CITES made during the Geneva Environment Network briefing on the Outcomes of the Nagoya Biodiversity Summit" CITES, January 12, 2021, https://cites.org/eng/news/sg/2010/20101110_sg_statement_GEN.php.

¹³⁴ Guillaume Futhazar. The Diffusion of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and Its Aichi Biodiversity Targets within the Biodiversity Cluster: An Illustration of Current Trends in the Global Governance of Biodiversity and Ecosystems. Yearbook of International Environmental Law, 2016, 25, pp.133 - 166. 10.1093/yiel/yvw061. halshs-01477899.

wards achieving a common set of goals and targets, and inviting them to align with the Strategic Plan.

As the CBD has no authority over any other MEA, just as UNEP and UNEA has no authority over the CBD or any other MEA, it was then for each MEA, through its own CoP, to determine if it wished to align with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. It was positive to see each biodiversity-related convention do so through their respective CoPs. By way of example, CITES aligned with the Strategic Plan through an amendment to its Strategic Vision in 2013, adopted at CITES CoP16 by consensus, which was a first for the Convention.^{135 136}

5.2 Global Biodiversity Framework and the SDGs

In a Technical Note prepared by UNDP, UNEP, CBD, FAO and the World Bank, these entities showed how the Aichi Targets overlapped and were aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹³⁷ Such synergy is critically important given the SDGs were adopted by the UNGA and had buy-in at the highest level of all States. By meeting the SDGs, States are also working towards the Aichi Targets and vice versa. For example, SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production patterns overlaps with Aichi Targets 1, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 19.¹³⁸ These targets cover

biodiversity awareness, sustainable production, sustainable management of aquatic sources, sustainable agriculture, pollution reduction, and sharing information and knowledge.¹³⁹ A new Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, to replace the Aichi Targets, is currently being drafted and will be considered in December of this year at CBD CoP15 in Montreal, Canada.¹⁴⁰

5.3 Tension with UNEP Administering MEAs – CBD, CITES and CMS

As UNEP moved to administer more MEAs, tension developed as to the purpose and identity of the organization and what 'administration' meant. With so much of its resources and energy going into this administrative role, convention secretariats came into conflict with the organization instead of working in harmony with it.¹⁴¹ As stated by Maria Ivanova, "*providing administrative services does not add value for UNEP.*"¹⁴² Further, UNEP continuing to engage in administrative services may prove costly, noting that "*UNEP is, in many instances, playing a role that is akin to a 'middle man' between the convention secretariat(s) and the service provider(s), which comes at a cost*"¹⁴³

This administrative role inhibits UNEP from playing the role of a conductor, organizing between each Convention and ensuring harmony. As stated by Maria Ivanova, "*The conven-*

135 The United States noted in the record that it did not want to call for a vote but wanted its objection noted (also noting that it is not a Party to the CBD).

136 John E. Scanlon, "CITES at Its Best: CoP16 as a 'Watershed Moment' for the World's Wildlife" *RECIEL* 22 (3) 2013: 226.

137 "Biodiversity and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Technical Note" *Convention on Biological Diversity*, <https://www.cbd.int/development/doc/biodiversity-2030-agenda-technical-note-en.pdf>.

138 "Biodiversity and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Technical Note" *Convention on Biological Diversity*, 2.

139 "Biodiversity and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Technical Note" *Convention on Biological Diversity*, 2.

140 "A New Global Framework for Managing Nature Through 2030: First Detailed Draft Agreement Debuts" *CBD*, <https://www.cbd.int/article/draft-1-global-biodiversity-framework>.

141 Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 217.

142 Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 218.

143 "Presentation of John E Scanlon, Secretary-General, CITES" *CITES*, February 21, 2012, <https://cites.org/fra/node/7727>.



CITES CoP16 ©

tions have very different administrative set ups ... Moreover, the convention secretariats are geographically distributed ... which has presented a range of communication and coordination challenges".¹⁴⁴ In the case of CITES, the Secretariat can address issues of international trade in listed species, but it cannot advance the other issues that impact species survival such as habitat loss, social issues, infrastructure, and agricultural growth.¹⁴⁵ UNEP with its broad mandate can and should ask such questions and ensure these areas of convergence are addressed through the careful coordination of all MEAs.¹⁴⁶

Prior to 2011, there had been an acrimonious relationship between CITES, its Secretariat and Standing Committee, and UNEP lasting for a decade, with negotiations on a Memorandum of Understanding between UNEP and the

CITES Standing Committee on the provision of administrative services having stalled.

Much of the dispute was about the quality and timeliness of the administrative services provided by UNEP and the respective roles of the CITES Standing Committee and the Executive Director of UNEP regarding staff appointments, including of the Secretary-General, the performance management of the Secretary-General and programmatic direction.

This impacted the programmatic relationship between UNEP and CITES, which was to no one's advantage.¹⁴⁷ A compromise was finally reached, that clearly identified the role and functions of all entities. Similar tensions were evident with many other MEAs administered by UNEP, including the CMS but most particularly with the CBD, where tensions between

¹⁴⁴ Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 86.

¹⁴⁵ Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 217.

¹⁴⁶ Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 217.

¹⁴⁷ John E. Scanlon, "Early reflections on eight years as Secretary-General of CITES, 2010-2018" *LinkedIn*, April 13, 2018, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/early-reflections-eight-years-secretary-general-cites-scanlon-am/>.

the then Executive Director and then CBD Executive Secretary were well known and played out in the public arena.¹⁴⁸ We have not seen the same level of tension with the climate and desertification conventions, both of which are administered by the United Nations Secretariat.

5.4 Clustering the Administration of the Chemicals and Waste Conventions

As regulatory instruments and conventions continued to emerge, leading to discussions of clustering, various countries were promoting UNEP to begin to 'cluster' MEA administrations. For example, the three chemical and waste conventions administered by UNEP, Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions were, following a decision of each of the conventions CoPs, given a joint Secretariat.¹⁴⁹ This was possible given all of the conventions were administered by UNEP and were physically located in the same duty station, Geneva, and the same building, the International Environment House. While this move made administrative processes more effective, negotiations became more challenging as the issues each Convention addressed were now joint, requiring more careful cooperation and problem solving.¹⁵⁰

Given the many different organizations administering the biodiversity-related conventions, and their disparate locations, such an approach would not work for this cluster. Here, UNEP should focus its efforts on programmatic coherence, especially at the national level.

Chapter 6: 2012 – UN Rio+20 Conference–Convergence and Implementation

Following the Rio Earth Summit and the move towards clustering, the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (known as 'Rio+20') continued to advance convergence between MEAs. The idea of a 'sustainable future' started in 1972 and has continued to evolve ever since, with an understanding that environmental challenges cannot be viewed in isolation. By its nature, sustainable development involves the identification of holistic solutions. One of the outcomes of Rio+20, was to move away from the concept of three pillars of sustainable development to three dimensions, recognizing they are all intertwined.

For Rio+20, this was emphasized in the 'Future We Want' document. Among the 283 paragraphs, previously isolated environmental issues were brought together under the umbrella of sustainable development.¹⁵¹ The document includes, for example, paragraphs on disaster risk reduction, climate change, forests, biodiversity, desertification, chemicals and waste, and CITES. The inclusion and recognition of CITES was a milestone for the Convention and of particular interest as it is one of the more narrowly mandated MEAs.¹⁵² The paragraph reads:

"We recognize the important role of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora,

148 "CBD Executive Secretary Responds to UNEP on Term of Office, Administrative Arrangements" IISD, October 4, 2011, <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/cbd-executive-secretary-responds-to-unep-on-term-of-office-administrative-arrangements/>.

149 Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 106.

150 Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 106-107.

151 UNGA Res 66/288 (July 12, 2012) A/RES/66/288.

152 Noting that CITES deals with international trade in wildlife and it only regulates trade in listed species (being 0.5% of the world's species). It does not address domestic trade issues or markets or other key factors impacting illegal exploitation of wildlife.



Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Convention logo for the COPs / Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development logo © UN

an international agreement that stands at the intersection between trade, the environment and development, promotes the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, should contribute to tangible benefits for local people, and ensures that no species entering into international trade is threatened with extinction. We recognize the economic, social and environmental impacts of illicit trafficking in wildlife, where firm and strengthened action needs to be taken on both the supply and demand sides. In this regard, we emphasize the importance of effective international cooperation among relevant multilateral environmental agreements and international organizations. We further stress the importance of basing the listing of species on agreed criteria.”¹⁵³

This important document reiterates that ‘sustainability is not achieved through one action but through the accumulation of multiple ac-

tions’.¹⁵⁴ In addition to this ground-breaking guideline document, Rio+20 focused on the ‘green economy,’ in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development, and an institutional framework for sustainable development.¹⁵⁵ The conference reaffirmed previous commitments and established a ‘High Level Political Forum’ to enhance the integration of the environment, economic, and social role in sustainable development.¹⁵⁶

6.1 Creating the UN Environment Assembly

While not an outcome of Rio+20, and rather a proposal emerging from the outcome document, the UNEA was established by the UNGA as the world’s first subsidiary body with universal membership within the United Nations.¹⁵⁷

Before Rio+20, there was general agreement that the international environmental governance (IEG) system was failing to deliver on expectations. This started a discussion on reform

¹⁵³ A/RES/66/288.

¹⁵⁴ John E. Scanlon, “CITES: From Stockholm in ’72 to Rio+20 – Back to the Future” *IISD*, July 6, 2012, <http://sdg.iisd.org/commentary/guest-articles/cites-from-stockholm-in-%E2%80%9972-to-rio20-back-to-the-future/>.

¹⁵⁵ Frederico Ramos De Armas, “Rio+20- Start of a Process” *Our Planet – UNEP*: 6, https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/9167/OP_FEB_2013.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

¹⁵⁶ Frederico Ramos De Armas, “Rio+20- Start of a Process” 6.

¹⁵⁷ Melinda Kimble, “The UN Environment Assembly: What you need to know” *United Nations Foundation*, June 23, 2016, <https://unfoundation.org/blog/post/the-un-environment-assembly-what-you-need-to-know/>.

of IEG with the (then) UNEP Governing Council adopting a decision at its Twenty fifth Session in 2009, followed by a decision to continue the process in 2010. This led to an inclusive inter-governmental process that elicited a variety of ideas from States through what came known as the 'Belgrade Process'.¹⁵⁸ This resulted in a set of options for improving IEG, including enhancing UNEP, creating a new umbrella organization, establishing a specialized agency, reforming the United Nations Economic and Social Council or enhancing institutional reforms and existing structures.¹⁵⁹

The main difference between the options was the institutional structure that would be either created or modified. After the 'Future We Want' document¹⁶⁰ called on the UNGA to strengthen UNEP through universal membership of its governing body, UNGA adopted resolution 67/251 which changed the designation of the UNEP Governing Council to UNEA, a body with universal membership. And from that point UNEA was born and is now a significant United Nations body with a membership of all 193 Member States.¹⁶¹

The discussion regarding improving the IEG system goes beyond creating a specialized agency or strengthening UNEP. Improvement

can also occur by "*enhancing the coordination and cooperation amongst conventions, which some often refer to as synergies*".¹⁶² For IEG to truly be effective, synergies between financing, programming and administration should be highlighted. The creation of UNEA came at a time when the effectiveness of UNEP was under question. With some requesting UNEP to play less of an administrative role and instead focus its attention on program development, finance, and general United Nations system-wide support.¹⁶³ According to Maria Ivanova, the UNEA is still "*a political forum whose potential is yet to be realized*".¹⁶⁴

6.2 Advancing Synergies on Multiple Fronts

Synergies is not just about synergies within clusters, for example the biodiversity-related conventions. In 2016 Secretary-General of CITES, and co-author, John Scanlon highlighted the importance of synergies that involved other conventions, agencies and initiatives, both from within and outside of the environmental space. In so far as it related to CITES, synergies relate to law enforcement, trade¹⁶⁵, natural resources management, livelihoods and finance, as was captured in the outcomes of a UNEP publication on the issue.¹⁶⁶

158 John E. Scanlon, "Enhancing Environmental Governance for Sustainable Development." *Governance and Sustainability Issue Brief Series: Brief 5*. Center for Governance and Sustainability. University of Massachusetts Boston (2012).

159 John E. Scanlon, "Enhancing Environmental Governance for Sustainable Development."

160 Dr. Bradnee Chambers led the UNEP Secretariat's inputs at Rio+20 on IEG.

161 "United Nations Environment Assembly – UNEA" *IISD*, <https://enb.iisd.org/negotiations/united-nations-environment-assembly-unea>.

162 "Presentation of John E Scanlon, Secretary-General, CITES" *CITES*.

163 "Presentation of John E Scanlon, Secretary-General, CITES" *CITES*.

164 Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 214. See also Chambers, Dr B, Reforming international environmental governance: From institutional limits to innovative reforms <https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:2457/pdf9789280811117.pdf>

165 For a deeper analysis on trade see: Opening Remarks by Roberto Azevêdo 'CITES and the WTO: Enhancing Cooperation for Sustainable Development' (2015) https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/spra_e/spra65_e.htm.

166 UN Environment, 'Understanding synergies and mainstreaming among the biodiversity related conventions: A special contributory volume by key biodiversity convention secretariats and scientific bodies.' (2016) UN Environment, Nairobi, Kenya. 67.



Image from Belgrade, first IEC meeting in 2009

A Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly on 10 May 2018, entitled “Towards a Global Pact for the Environment, was another effort to advance, inter alia, synergies, and it led to a Report of the United Nations Secretary-General entitled “Gaps in International Environmental Law and Environment-related Instruments: Towards a Global Pact for the Environment”, and a follow up Resolution in 2019. A new treaty has not yet found favour with States, but the idea continues to be advanced via a coalition that brings together NGOs, activists, artists, citizens, lawyers and scientists: the Global Pact Coalition.¹⁶⁷

6.3 Implementation, Implementation, Implementation

“Implementation, implementation, implementation” was the catch cry of the newly appoint-

ed Executive Secretary of the CBD, Braulio Dias, when he took over the reins of the Secretariat following the 2010 CBD CoP10 in Nagoya.¹⁶⁸

After the establishment of UNEP, there was increased participation by governments in addressing environmental issues, thereby enhancing UNEP’s standing and legitimacy, but it did not necessarily lead to better implementation of MEAs. Given UNEP’s mandate, the program’s role in the implementation of MEAs is key to the success of meeting environmental protection goals.¹⁶⁹

However, implementation is not just a matter of integrating international policy into domestic law. For many countries, implementation is dependent upon the ability to secure technical support and to build the necessary capacity, which requires

¹⁶⁷ For more see Global Pact for the Environment, <https://globalpactenvironment.org/en/>

¹⁶⁸ As noted by co-author, John Scanlon.

¹⁶⁹ Niko Urho, Maria Ivanova, Anna Dubrova and Natalia Escobar-Pemberthy, “International Environmental Governance: Accomplishments and Way Forward” *Nordic Council of Ministers* (2019) https://www.mivanova.com/files/ugd/d1ec7d_9174f994ef-0b46efa226aadf2559f094.pdf.

financial assistance.¹⁷⁰ Support often includes problem solving. UNEP is in a unique position to identify gaps and develop effective solutions.¹⁷¹ As stated by Maria Ivanova, “*International environmental governance is defined by commitments countries make and those they fail to fulfil. Close the implementation gap requires clear lines of responsibility and accountability for reaching internationally agreed-upon goals*”.¹⁷²

The importance of implementation was highlighted in the WWF 2018 Living Planet Report¹⁷³, which showed a steady and consistent decline in wildlife, with 60% of vertebrates being lost over the past 40 years. The 2020 global Living Planet Index¹⁷⁴ shows an average 68% (range:-73% to -62%) fall in monitored populations of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish between 1970 and 2016.

A graph presented with the 2018 Living Planet Report shows that this sharp decline in wildlife has been uninterrupted by the adoption of the CBD, its strategies and targets. And almost 50 years since the Stockholm Conference, the IPBES released its Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services¹⁷⁵, which says that one million species will go extinct within coming decades if we continue on our current trajectory. Among its many other

findings, IPBES tells us that 75% of the planet's terrestrial surface is severely degraded, and that we have lost 85% of wetlands by area, notwithstanding having the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands since 1973.

6.4 CBD – a Double-edged Sword?

In some ways, the CBD was a double-edged sword. On the one hand it demonstrated political and legal commitment to the issue, yet on the other hand it provided a forum for the global biodiversity community to meet, and agree upon biodiversity strategies and targets, largely detached from the agencies and sectors that determine the fate of biodiversity. There is an old expression that the tail does not wag the dog, and the biodiversity agenda has not shaped the development agenda.¹⁷⁶

In an interview on ‘A Thirty-year reflection of the 1992 Rio Conference on the Environment and Development with Ambassador Tommy Koh: “Have States failed?”’ with Ambassador Tommy Koh on 25 August 2022, hosted by the Centre for International Law at the University of Singapore, he described the CBD as having been “a failure”, yet he maintained his support for the value of international environmental law.¹⁷⁷ It has provided the framework for action by States, a means to monitor progress

170 Maria Ivanova, “International Environmental Governance: Implementing Reform” Center for Governance and Sustainability at University of Massachusetts Boston (2018) https://www.mivanova.com/files/ugd/d1ec7d_b9a9379309f441e9801df5ea65cb256a.pdf.

171 Ivanova, “International Environmental Governance: Implementing Reform”.

172 Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 213.

173 WWF (2020) Living Planet Report 2020 – Bending the curve of biodiversity loss. Almond, R.E.A., Grooten M. and Petersen, T. (Eds). WWF, Gland, Switzerland.

174 WWF (2020) Living Planet Report 2020 – Bending the curve of biodiversity loss. Almond, R.E.A., Grooten M. and Petersen, T. (Eds). WWF, Gland, Switzerland.

175 “Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services” IPBES, <https://ipbes.net/news/global-assessment-report-biodiversity-ecosystem-services>.

176 John E. Scanlon, “Saving wildlife requires a new approach” *LinkedIn*, September 10, 2019, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/saving-wildlife-requires-new-approach-john-e-scanlon-ao/>.

177 “A thirty-year reflection of the 1992 Rio Conference on the Environment and Development with Ambassador Tommy Koh: “Have

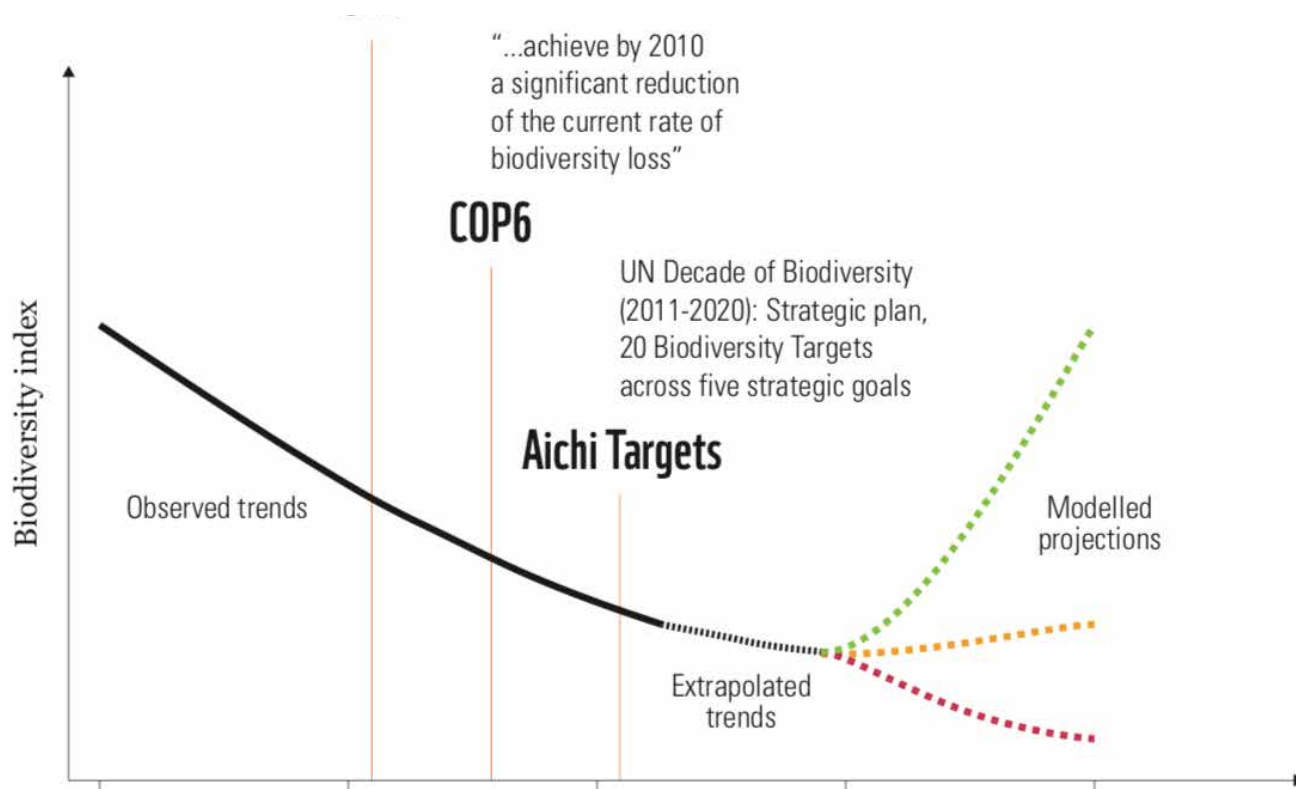


Image from the WWF Living Planet Report 2020

against commitments, and, in some instances, avenues for achieving compliance.

6.5 UNEP as a Coordinator and Convener

One aspect of UNEP acting more as a coordinator and a convener and less like an administrator, is the ability to help leverage other organizations to implement their mandate. An example of what is possible can be found through an initiative that was driven by one of the MEAs administered by UNEP, namely the creation of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC).¹⁷⁸ In 2010, during the Global Tiger Summit in Russia, the

ICCWC was created in response to a surge of illicit trafficking driven primarily by transnational criminal groups and the inadequate global response to these crimes.¹⁷⁹ The group brought together CITES, INTERPOL, UNODC, WCO, and the World Bank and was signed off by the executive head of each partner.¹⁸⁰ Each partner agreed to leverage its own unique mandate and authority to deliver a coordinated global response to a serious crime that required a much stronger and better coordinated global response.

Starting from the ground up, ICCWC assisted countries with advisory support, toolkits, and

States failed?" *National University of Singapore*, August 25, 2022, <https://cil.nus.edu.sg/event/a-thirty-year-reflection-of-the-1992-rio-conference-on-the-environment-and-development-with-ambassador-tommy-koh-have-states-failed/>.

¹⁷⁸ Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 222.

¹⁷⁹ Robert Zoellick and John Scanlon, "We Must Ratchet Up the Right Against Illicit Wildlife Trafficking" *IISD*, November 23, 2020, <https://sdg.iisd.org/commentary/guest-articles/we-must-ratchet-up-the-fight-against-illicit-wildlife-trafficking/>.

¹⁸⁰ "A Letter of Understanding" *CITES*, <https://cites.org/eng/prog/iccwc/mou.php>.

supporting cross-regional enforcement operations.¹⁸¹ Most notably, the ICCWC supported the publishing of the first ever United Nations World Wildlife Crime Report by UNODC in 2016, which furthered the level of global awareness and interest in the issue.¹⁸²

6.6 Development of a Carbon Market – Rio to Kyoto to Paris to Glasgow

Climate change, an environmental threat that touches every issue from biodiversity to desertification to water resources, only began to be seriously addressed once an MEA was adopted, namely the UNFCCC, followed by various protocols and agreements. The Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC operationalizes the UNFCCC by committing industrialized countries and economies in transition to limit and reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions in accordance with agreed individual targets. One important element of the Kyoto Protocol was the establishment of flexible market mechanisms, which are based on the trade of emissions permits. Under the Protocol, countries must meet their targets primarily through national measures. However, the Protocol also offers them an additional means to meet their targets by way of three market-based mechanisms.¹⁸³ Entering into force in 2005, there are currently 192 Parties to the Protocol. One important aspect of the Protocol is the continued adoption

of the principle of 'common but different responsibilities' where the Protocol recognizes developed countries are primarily responsible for the current high levels of GHG emissions in the atmosphere.¹⁸⁴ The principle first appeared in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development under Principle 7.¹⁸⁵ The creation of the Kyoto Protocol laid the groundwork for the Paris Agreement.

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding treaty adopted at UNFCCC CoP 21 and has 196 Parties. Entering into force in 2016, it sets a goal "*Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels*".¹⁸⁶ During CoP26 in Glasgow in 2022, the Parties adopted the 'Glasgow Climate Pact' which consists of decisions to build resilience, curb emissions and provide much needed financing to achieve climate targets.¹⁸⁷

During this meeting, States also adopted the Paris Agreement's rulebook, which sets market mechanisms and transparent reporting by States of climate action.

6.7 Human Rights and the Environment

From the time of the Stockholm Conference, the world also began to recognize the connec-

¹⁸¹ Zoellick and Scanlon, "We Must Ratchet Up the Fight Against Illicit Wildlife Trafficking".

¹⁸² "Wildlife crime assessed globally for the first time in new UNODC report" *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, May 24, 2016, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2016/May/wildlife-crime-assessed-globally-for-the-first-time-in-new-unodc-report.html>.

¹⁸³ "What is the Kyoto Protocol?" *UNFCCC*, https://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol.

¹⁸⁴ Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (adopted December 11, 1997, entered into force February 16, 2005) 2302 UNTS 148 (Kyoto Protocol) art 10.

¹⁸⁵ Rio Declaration, Principle 7.

¹⁸⁶ Paris Agreement (adopted December 12, 2015, entered into force November 4, 2016) UN Doc. FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1 Decision 1/CP.21 (Paris Agreement) art 1(a).

¹⁸⁷ "The Glasgow Climate Pact – Key Outcomes from COP26" *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-glasgow-climate-pact-key-outcomes-from-cop26>.



The three people are (left to right) John E. Scanlon, Yuri Febotov, Executive Director, UNODC, and Robert B. Zoellick, President, The World Bank, at the International Tiger Forum, Saint Petersburg 2010, after signing of the ICCWC Letter of Understanding.



Left: the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC) © CITES Flickr and right: CITES at the International Tiger Forum. St. Petersburg, Russia. 2010.

tion between environmental protection and human rights. This recognition has come to a head over the past two years. In resolution 48/13 in 2021 the Human Rights Council recognized the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.¹⁸⁸ Just this year, 2022, the UNGA adopted “*The Human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment*” resolution.¹⁸⁹ This achievement was five decades in the making, when the Stockholm Conference first brought environmental issues to the international stage, including the disproportionate impacts on people in developing countries. While this newly recognized right is not legally binding, it may have a ‘trickle-down’ effect encouraging further action on the environment, including climate action. Most importantly, this recognizes how marginalized groups who are least responsible for environmental harm are often the first to feel the devastating effects.¹⁹⁰

action, but it had not fully realized the significance of transboundary organized crimes on the environment.

A United Nations Group of Friends on Poaching and Illicit Wildlife Trafficking was established in New York in December 2013 and co-chaired by Gabon and Germany. Two UNGA high-level side events that were co-chaired by the President of Gabon, H.E. Ali Bongo Ondimba and Foreign Minister of Germany, Dr. Guido Westerwelle, and Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, on ‘Poaching and Illicit Wildlife Trafficking’ in 2013¹⁹² and 2014¹⁹³, both moderated by co-author, John Scanlon. These two events and the extraordinary work of the Friends Group led to the drafting of the first ever UNGA Resolution on ‘Tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife’, Resolution 69/314¹⁹⁴, which was adopted in July 2015¹⁹⁵, with follow-up resolutions adopted in 2016, 2017, 2019 and 2021.¹⁹⁶

6.8 Crimes that Affect the Environment

As policy continues to take shape, the UNGA is also beginning to recognize the criminal element in this story.¹⁹¹ Historically, international environmental policy required State

The UNGA Resolution expressed concern about the increasing scale of poaching and illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products and its adverse economic, social and environmental impacts, and recognized that illicit trafficking in

188 “Access to a healthy environment, declared a human right by UN rights council” UN News, October 8, 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/10/1102582>.

189 UNGA Res 76/300 (July 28, 2022) A/RES/76/300.

190 “UNGA Recognizes Human Right to Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment” IISD, August 3, 2022, <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/unga-recognizes-human-right-to-clean-healthy-and-sustainable-environment/>.

191 Tanya Rosen, ‘The Evolving War on Illegal Wildlife Trade’ IISD (October 6, 2020). <https://www.iisd.org/articles/evolving-war-illegal-wildlife-trade>.

192 “Opening Remarks by Session Moderator CITES Secretary-General John E. Scanlon” CITES, Updated January 12, 202, https://cites.org/eng/news/sg/2013/20130926_unga_side-event.php.

193 “Summary of the high-level discussion at the United Nations Headquarters- Poaching and Illicit Wildlife Trafficking – Towards Joint Action by the International Community” (September 26, 2014) https://cites.org/eng/unga_side-event_26092014.

194 John E. Scanlon, “CITES Secretariat welcomes UN General Assembly Resolution on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife” (July 30, 2015) https://stag.cites.org/eng/unga_resolution_wildlife_trafficking_150730.

195 UNGA Res 69/314 (July 20, 2015) A/RES/69/314.

196 A/RES/69/314.



UNGA event. 2014 © CITIES Flickr

wildlife contributes to damage to ecosystems and rural livelihoods, including those based on ecotourism, undermines good governance and the rule of law and, in some cases, threatens national stability.¹⁹⁷ Importantly, it called upon Member States to make this issue a 'serious crime' under domestic law in accordance with the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC).¹⁹⁸

In another ground-breaking moment, in 2020 UNTOC passed a resolution on 'Preventing and combating crimes that affect the environment falling within the scope of the UNTOC'.¹⁹⁹ The Resolution called upon States to fully implement UNTOC in order to effectively address crimes that affect the environment, make such crimes 'serious crimes' and amend domestic law as necessary to achieve such goals. These various resolutions not only established the role of international crime-related agreements play in combating environmental harm, but they further established the theme of co-operation that has remained constant since the Stockholm Conference.

In 2019, The World Bank released a report on 'Illegal Logging, Fishing and Wildlife Trade: The Costs and How to Combat It'²⁰⁰, which found that, if we add the costs of the impacts on ecosystems of wildlife trafficking, then the costs of

these serious crimes are estimated at a staggering \$1-2 trillion each year.



UN CCPCJ 31st meeting in Vienna May 2022
© John E. Scanlon

¹⁹⁷ UNGA Res 69/L.80 (July 15, 2015) A/69/L.80.

¹⁹⁸ UNGA Res 69/L.80 (July 15, 2015) A/69/L.80; United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (adopted November 15, 2000, entered into force September 29, 2003) 2225 UNTS 209 (UNTOC) art 2(b).

¹⁹⁹ Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime COP/2020 (October 16, 2020) CTOC/COP/2020/L.9/Rev.1.

²⁰⁰ Benoit Blarel, 'The real costs of illegal logging, fishing and wildlife trade: \$1 trillion- \$2 trillion per year' *World Bank Blogs* (October 29, 2019).



UN CCPCJ 31st meeting in Vienna May 2022 © John E. Scanlon

And in May 2022, at the 31st Session of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), the Commission adopted a resolution submitted by Angola, Kenya and Peru that invites Member States to “*provide the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime with their views on possible responses, including the potential of an additional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, to address any gaps that may exist in the current inter-*

national legal framework to prevent and combat illicit trafficking in wildlife”.

The Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime (EWC), acknowledged the adoption of this ground-breaking resolution and noted it was the first time a United Nations resolution mentioned a new global agreement on tackling illicit wildlife trafficking.²⁰¹ If States proceeded to develop such a Protocol, it would be the first time that a crime that affects the envi-

201 “Breaking News: UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice adopts historic new resolution on illicit trafficking in wildlife” *The Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime*, May 20, 2022, <https://endwildlifecrime.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/20.05.22-CCPCJ-press-release.pdf>.

ronment is recognized directly through international criminal law. Between now and May 2023, Member States will voice their views on this additional Protocol in preparation for the 32nd session of the CCPCJ in 2023.²⁰²

Since 2017, there has been an active civil society movement advocating for ecocide to be made an international crime.²⁰³ They are asking for the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court ('the ICC') to expand its list of four crimes to now include a fifth crime, ecocide. In June 2021, an Independent Expert Panel proposed a definition of ecocide.

Chapter 7: 2022 – Stockholm+50 and beyond

International environmental law is continuing to evolve, with the focus now turning to plastic pollution. We also see new international laws being created, or discussed, for the high seas, pandemics and wildlife trafficking, outside of environmental agencies, but with significant implications for the environment.²⁰⁴ This is part of an ongoing and evolving approach to tackling environmental challenges, which is also reflected in the adoption of the Resolution on 'The human right to a clean, healthy and

sustainable environment' by the UNGA in July 2022.²⁰⁵

7.1 International Law Making Continues – Plastics, Pandemics and Wildlife Trafficking

Plastic pollution is one of the most prevalent problems the world is facing. According to UNEP, 'every minute, the equivalent one garbage truck of plastic is dumped into our oceans'.²⁰⁶ In the Pacific Ocean lies the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, one of the largest off-shore plastic accumulations in the world. It is estimated the patch has a surface area twice the size of Texas or three times the size of France.²⁰⁷ The patch's mass is currently estimated to be 80,000 tonnes, weighing the same as 500 jumbo jets.²⁰⁸

The first move to address the plastic pollution problem was cemented in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development under goal 14.1.²⁰⁹ The problem was also highlighted in UNEA resolutions identifying possible solutions and emphasizing the need for a global and harmonized response, including monitoring.²¹⁰ In a monumental move, just this year, 2022, the UNEA passed an historic resolution to end plastic pollution and create a new

202 Alice Pasqualato, "Two years of Progress: The Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime" ADM Capital Foundation, July 6, 2022, <https://www.admcf.org/2022/07/06/two-years-of-progress-the-global-initiative-to-end-wildlife-crime/>.

203 For more see 'Stop Ecocide International', <https://www.stopecocide.earth/>

204 UN Environment, 'Understanding synergies and mainstreaming among the biodiversity related conventions: A special contributory volume by key biodiversity convention secretariats and scientific bodies.' (2016) UN Environment, Nairobi, Kenya. 67.

205 UNGA 76/300 (July 28, 2022) A/RES/76/300.

206 "Plastic Pollution" *United Nations Environment Programme*, <https://www.unep.org/plastic-pollution>.

207 "The Great Pacific Garbage Patch" *The Ocean Cleanup*, <https://theoceancleanup.com/great-pacific-garbage-patch/>

208 "The Great Pacific Garbage Patch" *The Ocean Cleanup*.

209 United Nations, "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" A/RES/70/1.

210 See UNEA Resolutions 1/6 (June 2014), 2/11 (August 2016), 3/7 (2017) and 4/6 (2019).



Global Plastic Pollution Agreement. UNEA 5.2. © UNEP

legally binding agreement by 2024.²¹¹ The resolution declared that the future convention would address the full life cycle of plastic and address compliance measures.²¹²

This year, in the aftermath of Covid-19, the World Health Assembly agreed to create a treaty or instrument focused on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.²¹³ The issue of pandemics is closely tied to how we treat nature, animal health and welfare and is the perfect candidate for a coordinated global response. In

today's global world with hundreds of millions of people crossing international borders every day, an emerging outbreak is unlikely to be limited to one country. Within days, a disease can reach every corner of the planet. While the ability to respond efficiently to such threats varies depending on a State's existing health infrastructure, no one country is immune from the environmental, economic and social impact of pandemics.

Pandemics have had environmental origins

211 UNEP 'End Plastic Pollution: Towards an International Legally Binding Instrument' UNEP/EA.5/Res.14 <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/39764/END%20PLASTIC%20POLLUTION%20-%20TOWARDS%20AN%20INTERNATIONAL%20LEGALLY%20BINDING%20INSTRUMENT%20-%20English.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

212 UNEP/EA.5/Res.14 para 3.

213 "World Health Assembly agrees to launch process to develop historic global accord on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response" *The World Health Organization*, December 1, 2021, <https://www.who.int/news/item/01-12-2021-world-health-assembly-agrees-to-launch-process-to-develop-historic-global-accord-on-pandemic-prevention-preparedness-and-response>.

long before Covid-19. According to IPBES, “*The majority (70%) of emerging diseases (e.g., Ebola, Zika, Nipah encephalitis), and almost all known pandemics (e.g., influenza, HIV/AIDS, COVID-19), are zoonoses – i.e., are caused by microbes of animal origin. These microbes ‘spill over’ due to contact among wildlife, livestock, and people*”.²¹⁴ Intertwined with environmental changes, many advocate for a ‘One Health’ approach to once again be championed.²¹⁵ This approach is not a new concept and recognizes the link between humans, domestic and wild animals and the surrounding environment, which the approach views as being interdependent. By focusing on all of these various aspects together, the approach can better address disease control in a holistic way addressing all stages of disease risk.²¹⁶

Similar to the pandemics instrument, the ‘One Health’ approach can directly address disease risks from wildlife trade and wildlife markets. As John Scanlon, co-author and Chair of the EWC stated, “*Health and wildlife experts warn us of the public health risks associated with people mixing with wild animals, including through habitat destruction, illegal or poorly regulated wildlife trade, and through the sale of wildlife at markets that bring together wild, captive bred and domesticated animals*”.²¹⁷ The EWC outlined how to operationalize such an approach, highlighting that past pandemics have been caused by wildlife-related zo-

onotic diseases and that markets inherently have a higher risk of such spill over. To address this specific issue, EWC is proposing making amendments to CITES or the development of a new international agreement.²¹⁸

7.2 A Common Challenge – Financing

While we are continuing to observe the evolution of MEAs to better address environmental challenges, they all have one fundamental problem that has hindered significant success. Money!

It is a simple reality that everything requires financial support. But this concept is of particular importance and complexity when discussing environmental agreements. The topic is often referenced, but not often resolved, leading to increasing levels of frustration. The ‘elephant in the room’, adequate financing, has now reached centre stage and will increasingly influence the ongoing advancement of international environmental law and its implementation. And while the various MEAs discussed in this paper can be recognized for their successes and ground-breaking nature, with the exception of the Montreal Protocol, we must also be honest about the failure to adequately finance their implementation.

The Paris Agreement is a great case study of the failure to finance. The Agreement was created

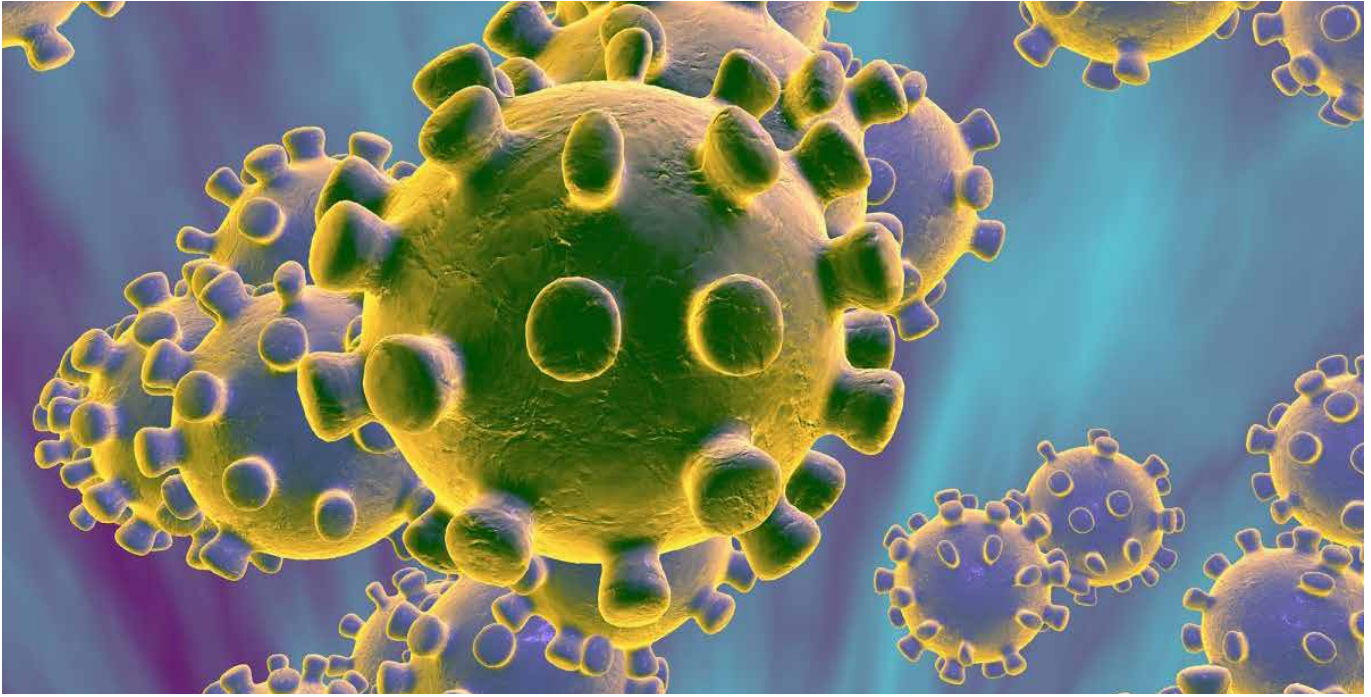
214 Daszak, P. et al., “Workshop Report on Biodiversity and Pandemics of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services” IPBES, October 29, 2020, <https://zenodo.org/record/4158500#YyEhuOzMKvA>.

215 Rillig, M.C., Lehmann, A., Bank, M.S. et al. “Scientists need to better communicate the links between pandemics and global environmental change.” *Nat Ecol Evol* 5, 1466–1467 (2021).

216 “One Health” *The World Health Organization*, https://www.who.int/health-topics/one-health#tab=tab_1.

217 John E. Scanlon, “Preventing Pandemics through One Health Approach” *LinkedIn*, July 7, 2021, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/preventing-pandemics-through-one-health-approach-john-e-scanlon-ao/>.

218 “Global Initiative Outlines a “One Health” Approach to Reforming Wildlife Trade Laws” *The Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime*, September 7, 2020, https://endwildlifecrime.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/EWC_CITESMediaRelease_07092020.pdf. See also for example, Neil Vora et al, “Want to prevent pandemics? Stop spillovers” *Nature*, May 12, 2022, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-01312-y>.



The ominous Coronavirus disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus

to address one of the single greatest threats facing humanity, climate change. And it was created with the understanding that developing nations are often the least responsible for climate change, the first to feel its effects, and do not have the resources to adapt as quickly as needed. Yet, despite these three facts being recognized by the Paris Agreement itself the money has yet appear.²¹⁹

In 2020, the United Nations Secretary General announced that the promise of \$100 billion a year in funding by 2020 for climate change

by developed countries would not be met by the deadline and would “*have a damaging impact on the trust that developing countries place in the Paris Agreement*”.²²⁰ The Fund only reached \$48 billion in 2016.²²¹ One source claims however, the goal could be reached in 2023.²²² Unfortunately, without funding, many countries cannot begin to implement goals set out by the Agreement. The longer action is delayed, the more expensive it will become. Even more concerning is the suggestion that countries’ funding reports have been inflated and the estimated amounts

219 See news articles: Shannon Osaka, “A \$100 billion promise holds the Paris Agreement together. Now, it’s coming apart” *Grist*, July 13, 2021, <https://grist.org/cop26/a-100-billion-promise-holds-the-paris-agreement-green-climate-fund/>; ; Fiona Harvey, “Rich failing to help fund poor countries’ climate fight, warns UN secretary general” *The Guardian*, December 9, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/dec/09/rich-failing-help-fund-poor-countries-climate-fight-warns-un-chief-antonio-guterres>.

220 Harvey, “Rich failing to help fund poor countries’ climate fight, warns UN secretary general”.

221 Tracy Carty and Armelle Comte, “Climate Finance Shadow Report 2018: Assessing Progress Towards the \$100 Billion Commitment,” *Oxfam*, 2018, <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620467/bp-climate-finance-shadow-report-030518-en.pdf;jsessionid=8F0167E958156BDCE275BD5808A54B20?sequence=1>.

222 “Climate Finance and the USD 100 Billion Goal” *OECD*, <https://www.oecd.org/climate-change/finance-usd-100-billion-goal/>.



© UN website

raised are much lower in reality.²²³ This issue does not just impact climate agreements, it also creates problems for CITES, CBD, CMS and other MEAs. Current negotiations under the CBD's Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework are calling for multiple billions in additional financing each year. Ultimately, financing will be a key factor in the success or failures of MEAs moving forward.²²⁴

7.3 New Focus for a Reinvigorated UNEP

In response to the concerns that UNEP is yet to fully play its mandated role, the organization should shift away from administrative tasks and focus instead on its unique ability to enhance coherence, support effective implementation, and monitoring of progress. As a glob-

al body of oversight, UNEP can support MEAs so they are as impactful and interconnected as possible, and ensure the UNEA is used in this regard to its fullest potential. This change must come at a crucial time for the environment and our planet's health. We are beginning to truly see the impacts of climate change, land degradation and biodiversity loss and the harm being done to the planet.

We need unified action from the leading global environmental authority in the United Nations. Despite all the hurdles and frustrations, UNEP has accomplished what may have once been considered impossible. While UNEP fostered the creation of much of the world's international environmental law, it is not enabling consistent implementation. UNEP provides scientific

223 "Climate Finance Shadow Report 2020: Assessing progress towards the \$100 billion commitment" *Oxfam*, <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/handle/10546/621066>.

224 Image from UN Webpage on climate financing.



Emissions Gap Report 2021 cover © UN

backing to issues, but it is neither the main authority for environmental scientific concerns²²⁵ or a major financier.

There are a variety of reasons for this disparity. Despite covering a wide range of environmental issues UNEP operates with a small staff and very limited financial resources.²²⁶ Throughout its time, it has struggled to find its identity and maintain credibility. These two things are crucial for any agency that operates as a global authority. It becomes a vicious cycle, without strong domestic support the global environmental authority is weakened but without a strong global authority, national agencies have less support to carry out their duties.²²⁷ As UNEP begins to reposition it has the chance to learn from its own history, recognizing its successes while identifying a better way forward.

The UNEP GEO has, for whatever reason, not managed to capture the attention of intergovernmental bodies, funding entities, policy makers or others. For example, it is not the primary source of policy and strategic direction setting for the GEF or the UNDP. It should be seen for what it is, not influential and not setting the global agenda. UNEP has, however, had greater success with its 'gap' reports, especially its Emissions Gap Reports.²²⁸

We have multiple well-crafted MEAs in place to address our most pressing environmental and sustainability challenges, others are on the way, and important agreements that fall outside of the strict scope of an 'environmental' agreement but are nonetheless of critical impor-

tance to sustainability, are also underway. Life is in perpetual motion, and new international agreements are still needed, from high seas, to pandemics, to plastic pollution and wildlife trafficking. But we also need a revitalized commitment to implementation, the necessary international and national financing needed to enable it, and an authoritative global center of gravity for monitoring progress and enhancing compliance.

It is time for UNEP to change track and be more ambitious and impactful. This could include UNEA adopting a biannual 'State of the Planet Report', as the global authoritative publication for setting the global environmental agenda across the intergovernmental and international landscape, including for the GEF and UNDP, and embarking on a process of continual review of the effectiveness of, and compliance with, MEAs, and to identify the gaps and what needs to be done to fill them, as it has increasingly done for climate change.²²⁹

The time is ripe, and it's time for UNEP and UNEA to step up become the global environmental authority it was designed to be.²³⁰

Summary

It was fitting to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Stockholm Conference at an international meeting held on 2-3 June called 'Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the pros-

225 Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 200.

226 Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 201.

227 Ivanova, *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* 202.

228 UNEP and UNEP-CCC, "The Heat is On: A world of climate promises not yet delivered" Emissions Gap Report".

229 Image from UNEP.

230 "United Nations Development Programme: Annual Report 2021" *United Nations Development Programme*, May 2, 2022, <https://www.undp.org/publications/undp-annual-report-2021>.



UNEA 5.2. Plastic Art Installation by Saype © UNEP / NayimAhmed



Ms. Inger Andersen, UNEP ED, addressing the UNEA plenary. UNEA 5.2. 2022 © UNEP



CITES UN World Wildlife Day 2016 © CITES UN

perity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity’ (‘Stockholm+50’).

It was the Stockholm Conference that launched an extraordinary amount of global and national environmental law and policy making and scientific endeavor. However, Stockholm+50 lacked ambition. The outcomes of the 2022 meeting were modest at best and will not stand the test of time.

The impact of the Stockholm Conference that was being commemorated this year will endure. Over the past 50 years we have developed a comprehensive body of international and national policies and laws, which continue to evolve, backed by a strong and improving science base. It has not been fast enough or effective enough or adequately financed. But it does reflect how humanity has been continually striving to find the ways and means of better responding to environmental threats to our planet’s health.

As we take pause to reflect on the 50 years since the Stockholm Conference, it’s also timely to look 50 years ahead. What will the state of our planet be like in 2072?

In 2022, science is unequivocally presenting us with the reality of the environment harm we are inflicting on our planet, and in real time. If we stay on the same trajectory for the next 50 years, the prognosis looks rather grim to say the least. It’s easy to feel flat and get depressed. But that will not help anyone, including our planet.

It’s not all bad news.²³¹ There are glimmers of hope. There are solutions. The science tells us it’s still not too late - provided we change course. And the need to change course is increasingly recognized across all sectors.

The future of the planet is in our hands. We know that changing course will not be easy but, come what may, there is no better option than to persist, and if we try hard enough, who knows, we may just succeed!

231 See for example, Jane Goodall, “Hopecast” <https://news.janegoodall.org/category/hopecast/>.

You have just read a Legacy Paper, one of five, which is an integral element of the report: **The People's Environment Narrative** celebrating 50 years of work between civil society and UNEP to safeguard the environment. The report is created, published and owned by Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future, SF, and can be downloaded in its entirety for free at:

www.stakeholderforum.org

www.unep.org

Section Four: the five Legacy Papers

Connecting the dots - making a forceful canon of the Rio Conventions and the MEAs

Authors: John E Scanlon AO, with Aubrey Collins JD, LLM

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Illustrations and graphic design by María Andrea Miranda Serna

Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future

Company no. 05243470 / Registered in England and Wales and Utrecht, the Netherlands

Registered Office: 2 The Links, Herne Bay,

Kent, CT6 7GQ, UK

www.stakeholderforum.org

info@stakeholderforum.org

twitter @stakeholders

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UNEP at Gigiri © UNEP

Reimagining Environmental Multilateralism

by Professor **Maria Ivanova**,
Olga Skaredina & Carmen Arias

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Executive Summary

Climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss interlock into a triple planetary crisis that demands global cooperation and effective multilateral institutions. Five decades after establishing the contemporary multilateral system for environmental governance, and despite the increasing number of institutions and commitments, the global community is facing *more* problems: more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, more people on the planet consuming more natural resources, and more nationalism hindering international cooperation. On the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, UN Secretary-General António Guterres urged member states to reimagine and transform multilateralism as the global threats confronting humanity demand immediate and all-encompassing action.

The “Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity” international meeting became such an attempt to reassess the trajectory of multilateral efforts toward environmental action. The commemoration of 50 years of earth politics as a global priority exposed what has worked in environmental multilateralism and what challenges remain and this chapter seeks to provide a new vision for a reinvigorated global system. The narrative draws on Maria Ivanova’s book *The Untold Story of the World’s Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* and includes contributions by the speakers at the *Towards Stockholm+50 Webinar: Environmental Diplomacy and Multilateralism* and *UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series*.¹

Environmental concerns gained public recognition in the 1960s when it became clear that environmental problems were caused by human activity and shared across borders. Such a common vision led to the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970 and to the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, the pivotal moment in the history of global environmental governance. The Stockholm Conference placed the environment on the global agenda of international policy and law and catalyzed the development of domestic environmental programs in

¹ UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series is the initiative led by Maria Ivanova to celebrate the 50th anniversary of UNEP, reflect on the institution’s past, and reimagine its future through a series of conversations with leaders around the world engaged in global environmental governance. <https://www.environmentalgovernance.org/unepdialogue>.

many countries. Ultimately, it generated political commitment to create a new international environmental institution – the United Nations Environment Programme that would champion environmental action around the world.

Envisioned as the anchor institution for the global environment, UNEP was to assess the state of the environment, inform and enable countries to react, promote partnership within the UN system to tackle issues that no one state or organization could deal with on its own, catalyze cooperation, and encourage synergy. As the first UN institution to be headquartered in the Global South, UNEP was at the forefront of environmental challenges and witnessed the tensions among a growing population, development demands, pressure on dwindling resources, degradation of ecosystems, and threats to human security.

As the leading environmental institution, UNEP is the “environmental conscience” of the United Nations and the world and is best known for its leadership in shrinking the ozone hole and for co-founding the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Other wins include establishing international instruments to control pesticides and herbicides, hazardous wastes, and mercury and launching processes for addressing regional seas pollution, chemicals, and plastics. Yet UNEP faced hurdles in tackling land degradation and the loss of species and forests. Despite providing scientific rigor, evidence, and engagement on several environmental issues, UNEP has failed to become the main scientific authority for environmental concerns writ large. It spurred the creation of a significant body of international environmental law but has not managed to ensure its coherence and consistent implementation.

UNEP's authority, influence, and the extent to which the institution can affect change largely depend on building capacity, connectivity, and credibility. If UNEP wants to become the go-to institution for the global environment and

forge an environmental agenda for the world, it must augment its capacity; enhance its connectivity to governments and partners and become the authoritative scientific voice on the environment. It should craft a space for influencers and institutions to consult and collaborate. It should pull together a dynamic platform to which environment ministers can go to learn, say, how climate regulations affect wetlands in their country and what the major sources of degradation are. It must become the place where issues are voiced, law shaped, and lasting coalitions constructed.

Since 1972, the first environmental conference and the creation of UNEP, the international community has created common guidelines for tackling a range of environmental problems. Despite differences in national policies and priorities, international environmental institutions have been established, hundreds of environmental agreements have been negotiated, and international conferences on the environment convene regularly attracting high-level political participation. The 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the 2016 Kigali amendment to the Montreal Protocol to phase down hydrofluorocarbons, the 2022 Resolution to End Plastic Pollution, and the 2022 Resolution on declaring a healthy environment a human right are among recent examples of successful multilateral efforts to address environmental issues.

Multilateralism has become a powerful tool for countries in the Global South to exercise leadership, move the international environmental agenda forward, and leverage their status in specific issues according to their national interests. A recent example of such leadership is Peru and Rwanda initiating negotiations on all forms of plastic pollution, in all media, and in its full life cycle. This initiative by two small states led to the UN Environment Assembly resolution to end plastic pollution, with 175 member states unanimously endors-



© Unsplash / Patrick Hendry

ing it and agreeing to forge an international legally binding agreement by the end of 2024. However, despite substantial progress in international environmental policymaking, environmental multilateralism is in crisis. Global collective action is lacking, and governments are failing to reverse or slow down threatening environmental trends.

Environmental multilateralism is critical. In a triple planetary crisis, solutions cannot be found in isolation but in a cooperative and coordinated manner in which UNEP's leadership and strengthened multilateralism are key. Looking back on the last 50 years, UNEP has stood tall, strived, and in some cases, thrived amid challenges, to say the least. The vision of UNEP at 100 by environmental leaders is characterized by cautious optimism, unbridled commitment, and redeeming confidence. In anticipation of a changing world in the next 50 years, UNEP must hold on to dynamism and transition from being the 'bearer of knowledge' to the 'bridge-builder between gaps.' UNEP must learn from the mistakes of the past that do not

define it but rather better its steps for the future and increase its connectivity. Capitalizing on its institutional design and resources, relationships and foundational trust built throughout the years can go a long way in the realization of UNEP's potential as the champion of the Earth.

With UNEP leading the way, strengthened environmental multilateralism requires more ambition and action to comply with environmental commitments. It requires science to inform environmental negotiations, which, in turn, can motivate and promote further research and technology innovation and transfer. It requires more inclusivity in a meaningful solution-focused way, facilitating the participation of a wide range of stakeholders from academia, civil society, industry, and the private sector to achieve the expected results. With hope and optimism, commitment and cooperation, determination and urgency can we reimagine multilateralism and inspire collective action to protect life on earth.



UNEP headquarters, Nairobi, Kenya© UNEP

Reimagining Environmental Multilateralism

by Professor **Maria Ivanova,**
Olga Skaredina & Carmen Arias

Climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss interlock into a triple planetary crisis that demands global cooperation and effective multilateral institutions. Five decades after establishing the contemporary multilateral system for environmental governance, and despite the increasing number of institutions and commitments, the global community is facing *more* problems: more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, more people on the planet consuming more natural resources, and more nationalism hindering international cooperation. Global institutions that foster collaboration and integrated responses in the environmental space are more necessary than ever, yet they are experiencing an acute lack of legitimacy. UN Secretary-General António Guterres lamented on the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace that “the multilateral system and the value of diplomacy are under threat from all directions”, urging member states to reimagine and transform multilateralism.¹

Growing discontent stems from the failure of multilateral institutions to deliver shared prosperity coupled with decreasing sovereign policy autonomy of member states and rising inequality. Multilateralism, therefore, has lost its very essence – the reasoning behind cooperation. Rather than empowering states and their citizens and enhancing social prosperity, the multilateral system has devolved into bilateral agreements and cooperation within regional blocks, which cannot substitute coordinated global action to address global challenges.² Moreover, as the predominance of national interests increases, member states decrease their commitment to international organizations and challenge multilateral norms. As a result, multilateral negotiations fail and the crisis of multilateralism intensifies.³ The United States, for example, has limited its commitments to the multilateral system prioritizing only those that explicitly meet national needs. Under the presidency of Donald Trump, the country withdrew from

1 UN Secretary-General. “Message on the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, UNIS/SGSM/1231,” April 24, 2022. <https://unis.unvienna.org/unis/en/pressrels/2022/unissgsm1231.html>.

2 Kharas, Homi, and Sebastian Strauss. “Can Multilateralism Evolve?” *International Trade Forum*, no. 4 (2020): 22–23.

3 Smith, Mike. “The EU, the US and the Crisis of Contemporary Multilateralism.” *Journal of European Integration* 40, no. 5 (2018): 539–53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2018.1488836>.

the Paris Agreement, abandoned efforts to conclude a Trans-Pacific Partnership and negotiate a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, and retracted its endorsement of the G7 communiqué. As a result, the US commitment to multilateralism has become uncertain and unpredictable, endangering the stability of the entire multilateral system.⁴

With multilateralism in crisis, the new realities of inclusivity and mobility, growing complexity and interdependence of the international system, and interconnectivity of global challenges demand new responses. A reinvigorated and reinvented global system that comprises not only member states but the range of actors operating beyond the traditional notion of territory. The global threats confronting humanity are multidimensional and transnational, affecting everyone and everything everywhere. Environmental concerns present an existential threat that demands immediate and all-encompassing action. It requires the enhancement of awareness, knowledge, and understanding, as well as the integration of a new value system that moves away from immediate and short-term returns and deploys innovative strategies for the engagement of diverse stakeholders.⁵

Such an attempt was made in June 2022 when the “Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity” international meeting gathered high-level representatives of member states and non-state actors to reassess the trajectory

of multilateral efforts toward environmental action. The commemoration of 50 years of making earth politics a global priority exposed what has worked in environmental multilateralism and what challenges remain. This chapter presents a brief history of collective environmental action since its beginnings in the 1970s, the creation and operation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as the anchor institution for the global environment, and possible future trajectories. It offers an assessment of achievements and challenges with the goal of providing a vision for change and a call for action.

We begin this chapter by examining the current architecture of environmental multilateralism and the actors involved in its shaping. Next, we proceed by mapping out how the environmental agenda became internationally acknowledged and the impact the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment had on catalyzing environmental action. We then follow by discussing UNEP’s role as the leading global environmental authority and advocate, its successes and challenges, and its potential for transformation. Lastly, we outline 50 years of environmental action and elaborate on reimagining environmental multilateralism.

This chapter draws on Maria Ivanova’s book *The Untold Story of the World’s Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* and includes contributions by the speakers at the *Towards Stockholm+ 50 Webinar: Environmental Diplomacy and Multilateralism*.

4 Lavelle, Kathryn C. “The Past and Future of Multilateralism.” In *The Challenges of Multilateralism*, 245–64. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvxkn79b.14>.

5 Garry Jacobs, Donato Kiniger-Passigli, and Alexander Likhotal. “Redefining Multilateralism.” *Cadmus (Trieste, Italy)* 4, no. 3 (2020): 5–19.



Professor Maria Ivanova at Stockholm+50. 50 Years of Environmental Policies © FoRUM Norway

We are grateful to Shereen Zorba⁶, Carmen Arias⁷, Narges Saffar⁸, and John Matuszak⁹ who engaged in the webinar on environmental multilateralism. The chapter also draws upon the ideas expressed during the *UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series* conducted by Maria Ivanova from May 2021 to May 2022. The series marked UNEP's 50th anniversary with environmental leaders who have shaped or been shaped by the institution.¹⁰

Architecture of Environmental Multilateralism

Multilateralism is a win-win game.

— Narges Saffar, Advisor to the Deputy of Head of the Department of Environment in Iran, at the Towards Stockholm+ 50 Webinar: Environmental Diplomacy and Multilateralism

6 Head of the Secretariat of the UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment.

7 Deputy-Director of United Nations and Global Issues at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peru.

8 Advisor to the Deputy of Head of the Department of Environment, Iran.

9 International Environment and Sustainable Development Advisor.

10 UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series is the initiative led by Maria Ivanova to celebrate the 50th anniversary of UNEP, reflect on the institution's past, and reimagine its future through a series of conversations with leaders around the world engaged in global environmental governance. <https://www.environmentalgovernance.org/unepdialogue>.

Environmental challenges do not stop at national borders. In fact, their solutions require informed and systematic collective action. With the urgency and necessity to address transboundary environmental problems, one would think that the institutional architecture for the environment is coherent, with a leading organization championing the action. On the contrary, multiple UN agencies, international financing institutions, independent secretariats, and governing bodies of the numerous multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) are engaged in environmental activities.¹¹

In the system of environmental multilateralism, UNEP serves as “the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.”¹² Over the years, however, rather than consolidating within UNEP, international environmental responsibilities have spread across multiple organizations, including:

1. specialized agencies in the UN system such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and others
2. the programs in the UN system such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Food Programme (WFP)
3. the UN regional economic and social commissions

4. the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)
5. the World Trade Organization (WTO)
6. the environmentally focused mechanisms such as the Global Environment Facility, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), and multilateral environmental agreements.

These organizations may operate in the same environmental issue area but engage in different types of activities – research, monitoring, assessment, and analysis; creation of new norms, rules, standards, guidelines, and policies; carrying out plans, implementing projects, or providing services on the ground.¹³

While international institutions play important roles, it is member states who are the main actors in environmental multilateralism. Governments vote, designate representatives to attend official meetings, and submit conventions to their respective parliaments for ratification. It is governments that make final decisions on global issues and direct international organizations to implement them. However, non-state actors also perform indispensable duties in the system. Non-governmental organizations, academia, local and indigenous communities, the business sector, and youth movements are all working toward addressing environmental problems.¹⁴ Their value to the UN system and environmental negotiations is acknowledged in Agenda 21, adopted at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development. The document recognizes the members of civil society as a major constituency and encourages international organiza-

11 Ivanova, Maria, and Jennifer Roy. “The architecture of global environmental governance: Pros and cons of multiplicity.” *Global Environmental Governance: Perspectives on the Current Debate* (2007): 48–66.

12 UNEP. “About UN Environment Programme.” Accessed September 17, 2022. <https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment>.

13 Ivanova, Maria, and Jennifer Roy. “The architecture of global environmental governance: Pros and cons of multiplicity.” *Global Environmental Governance: Perspectives on the Current Debate* (2007): 48–66.

14 Gleckman, Harris. *Multistakeholder Governance and Democracy: A Global Challenge*. Routledge, 2018.

tions and member states to draw upon the expertise and views of various non-state actors toward policy and program design, implementation, and evaluation.¹⁵

Inclusion of representatives beyond governments and international organizations diversifies global environmental governance, expands the official agenda, and emphasizes the idea that at the multilateral stage several processes are going on at the same time. It is in multilateral spaces, formal settings where member states gather to review and advance the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and respond to pressing environmental challenges, that non-state actors have the most opportunities to engage in the inter-governmental decision-making process and influence the environmental agenda.¹⁶

In climate negotiations, for example, non-state actors play an increasingly important role. On December 12, 2009, at the Conferences of the Parties (COP) in Copenhagen, about 100,000 participants publicly expressed their discontent with the exclusionary practices of negotiations and urged for climate justice. It was the world's largest ever protest about global warming and it has continued to take place

at every COP since.¹⁷ On November 29, 2015, the day before the opening of COP21 in Paris, more than 785,000 people participated in the Global Climate March, taking place in various cities around the world.¹⁸ On November 6, 2021, at COP26 in Glasgow, more than 100,000 people marched outside the streets of the city, calling on world leaders to take immediate action in combating climate change.¹⁹

Elizabeth Mrema, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, notes that “We can all recognize that we cannot solve issues of biodiversity loss and land degradation without the civil society, without local communities, without the youth and all these other stakeholders.”²⁰ Non-state actors have become global consciousness bringing attention to environmental issues at hand and advocating for environmental justice. They provide relevant information and expertise to the governments that can be missing in the negotiation process, bringing additional value to policy development processes.²¹ They also make the underrepresented voices heard and hold international organizations and member states accountable.²² As a result, non-state actors play diverse roles across the whole policy spectrum in the system of environmental multilateralism.

15 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. *Agenda 21*. 1992. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/outcomedocuments/agenda21>.

16 Vadrot, Alice B. M. “Multilateralism as a ‘site’ of struggle over environmental knowledge: The North-South divide.” *Critical Policy Studies* 14, no. 2 (2020): 233–245.

17 van der Zee, Bibi, and David Batty. “Copenhagen climate protesters rally.” *The Guardian*, December 12, 2009. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2009/dec/12/copenhagen-demonstrators-rally-global-deal>.

18 350. “The Global Climate March Was Incredible – Here’s What’s next.” Accessed September 17, 2022. <https://350.org/global-climate-march/>.

19 Specia et al. “COP26 climate summit. Here’s What Happened at the COP26 Climate Summit on Saturday.” *The New York Times*, November 6, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/06/world/cop26-glasgow-climate-summit-protests>.

20 Elizabeth Mrema, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2022.

21 Bernauer, Thomas, and Carola Betzold. “Civil Society in Global Environmental Governance.” *The Journal of Environment & Development* 21, no. 1 (2012): 62–66. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1070496511435551>.

22 Gemmill, Barbara and Abimbola Bamidele-Izu. “The Role of NGOs and Civil Society in Global Environmental Governance.” In *Global Environmental Governance: Options and Opportunities*, 77–101. Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, 2002.

Understanding the roles of main actors and institutions is crucial in evaluating the trajectory of how the environmental agenda has evolved in the past decades.

Crafting a Global Environmental Agenda

The environment is everything. It is the foundation for the other elements of sustainability, the social and economic issues. Without the environment, we are non-existent.

— Wanjira Mathai, Vice President and Regional Director for Africa at the World Resources Institute, at UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series

Environmental concerns gained public recognition in the 1960s when it became clear that pollution, toxic chemicals, large-scale destruction of natural ecosystems, and the loss of species were caused by human activity and shared across borders. Such a common vision led to the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970, bringing 20 million Americans into the streets demanding environmental protection to be reflected in the national political agenda. President Nixon and the US Congress recognized the power of the growing environmental movement and created the environmental policy apparatus—the Environmental Protection Agency, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Endangered Species Act.

While the attention was on the US domestic scene, the global environmental agenda was steadily taking shape. In 1967, with the support of Inga Thorsson, head of the UN Secretariat's Social Division, and Philippe de Seynes, then-

UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, the Swedish delegation to the United Nations led the effort to convince the UN General Assembly to convene an environmental conference instead of a nuclear energy one. On December 3, 1968, the General Assembly issued a resolution calling for the convening of an international conference on the human environment in 1972, with Sweden hosting the event in Stockholm. It was an urge to intensify action at the national, regional, and international levels to limit and eliminate the deterioration of the human environment. The initiation of the conference was followed by several path-breaking publications that fueled the debate on collective responsibility to tackle global-scale environmental problems. Barbara Ward, author of the 1971 *Only One Earth* report, Richard Falk, author of the *This Endangered Planet: Prospects and Proposals for Human Survival* book were among those who called scientists, member states, and the public to promote the environmental agenda and act collectively.²³

The 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment gathered member states and representatives from various UN agencies to discuss the role of human activities on life on earth. Pivotal in the history of global environmental governance, the Stockholm Conference formalized a space to discuss, debate, and generate solutions to environmental issues and set the stage for a series of global conferences that would convene over time. It also became the first of its kind to fully engage civil society in the intergovernmental process and gather at the time what was considered an exceptional number of nongovernmental organizations. More than 250 nongovernmental organizations were registered as observers at the Stockholm Conference, with a great

²³ Caldwell Lynton Keith; Weiland, Paul Stanley. *International Environmental Policy: From the Twentieth to the Twenty-First Century*. Durham, Duke University Press, 1996.



5 June 1972 - United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, Sweden. A general view of the opening meeting of the Conference © UN / Yutaka Nagata

number of people attending the Environment Forum, the side event aiming to accommodate those who had not received official accreditation.²⁴ In preparations for Stockholm, non-governmental organizations were developing position papers, publishing reports on the United Nations, the human environment, and institutional arrangements for environmental cooperation, making plans for side events in Stockholm, and arousing public interest in the environment and development. The years between 1968 and 1972 raised the world's consciousness toward acknowledging the scale of environmental issues.²⁵

The success of the Stockholm Conference is partially a function of the success of an individual, Maurice Strong, an official of the government of Canada and Secretary-General of the conference. Strong's energy, commitment, and diplomatic skills resulted in the successful convening of the large world conference that required extensive preparations. Maurice Strong recognized early on that the practical accomplishment of the Stockholm Conference would depend heavily on negotiations and arrangements concluded prior to Stockholm and support from developing countries who were skeptical about a Northern anti-pollu-

24 Willetts, Peter. "From Stockholm to Rio and Beyond: The Impact of the Environmental Movement on the United Nations Consultative Arrangements for NGOs." *Review of International Studies* 22, no. 1 (1996): 57–80.

25 Caldwell Lynton Keith; Weiland, Paul Stanley. *International Environmental Policy: From the Twentieth to the Twenty-First Century*. Durham, Duke University Press, 1996.

tion agenda. Strong traveled to every continent to assure leaders of developing countries that their interests would be respected and secured the support of India's leadership – Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, to commit to negotiations and attending the conference. Indira Gandhi understood the need to protect the environment and achieve a higher standard of living in harmony with nature and therefore became a strong proponent of developing countries' engagement.

To address concerns at the nexus of environment and development, Strong convened economists and scientists from developing countries in Founex, Switzerland, in June 1971, a gathering that resulted in the influential Founex Report. The report demonstrated that the environment was connected to every aspect of human life and placed environmental protection as an enabling condition for economic development, not as a barrier. In parallel with his work to engage developing countries, Strong recognized that many industrialized countries also needed convincing. The United States was an avid advocate of the conference, capitalizing on a vibrant domestic environmental movement and growing national environmental institutions, but the United Kingdom and France, among others, remained skeptical.

Intellectual leadership was critical in preparations for the Stockholm Conference. Maurice Strong engaged Barbara Ward, a British economist and journalist known for her advocacy on behalf of developing countries, to prepare a conceptual framework for the conference. A team of 152 scientific and intellectual leaders from 58 countries served as consultants for the conference agenda and produced the main background document that reflected the

concerns of both developing and industrialized countries.

The Stockholm Conference accumulated efforts to place the environment on the global agenda of international policy and law and catalyzed the development of domestic environmental programs in many governments. The conference succeeded in convening governments and creating a common understanding of the interconnectedness of life on earth and of the goal to address environmental problems. Member states adopted the ambitious Stockholm Declaration with twenty-six principles, an Action Plan with 109 recommendations, and a draft of what would become UN General Assembly Resolution 2997 on *Institutional and Financial Arrangements for International Environmental Cooperation*. Ultimately, the Stockholm Conference generated political commitment to create a new international environmental institution – the United Nations Environment Programme that would champion environmental action in the years ahead.

UNEP as the Anchor Institution for the Global Environment

UNEP was created in order to be light and nimble and a breath of fresh air.

— Shereen Zorba, Head of the Secretariat of the UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment, at the Towards Stockholm+ 50 Webinar: Environmental Diplomacy and Multilateralism

During the preparations for the 1972 Stockholm Conference, governments expressed their

preference to address environmental issues through existing international institutions. It soon became clear, however, that sound institutional arrangements were needed. The United States, supported by Sweden, became a strong proponent of a new independent institution for the environment and argued for the establishment of a “strong executive for environmental affairs with broad terms of reference.”²⁶ John W. McDonald, then-Director of Economic and Social Affairs at the Bureau of International Organization Affairs at the US State Department, had been instrumental in circulating the idea of a centralized structure for all environmental efforts. “I used the argument I had used earlier for the creation of the UN Population Fund,” Ambassador McDonald recalled. Population had never been the focus of the UN system and was a critical issue that required a separate and distinct institution. “I said the same thing about the environment,” he noted. “There is a growing movement across the world, particularly in the United States, and if we want anything to happen in this global system, we have to have a new agency. And that became my mantra—you had to have a new agency to actually make this happen.”²⁷

Ultimately, UNEP was created as the anchor institution for the global environment and headquartered in the capital of Kenya, Nairobi. Anchor institutions are large place-bound and mission-based nonprofit organizations that are socially and economically intertwined with their local communities, play an integral role in their local economies, and have explicit social purposes. At the local or regional level, anchor

institutions operate as hubs with the requisite expertise, leadership, capacity, and connectivity, while at the international level, they are the primary, though not the only, institutions in a global issue area that collect and collate information, analyze data and policy options, develop and prescribe policy, and support the development of necessary capacity in terms of governance, human resources, or financial capabilities. They define the problems, develop new policy ideas and programs, manage crises, and set priorities for shared activities that would not otherwise exist. Unlike businesses, anchor institutions cannot change locations even in the face of considerable hardship and thus are tied to, and shaped by, their locations.

Envisioned as the anchor institution, UNEP was to assess the state of the global environment, inform and enable countries to react, promote partnership within the UN system to tackle issues that no one state or organization could deal with on its own, catalyze cooperation, and encourage synergy. The idea behind UNEP was that the new institution would “enable the [General] Assembly to effectively tackle problems posed by the interconnection of development with the need to safeguard the environment and to provide policy guidance thereon.”²⁸ Designed as a nimble, fast, and flexible entity at the core of the UN system, UNEP was to be the world’s environmental conscience and the center of gravity for environmental affairs. In essence, UNEP was to be “a pinch of silver to energize mighty reactions,” a normative institution that would measure, en-

26 United States Secretary of State’s Advisory Committee on the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. “Stockholm and Beyond: Report,” 131.

27 McDonald, John W., and Noa Zanolli. *The Shifting Grounds of Conflict and Peacebuilding: Stories and Lessons*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009: 74.

28 United Nations, “Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment,” 71.

vision, and craft a program and let others carry it out.²⁹

UNEP, however, with an increased demand for concrete technical assistance and support, moved toward a more operational role. Three main drivers account for this dynamic. As the first UN institution to be headquartered in the Global South, UNEP was at the forefront of environmental challenges and witnessed the tensions among a growing population, development demands, pressure on dwindling resources, degradation of ecosystems, and threats to human security. Staff, therefore, saw the demand for technical assistance and felt a need to be more responsive to these demands. Second, concrete projects are noticeable, easy to showcase and report on, and attractive. Third, funders were sending contradictory signals when they demanded concrete results rather than broad policy reports, thus pushing the organization to engage on the ground in practice while also insisting that UNEP should remain exclusively normative. Torn between a highly normative mandate to measure the state of the environment and to catalyze and coordinate action and the pull to respond and act on concrete demands for immediate support, UNEP has been challenged in defining a clear identity. With environmental issues ever expanding, UNEP has been drawn to the next urgent problem and with limited funding, it has often discontinued programs and shifted investments. As a result, planning has been difficult and implementation a challenge, in turn affecting the managerial and political will to make hard choices.

UNEP's Past, Present, And Future

Look at the future but learn from the past. See what works and scale that up so that we can get a better world and a more sustainable and equitable future.

— Martha Rojas Urrego, Secretary-General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, at UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series

In the 75 years since its creation, the UN has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize twelve times for work on peace, refugees, social justice, chemical weapons prohibition, and measures to deal with climate change. The UN also bestows awards for achievement by others and in September 2019, UNEP presented its highest honor—the Champions of the Earth award—to Fridays For Future, an activist youth organization. Speaking on behalf of the organization at the award ceremony in New York, 15-year-old Kallan Benson declined the prize and challenged the UN to earn the award itself. “We offer to hold it for you to earn,” she stated. “You at the United Nations hold the power to save humanity from itself. You must act in time to become the real champions of the Earth.”³⁰ Has UNEP become the convener, catalyst, and the Champion for the Earth, or has it stumbled upon insurmountable challenges undermining its success?

To answer this question, the Center for Governance and Sustainability at the University of Massachusetts Boston (now Global Environmental Governance Project at

29 Harrison, Gordon. “Is There a United Nations Environment Programme? Special Investigation at the Request of the Ford Foundation.” In the author’s possession, 1977: 10.

30 Benson, Kallan. “Kallan Benson’s Speech for FridaysForFuture at UN Champions of The Earth Award Assembly.” New York, September 27, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqiFsoJARHI&ab_channel=FridaysForFuture.



Mr. A.I. McCutchan (left) and **Mr. S.W. Gentle**, of Australia, are seen at a meeting of the Second Committee held on 12 June 1972 at Stockholm+50 © UNEP

Northeastern University) carried out the initiative to conduct UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series with leaders around the world who have shaped the institution's history (see Annex I). This section is a tribute to UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series and all the speakers who participated in the conversations. It contains insights from environmental leaders on UNEP's strengths, weaknesses, and ways to move forward.

Deliberate Design

Much of the global environmental governance literature assumes that UNEP was purposefully designed to be weak. The odds of even convening a successful international conference on the environment were rather slim when the idea first came up in 1967. Environmental protection evoked a range of conflicting connotations among countries. For developing coun-

tries, it denoted protectionism, conditionality, and an obstacle to development. For Eastern Bloc countries, it conjured capitalist attempts to stunt economic and political progress in the race for military dominance and ideological supremacy. For many industrialized countries, it represented a potential tool for developing countries to pressure them for greater resource transfers.

Yet, from June 5 to 16 in 1972, 131 governments gathered in Stockholm for the UN Conference on the Human Environment to consider "the need for a common outlook and for common principles to inspire and guide the peoples of the world in the preservation and enhancement of the human environment." Despite deep differences, countries reached an unprecedented agreement to create a new international environmental body within the United Nations: UNEP, a subsidiary body under the

UN General Assembly's oversight. Such an institutional design has led scholars to assume that UNEP was created for failure, or at least for something less than success. The perception of UNEP's mandate as impossible and hopeless and its budget as dismal have prompted the conclusion that its institutional form is an insurmountable weakness. Moreover, the assumption that UNEP was located in Nairobi to marginalize it has reinforced the "deficiency by design" narrative.

The conclusion, therefore, is that if the institutional design were to change, the deficiencies would disappear. The almost exclusive focus on UNEP's status as a subsidiary body being the root problem has led to repeated arguments in favor of a fundamental institutional redesign that would "upgrade" UNEP to a specialized agency. However, a careful analysis of UNEP's achievements and challenges shows that the vision for "upgrading" institutional design is based on faulty assumptions and needs to be recalibrated. Importantly, changing institutional form does not automatically improve performance.

Establishing UNEP as a programme rather than a specialized agency and providing it with voluntary financial resources were well-intentioned early choices. Contrary to prevailing accounts, locating UNEP in Nairobi was neither a plot to marginalize the new institution nor a concession to developing countries to gain their support for its creation. Rather, such a location was envisioned as a tool of greater equity in the distribution of international institutions around the world, and the final decision was the product of a contested vote in a committee at the United Nations. Nevertheless, in practice, capacity constraints, the remoteness from the institutions that UNEP had to influence and coordinate, coupled with connectiv-

ity challenges in Nairobi and the uneven credibility of the agency, became important limiting factors to UNEP's performance and have predetermined its successes and challenges.

Successes and Challenges

As the leading environmental institution, UNEP is the "environmental conscience" of the United Nations and the world. UNEP provides the space and forum that bring member states together to solve environmental issues through the science-policy interface. It is distinguished by its approach that science informs the policy and collects and provides up-to-date information to support environmental processes.³¹ Its work has been a success, but it has also been a challenge.

UNEP is best known for its leadership in shrinking the ozone hole and for co-founding the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; its influence is the main reason that most countries now have environmental ministries. Other wins include establishing international instruments to control pesticides and herbicides, hazardous wastes, and mercury and launching processes for addressing regional seas pollution, chemicals, and plastics. Yet UNEP faced hurdles in tackling land degradation and the loss of species and forests. Despite providing scientific rigor, evidence, and engagement on a number of environmental issues, UNEP has failed to become the main scientific authority for environmental concerns writ large. It spurred the creation of a significant body of international environmental law but has not managed to ensure its coherence and consistent implementation.

One of the major challenges that UNEP faced at its inception was the lack of universal mem-

³¹ Inger Andersen, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2021.

bership. Until the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, in 2012, UNEP did not have the moral or political authority to provide overarching guidance.³² “The decision by the General Assembly to strengthen and upgrade UNEP was a watershed moment. Universal membership of UNEP’s Governing Council establishes a new, fully-representative platform to strengthen the environmental dimension of sustainable development and provides all governments with an equal voice on decisions and action needed to support the global environment and ensure a fairer share of the world’s resources for all,” said then-United Nations Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.³³ However, as noted by Dr. Rebecca Gaudiosi, negotiator of the United States, UNEP is going to remain challenged “until and unless governments prioritize it and engage through it.”³⁴

The greatest strength UNEP has achieved, however, is the ability to remain focused on the frontier of knowledge which is evident within the products that the institution has produced. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, geo reports, and emissions gap reports, among others, bring the environmental reality to the front door of everyone. “I see UNEP as a great source of data; they share a lot of knowledge that helps us on a country level to develop policies that are informed by that knowledge and data generated from a (so to speak) small institution,” stated Juliet Kabera, Director General of the Rwanda Environment Management Authority.³⁵

UNEP has also motivated national and international action and supported the advancement of scientific knowledge and new technologies. Achim Steiner admits that “UNEP has been good at understanding that it does not own the environmental agenda; it is there to curate it, to mature it, to disseminate it, and to push and advocate for it.”³⁶ However, it has not had the resources and capacity to provide the support necessary at the national level. UNEP provides administrative services to convention secretariats, for example, rather than to member states seeking to improve the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements. “The added value of UNEP is less on administration but on substance,” Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, notes, “as current administrative services are a burden to the organization.”³⁷

By executing many projects, UNEP dilutes its influence. Some dub it the UN Everything Programme. Staff members admit that the institution is guilty of trying to be all things to all people and tends to go where funding comes from, not where knowledge has accumulated and action is necessary. In the context of UNEP’s fundamental normative role, Dr. Franz Perrez, negotiator of the United States, notes that by adding additional elements to an institution that was built for a certain purpose, one does not necessarily help that association.³⁸

UNEP’s authority and purpose are not in pursuing efforts in-depth but in bringing togeth-

32 Dr. Franz Perrez, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2022.

33 UNEP. “United Nations Environment Programme Upgraded to Universal Membership Following Rio+20 Summit,” December 21, 2012. <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/united-nations-environment-programme-upgraded-universal-membership>.

34 Dr. Rebecca Gaudiosi, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2022.

35 Juliet Kabera, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2022.

36 Achim Steiner, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2021.

37 Ibrahim Thiaw, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2022.

38 Dr. Franz Perrez, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2022.

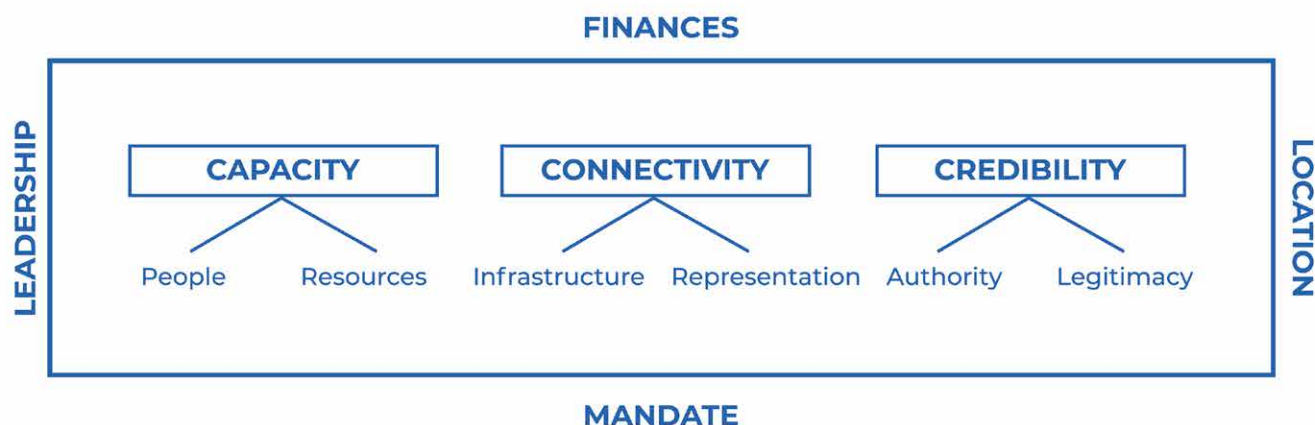


Figure 1: Performance analysis framework

er disparate efforts into a common response. The powerful yet broad and ambitious mandate of UNEP to serve as the leading global environmental authority is another constraint. UNEP has not been seen as the global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda: it has not been able to coordinate the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system as was anticipated.³⁹ Additionally, the environment is not a priority for many member states and accordingly, resources have been grossly inadequate to deliver on UNEP's mission. At the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), the world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment, discussions over substance can be over-politicized and artificial divides can emerge, stalling progress on resolving key issues.⁴⁰

UNEP also suffers from a lack of credibility, especially among developed countries, where not only the public but even environmental experts may not be aware of UNEP's work. Many of the challenges are due to limited capacity, connectivity, and credibility (see Figure 1). UNEP's capacity derives from its people and

its resources—it can recruit staff, mobilize partners as well as generate funding and other contributions for its own work and for work on the issues under its purview. Communication technologies and infrastructure determine connectivity, the ability to connect to constituencies far and near, and to be visible and accessible. Investment by the host government is indispensable to connectivity. The authority and influence of an institution determine its credibility, which derives from the quality of work by staff and partners, its visibility, and its reputation for delivering results. UNEP's success in raising awareness led to an increase in the prominence of the environmental agenda; but with a growing number of organizations in the field, UNEP lost in the competition for resources – financial and human.

With limited capacity and connectivity, UNEP has not been sufficiently visible and convincing to both the governments in need of its support and to donors. Accordingly, the organization's finances are grossly inadequate to address its broad mandate: UNEP's core financing, the Environment Fund, decreased by 37% from 1979 to 2019 — from US\$111 million to \$70 million (adjusted for inflation). And al-

39 John Scanlon, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2021.

40 Dr. Franz Perrez, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2022.

Categories	Description and Source	Focus
UN regular budget	Constitutes the share allocated from the UN regular budget to UNEP	Supports mainly the work of UNEP's governing bodies
Environment Fund	Constitutes non-earmarked contributions from member states	Supports implementation of UNEP's Programme of Work
Earmarked contributions	Constitutes trust funds and other earmarked contributions from member states, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund, the European Commission, foundations, the private sector, and UN bodies	Supports selective implementation of UNEP's Programme of Work
Conventions and Protocols	Constitutes trust funds for fifteen MEAs for which UNEP provides secretariat functions	Supports the implementation of MEAs administered by UNEP
Multilateral Fund	Constitutes assessed contributions from forty-nine member states	Supports the implementation of the Montreal Protocol

Table 1. Main sources of financing for UNEP

though UNEP's overall income grew to \$570 million in 2018, the bulk of it, 87 percent, came from extrabudgetary, earmarked resources that respond primarily to donor preferences and limit the organization's initiative.

UNEP's engagement with non-state actors has been both a challenge and a success. Ibrahim Thiaw sees UNEP as a system that galvanizes more people because civil society is eager to get involved in its processes: "They are on the streets speaking about the environment; they are great allies for the course we are talking about because we are talking about their future."⁴¹ However, he continues that mechanisms within the institution are not yet fully in place to embrace the whole spectrum of civil engagement. MEAs do not have the capacity

to galvanize the movement and work with civil society, as many conventions will be outdated and completely sidelined by society if they appear to be bureaucratic and do not efficiently address the issues of concern.

Over the past 50 years, UNEP has delivered on several of its core functions, resolved some global environmental problems, and created the conditions for collective action on others. UNEP comes with authority and legitimacy that keeps environmental issues at the forefront of global discussions. Its prominence and visibility are essential in setting the environmental agenda. However, despite its strengths and successes, UNEP lacks sufficient capacity, connectivity, and credibility to become the authority on the global environment and

41 Ibrahim Thiaw, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2022.

requires an innovative and common vision to move forward.

Potential for Transformation

UNEP's capacity comes from its people and resources; connectivity depends on visibility and accessibility; credibility derives from the quality of work by staff and partners and delivered results. UNEP's authority, influence, and the extent to which the institution can affect change largely depend on building capacity, connectivity, and credibility. As Wanjira Mathai affirms, if UNEP wants to become "the go-to institution for the global environment, an institution that we can trust to strongly forge an environmental agenda for the world," it first must demonstrate connectivity.⁴² Ibrahim Thiaw shares that he always asks questions of connectivity to the leaders he meets: "Do you connect land with the clothes you wear? What is the connection between land and your T-shirt? How much do you consider land's worth in terms of your footprint? What is the link between energy and land?"⁴³ Many people, especially leadership at the top, do not see the connections, and UNEP is not always able to convey that message effectively. How we articulate and convey messages is crucial to the articulation of complex issues in an intelligible way.

Another way to make UNEP's role as a connector more explicit is to raise funds across institutions. For example, in January 2021, France, the World Bank, and the African Development Bank committed \$14 billion to the ambitious Great Green Wall initiative, which aims to restore 100 million hectares of degraded land in

Africa's Sahel region, build an 8,000-kilometre corridor from Senegal to Djibouti and create 10 million green jobs by 2030. This supports a major restoration effort across multiple countries and institutions. That should be UNEP's default.

It should create formal partnerships spanning UN agencies. Informal partnerships are stymied because donors expect institutions to tout individual results; this encourages competition, not collaboration. Formal expectations shift the dynamics. A case in point: in 2010, the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) partnered with intergovernmental agencies, including the international police organization INTERPOL, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, and the World Bank, to combat wildlife crime. The initiative has secured more than \$20 million, benefiting all partners. By leading it, the CITES secretariat achieved what it could not alone. UNEP could do so, too, by, for example, setting up a hub on food security across agencies working on biodiversity, climate change, and land degradation.⁴⁴

John Scanlon, Chief Executive Officer of the Elephant Protection Initiative, notes that "We need UNEP to be the global authority, to be the authoritative voice, to be the one that brings coherence to the system. We need that anchor institution. We need that conductor of the orchestra. We need that entity that is sitting over the top with authority."⁴⁵ To this end, UNEP must augment its capacity, enhance its connectivity to governments and partners and become the authoritative scientific voice on the environment. It should craft a space for influencers and institutions to con-

42 Wanjira Maathai, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2021.

43 Ibrahim Thiaw, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2022.

44 Ivanova, Maria. "At 50, the UN Environment Programme Must Lead Again." *Nature (London)* 590, no. 7846 (2021): 365–365. <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-021-00393-5>.

45 John Scanlon, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2021.



Iraq Oil Fields burning © UNEP

sult and collaborate. It should pull together a dynamic platform which environment ministers can access, to learn, say, how climate regulations affect wetlands in their country and what the major sources of degradation are. “Maintaining that space within UNEP, those relationships, that foundation of trust, those conversations is important because it is there for when we need it,” affirmed Dr. Rebecca Gaudiosi.⁴⁶ The UN Environment Assembly, UNEP’s governing body, comprises all 193 UN member states. It must become the place where issues are voiced, law shaped, and lasting coalitions constructed.

As Inger Andersen, UNEP’s Executive Director, noted, the institution can assist us to make peace with nature and deploy all the tools in our toolbox, be it knowledge and science, new technology and AI, insights and imagination to fulfill all these environmental promises that we have made over the decades. Peace with nature starts by implementing the commitments that member states made under the conventions but have not lived up to them. Humanity should be living in harmony with nature, on a pollution-free planet, in a zero climate-changing world. That is the vision UNEP should strive for.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Dr. Rebecca Gaudiosi, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2022.

⁴⁷ Inger Andersen, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2021.

50 Years of Environmental Action

Working for the environment at large is really something that we should all be doing. Whether we are paid or not, whether we are called environmentalists or not, whether we are doing agriculture or law. We are doing the environment.

— Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, at UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series

In 1972, the first UN conference on the environment catalyzed a new era of collective response to environmental problems and catalyzed environmental multilateralism. It mobilized multilateral environmental cooperation and triggered treaty-making, which continued over time as new problems emerged. Governments convened at environmental summits held at anniversary moments every ten to twenty years (Table 2).

Since 1972, there has also been an unprecedented surge in environmental lawmaking – negotiation and ratification of multilateral environmental agreements. Succeeding Maurice Strong, UNEP Executive Director Dr. Mostafa Tolba recognized the need to develop legal instruments for collective action toward the resolution of environmental problems and invested his personal energy toward this end. In 1982, UNEP adopted the Montevideo Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law, which has been renewed every ten years. The Montevideo Programme was designed to support the development of environmental law and legal frameworks, improve implementation at the national level, and support capacity-building for member states and a range of stakeholders.

Three first-tier priorities formed the core of the Montevideo Programme: (1) marine pollution from land-based sources, (2) protection of the stratospheric ozone layer, and (3) transport, handling, and disposal of toxic and hazardous waste. To address these priorities, UNEP developed international environmental agreements and specialized institutional and financial instruments to facilitate this work. In the first two decades, these became some of UNEP's most compelling successes. The global treaties on ozone-layer protection, regulation of chemicals and hazardous waste, climate change, desertification, and biodiversity were all created and concluded with UNEP's engagement. Indeed, during the first decade of UNEP's operations, almost as many international agreements were created as during the previous sixty years. As the leading global environmental authority, UNEP now administers or provides secretariat functions for about 15-20 multilateral environmental agreements that deal with issues of global concern and have universal membership. Some of these agreements are presented in Table 3.

To date, there are over 1,400 MEAs comprising conventions and protocols that address environmental issues and manage human impact on natural resources.⁴⁸ Once signed and ratified, MEAs result in longstanding mutual commitments and cooperation, create institutions that coordinate science, and explore new frontiers of environmental policy. While MEAs differ to a certain degree in terms of subject matter, objectives, membership, geographical scope, regulatory mechanisms, and underlying jurisprudence, they do not exist independently from each other. MEAs are rather interconnected, which makes it possible for them to address the intersection of environmental is-

48 Mitchell, Ronald B. "International Environmental Agreements Database Project." Accessed August 22, 2022. <http://iea.uoregon.edu/>.






Logo/Year	Conference name	Location	No. of states	Outputs
 1972	UN Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE), also known as the <i>Stockholm Conference</i>	Stockholm, Sweden	113	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Creation of UN Environment Programme (UNEP) — Declaration of the UN Conference on the Human Environment, or Stockholm Declaration with 26 Principles — Action Plan for the Human Environment with 109 recommendations
 1992	UN Conference on Environmental Development (UNCED), also known as the <i>Rio Earth Summit</i>	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	172	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Creation of the Commission on Sustainable Development — Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, or Rio Declaration with 27 principles — Agenda 21
 2002	UN Conference on Sustainable Development (WSSD), also known as the <i>Johannesburg Summit</i>	Johannesburg, South Africa	191	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development — Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development
 2012	UN Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as <i>Rio+20</i>	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	188	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — High-level Political Forum established to replace Commission on Sustainable Development — The Future We Want outcome Document — 2030 Agenda — Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) process launched
 2022	Stockholm+50 a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity, also known as <i>Stockholm+50</i>	Stockholm, Sweden	150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Recommendations for accelerating action towards a healthy planet — Key messages for action — Initiatives and Declaration delivered on intergenerational responsibility, interconnectivity, and implementing opportunity

Table 2. Fifty years of environmental summits. Sources: Ivanova, Maria. “Coloring the UN Environmental.” *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations* 26, 2 (2020): 311. Stockholm+50. “Recommendations and Actions for Renewal and Trust.” Accessed September 20, 2022. <https://www.stockholm50.global/resources/stockholm50-recommendations-and-actions-renewal-and-trust>










Adopted/ entered into force	Logo	Convention	No. of parties	Issue area	Location
1971/1975		Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention)	170	Biodiversity	Gland
1972/1975		World Heritage Convention (WHC)	193	Biodiversity	Paris
1973/1975		Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)	183	Biodiversity	Geneva
1979/1983		Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS)	130	Biodiversity	Bonn
1985/1988 1987/1989		Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (Vienna Convention) and Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (Montreal Protocol)	198	Atmosphere	Nairobi
1989/1992		Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal (Basel Convention)	187	Chemicals and Waste	Geneva
1992/1994		United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)	197	Atmosphere	Bonn
1992/1993		Convention on Biological Diversity	196	Biodiversity	Montreal
1994/1996		United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)	197	Land	Bonn
1997/2005		International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)	184	Biodiversity	Rome
1998/2004		Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (Rotterdam Convention)	161	Chemicals and Waste	Geneva
2001/2004		Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (Stockholm Convention)	161	Chemicals and Waste	Geneva
2013/2017		Minamata Convention on Mercury	117	Chemicals and Waste	Geneva

Table 3. Global environmental conventions. Source: Ivanova, Maria. "Coloring the UN Environmental." *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations* 26, 2 (2020): 311.

sues with other areas such as development, human rights, trade, etc.⁴⁹

Marta Rojas Urrego, Secretary-General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, explains that there are many interconnections between different conventions, such as between climate, biodiversity, and wetlands. “The key is to connect with other agendas. I think that we, environmental movements, and the convention is part of that, have been for many years so centered in our community when what we need is to engage with other communities.”⁵⁰ Such interconnectedness between the mandates is an opportunity to enhance various institutions’ obligations, policies, and programs for MEAs’ implementation; a space for civil society to participate in the implementation process; an opportunity for the secretariat for self-innovation and enhancement of their performance.⁵¹

Have these global conventions succeeded in their intended purposes? Unfortunately, the quantity of new international agreements is not necessarily reflective of their impact on the environment. States voluntarily create international agreements to govern their relations through legal responsibilities, and there is no overarching judicial or penal system to ensure the enforcement of these agreements. Parties face no penalties for not meeting their commitments, and breaches are not punishable by sanctions. Compliance and implementation must be enticed rather than coerced.

There is an urgent need for greater measurement, which is not simply “Did you report?” John Matuszak, International Environment and Sustainable Development Advisor, argues that too often, governments check the box and report on what has been done, but are parties getting closer to fulfilling the commitments they made? Are carbon emissions decreasing? Are hazardous chemicals managed better? Do species continue to go extinct? International treaties focus on processes but not on outcomes. That is why the critical questions here are: “Are we changing the conditions on the ground? Is the environment actually getting better, or is it at least not getting worse at the same rate that it has been?”⁵² There is still a lot to do in terms of creating opportunities for reimagining environmental multilateralism.

Future of Environmental Multilateralism

Since 1972, the first environmental conference and the creation of UNEP, the international community has successfully placed the environment on the global agenda and created common guidelines for tackling a range of environmental problems. Despite differences in national policies and priorities, member states have created a common vision to mitigate the effects of climate change which became one of the greatest achievements of

49 Kim, Rakhyun E. “The Emergent Network Structure of the Multilateral Environmental Agreement System.” *Global Environmental Change* 23, no. 5 (2013): 980–91. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2013.07.006>.

50 Martha Rojas Urrego, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2021.

51 Kanie, Norichika. “Governance with Multilateral Environmental Agreements: A Healthy Or Ill-Equipped Fragmentation? In *Green Planet Blues: Critical Perspectives on Global Environmental Politics*, 137–153. Taylor and Francis, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429493744>.

52 John Matuszak, Towards Stockholm+ 50 Webinar: Environmental Diplomacy and Multilateralism, 2022.

environmental multilateralism.⁵³ Since 1972, international environmental institutions have been established, hundreds of environmental agreements have been negotiated, and international conferences on the environment have been carried out on a constant basis. The 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the 2016 Kigali amendment to the Montreal Protocol to phase down hydrofluorocarbons, the 2022 Resolution to End Plastic Pollution, and the 2022 Resolution on declaring a healthy environment a human right are among recent examples of successful multilateral efforts to address environmental issues.⁵⁴

Multilateralism has become a powerful tool for countries in the Global South to exercise leadership, move the international environmental agenda forward, and leverage their status in specific issues according to their national interests. In the early 1980s, for example, several African nations championed global action to address the disposal of toxic waste across international borders. The effort resulted in the Basel Convention on Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes. In 1988, Malta foresaw the dangers of anthropogenic climate change, added the issue to the UN General Assembly agenda, and engaged in drafting a resolution that would lead to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Emphasizing the role of small states, Andrea Guerrero-Garcia, the lead climate negotiator for Colombia, notes that “It is very hearten-

ing to see that in climate, small countries can have a big voice and have a lot of agency and action in the United Nations negotiations.”⁵⁵ At COP16, Mexico played a key role during climate change negotiations to overcome the Copenhagen deadlock. Manual Pulgar-Vidal, Former Minister of the Environment of Peru, asserts that “Since the failure of Copenhagen, we have been trying to balance the multilateral process with a sense of urgency; we have been trying to create confidence but, on the other hand, to attend to the vulnerability of the poorest countries of the world, and we have been trying to define targets in a way to make them more enforceable, gradually.”⁵⁶ As a result, at COP20, Peru paved the road toward COP21 in Paris by encouraging all member states to submit their intended nationally determined contributions and launching a Lima-Paris Action Agenda. Nations like Costa Rica, the Marshall Islands, and Fiji continued to champion climate action to successful adoption of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement and beyond. Colombia led the development of the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

In March 2022, at the fifth session of UNEA, Peru and Rwanda initiated negotiations on all forms of plastic pollution, in all media, and in its full life cycle. The text submitted by two countries served as the basis for the resolution to end plastic pollution, with 175 member states unanimously endorsing it and agreeing to forge an international legally binding agreement by the end of 2024.⁵⁷ Joshua Wycliffe, Permanent Secretary of Waterways and Environment of

53 Narges Saffar, Towards Stockholm+ 50 Webinar: Environmental Diplomacy and Multilateralism, 2022.

54 Ghosh, Arunabha. “Multilateralism for chronic risks.” UN75 Global Governance Innovation Perspectives. Washington, D.C.: Stimson Center, Doha Forum, and Council on Energy, Environment, and Water, 2020.

55 Andrea Guerrero-Garcia, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2022.

56 Manual Pulgar-Vidal, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2022.

57 Farrelly, Trisia. “An international treaty to curb plastic pollution risks being watered down. New Zealand needs to take a stand.” The Conversation, February 16, 2022. <https://theconversation.com/an-international-treaty-to-curb-plastic-pollution-risks-being-watered-down-new-zealand-needs-to-take-a-stand-177130>.



Clean-up of Varsova beach on August 6, 2016 in Mumbai, India © UNEP

Fiji, emphasized “the need for a strong coalition internationally to collaborate and facilitate technology, access to information and capacity building” in relation to the leadership role of small states.⁵⁸

However, despite substantial progress in international environmental policymaking, environmental multilateralism is in crisis. Global collective action is lacking, and governments are failing to reverse or slow down threatening environmental trends. The rise of political and economic crises decreases the importance and priority of the environment, causing the exacerbation of environmental challenges over time. As a result, climate change, the loss of biologi-

cal diversity, air and water pollution, and desertification still persist.

There has also been a significant decline in the pace and ambition of environmental treaty-making. Major powers are reluctant to agree to new and legally binding international environmental commitments, while small states pave the way for a more ambitious environmental agenda. As everything in environmental multilateralism is done by consensus, it is extremely hard to reach a ‘one size fits all’ agreement. One country can simply block consensus or put in very difficult demands in terms of being able to achieve it. Even when a consensus is achieved, the willingness to make in-

58 Joshua Wycliffe, UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series, 2022.

dividual commitments can become an issue as the system has little accountability in terms of actually implementing and achieving the goals that have been negotiated.⁵⁹

As the implementation gap is clear, inclusion can be the solution. Shereen Zorba, Head of the Secretariat of the UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment, notes that "Inclusion is about equity; it is about equality; it is about justice; it is about ethics."⁶⁰ As we live in a world of the fourth industrial revolution, industry and the private sector are indispensable parts of it. Technology is the master of the world and has the potential to solve many environmental problems as long as it is integrated into solutions, supported by policies, bold and forthcoming. She concludes that "If we rearrange the system, rearrange the thinking, rearrange the priorities, and try to think from a solutions perspective that is combined with inclusion, equity, ethics, and accountability, only then will we be able to really make the change that we need; otherwise, we will continue to talk."⁶¹

Change in environmental multilateralism is also impossible without gender equality and human rights approaches to the environment. The Stockholm Declaration states that "Man is both creature and moulder of his environment."⁶² Since then, major steps have been taken to include gender equality as inherent to the fulfillment of the environmental agenda. The 1992 Rio Declaration recognizes that women have a vital role in environmental management

and development, and it was not until the 2012 Rio+20 Declaration that the international community resolved to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of sustainable development agenda.

The Stockholm Declaration also recognizes a human-centric approach to environmental justice: "The protection and improvement of the human environment is a major issue which affects the well-being of peoples and economic development throughout the world."⁶³ During the Paris Agreement negotiations, a group of countries promoted the inclusion of human rights in the operational part of the treaty. Although from the academic field the link between human rights and climate change was undeniable, during the negotiations, that connection was not clearly perceived or understood, leading to no consensus.⁶⁴ Six years later, at COP26 in Glasgow, preambular paragraph 11 of the Paris Agreement acknowledged climate change as a common concern of humankind and urged member states "when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity."⁶⁵

One important step toward the consolidation of the link between human rights and the en-

59 John Matuszak, Towards Stockholm+ 50 Webinar: Environmental Diplomacy and Multilateralism, 2022.

60 Shereen Zorba, Towards Stockholm+ 50 Webinar: Environmental Diplomacy and Multilateralism, 2022.

61 Ibid.

62 United Nations Conference on the Environment. Stockholm Declaration and Action Plan for the Human Environment. 1972: 3.

63 Ibid.

64 Arias, Carmen. "The transformative power of the preambular 11 of the Paris Agreement." Climate Policy Lab, December 20, 2021. <https://www.climatepolicylab.org/communityvoices/2021/12/20/the-transformative-power-of-the-preambular-11-of-the-paris-agreement>.

65 UNFCCC. "Guidance on cooperative approaches referred to in Article 6, paragraph 2, of the Paris Agreement." Accessed

vironment is the recent adoption of resolution 76/300. The resolution was promoted by Costa Rica, together with Slovenia, Switzerland, Morocco, and the Maldives, and recognizes the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as a human right, taking into consideration that “environmental degradation, climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification and unsustainable development constitute some of the most pressing and serious threats to the ability of present and future generations to effectively enjoy all human rights.”⁶⁶ This resolution was considered a “historical move”, and although not being legally binding, it will help reduce environmental injustices and empower people, especially those who are most vulnerable.⁶⁷

Regardless of its successes and challenges, environmental multilateralism is absolutely needed. As David Attenborough mentioned in his acceptance of the Champions of the Earth Lifetime Achievement Award, the environment is all-encompassing and affects all living beings. “The world has to get together. These problems cannot be solved by one nation – no matter how big that single nation is. We know what the problems are, and we know how to solve them. All we lack is unified action.”⁶⁸ In a triple planetary crisis, solutions cannot be found in isolation but in a cooperative and coordinated manner in which UNEP’s leadership and strengthened multilateralism are key.

Looking back on the last 50 years, UNEP has stood tall, strived, and in some cases, thrived

amid challenges, to say the least. The vision of UNEP at 100 by environmental leaders is characterized by cautious optimism, unbridled commitment, and redeeming confidence. In anticipation of a changing world in the next 50 years, UNEP must hold on to dynamism and transition from being the ‘bearer of knowledge’ to the ‘bridge-builder between gaps.’ UNEP must learn from the mistakes of the past that do not define it but rather better its steps for the future and increase its connectivity. Capitalizing on its institutional design and resources, relationships and foundational trust built throughout the years can go a long way in the realization of UNEP’s potential as the champion of the Earth.

With UNEP leading the way, strengthened environmental multilateralism requires more ambition and action to comply with environmental commitments. It requires science to inform environmental negotiations, which, in turn, can motivate and promote further research and technology innovation and transfer. It requires more inclusivity in a meaningful solution-focused way, facilitating the participation of a wide range of stakeholders from academia, civil society, industry, and the private sector to achieve the expected results. With hope and optimism, commitment and cooperation, determination and urgency can we reimagine multilateralism and inspire collective action to protect life on earth.



September 24, 2022. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma3_auv_12a_PA_6.2.pdf.

66 United Nations General Assembly. The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. 2022.

67 UN News. “UN General Assembly declares access to clean and healthy environment a universal human right.” United Nations, July 28, 2022. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1123482>.

68 UNEP. “David Attenborough receives the UN’s most distinguished environment award,” April 21, 2022.

<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/david-attenborough-receives-uns-most-distinguished-environment-award>.



Professor Maria Ivanova at Stockholm+50. 50 Years of Environmental Policies © UNEP

You have just read a Legacy Paper, one of five, which is an integral element of the report: **The People's Environment Narrative** celebrating 50 years of work between civil society and UNEP to safeguard the environment. The report is created, published and owned by Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future, SF, and can be downloaded in its entirety for free at:

www.stakeholderforum.org

www.unep.org

Section Four: the five Legacy Papers

Reimagining Environmental Multilateralism

Authors: Professor Maria Ivanova, Olga Skaredina & Carmen Arias

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Illustrations and graphic design by María Andrea Miranda Serna

Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future

Company no. 05243470 / Registered in England and Wales and Utrecht, the Netherlands

Registered Office: 2 The Links, Herne Bay,

Kent, CT6 7GQ, UK

www.stakeholderforum.org

info@stakeholderforum.org

twitter @stakeholders

linkedIn @stakeholderforum





Beach clean up, sorting of plastic and marine litter at EcoWorld Watamu, Kenya
© UNEP / Florian Fusstetter

Fifty Years of Education and Learning for the Environment and Sustainability

by **Dr. Thomas Macintyre**, Project leader Fundación Mentes en Transición
Prof. Daniella Tilbury, HMGOG Commissioner for Sustainable Development and Future Generations and Hon Fellow, St Catharines College, University of Cambridge.
Prof. Arjen Wals, Professor of Transformative Learning for Socio-Ecological Sustainability, Wageningen UR, UNESCO Chair of Social Learning and Sustainable Development.

Download the complete Legacy Paper by clicking on the PDF icon



Executive Summary

Commissioned to inform the Stockholm+50 conference in 2022, the paper provides an analysis on how our understanding of the relationship between the environment and education has evolved over the last 50 years. The starting point is the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden, which was the first world conference to place the environment at the heart of global dialogues, bringing together delegations from 114 governments to carve collaborative pathways towards the future. In addition to its importance in consolidating environmental governance around the world, the Stockholm conference is celebrated for being the first international meeting to formally recognise the vital role that education plays in limiting human impact on the environment and seeking a healthy relationship between people and planet. In 2022, Stockholm+50 reminds us of the urgency to address global issues such as climate change, ocean acidification, loss of biodiversity, deforestation and air pollution, as well as the need to employ all means and tools available to improve the health of our planet. As the world looks forward, the paper recognises that education and learning must play their part in helping to navigate our urgent efforts towards more sustainable futures.

The paper maps the evolution of educational approaches, contexts and themes over the decades, from the 1970s until the 2020s, including the paradigm shifts that have shaped engagement with formal, informal and non-formal learning for the environment and sustainability. It sought to address questions on: how to best educate and learn for the planet?; how has the thematic focus of environmental learning evolved over time?; where does learning for the environment take place?; how have our world views evolved and influenced how we see and engage with education and learning for the natural world; and, how has the role of stakeholders in learning and education evolved?

1970s - Inform and Experience: Following the influence of the 1972 Stockholm meeting, this decade saw environmental learning defined by a nature-based narrative that would aspire to rebuild our relationship with the natural environment. At the same time, the decade was shaped by a dominant and perhaps contradictory view, that science and technology would solve our environmental plight. Awareness raising and heightened concern were seen as triggers for environmental action. Behaviour changes techniques, that prescribed environmental outcomes, were the flavour of the day, as was the assumption that more information, awareness and appreciation of both nature and the environmental challenges at hand would lead to positive environmental behaviour. While the decade's key contribution was perhaps its ability to instil the notion that quality of life is dependent on the quality of the environment, a simmering tension arising in the late 1970s would underlie the following decades as the role of education in addressing structures and practices that exploit the planet came into question.

1980s - Investigate and 'solve': It took ten years for the key Stockholm messages to take root in the education world. The early 1980s represented a focus on science and technology, targeting individual values and behaviours but also saw some significant questioning, from educational circles, about the value of this learning. As the decade progressed, a shift was witnessed in the narratives with the realisation that environmental problems were no longer a 'clean up' problem, solved by increasing awareness to the issues and technological and scientific solutions. Instead, an understanding of socio-political and economic contexts were seen as vital to get to the root causes. We see citizenship and learner engagement grow as a learning strategy for environmental learning thanks to NGO involvement and the critique of education professionals. Transboundary learning and critical inquiry also entered the frame. These innovations served to strengthen the educa-

tional processes underpinning environmental learning and brought the agenda into an increasing number of schools, colleges and universities. This complemented the outdoor and natural studies offerings that gained ground in the previous decade.

1990s - Rethink and Engage: Although environmental learning of the last two decades led to a more environmentally aware population at the end of the 1990s, it was argued that people still lacked the necessary knowledge about the roots of sustainability problems and specifically what actions they could take. It was noted that environmental learning and education was a more complex and controversial field than it was at the start of the decade, with diverging ideas on reformist versus radical concepts of sustainable development, and the central question of the role of education for addressing environmental concerns. From an initial focus on applied science, the 1990s saw calls for more interpretive, critical and post-modern lines of inquiry through environmental learning and education and for experiences to move outside the academy and beyond national parks and into communities.

2000s - Connect and Change: This decade saw significant changes in educational frames and responses to environmental issues. It consolidated and mainstreamed emergent approaches and marginal narratives that were brewing over the previous twenty years. The result was a different pedagogical style and learner focus which critiqued the way we see the environment, the way we see one another, and the way society engages with the natural world. Issue-resolution learning, single action outcomes or behaviour change approaches still existed but were no longer the dominant aspirational goals for the environmental education movement, instead more integrative and emancipatory approaches were on the rise.



Field visit to Nairobi National Park. The 4th United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 4). March 2019. Nairobi, Kenya. © UNEP / Natalia Mroz

2010s - Reframing and Transforming Futures:

During this period, we saw a convergence of educational streams around the drive towards addressing sustainability concerns which only seem to be increasing in societies around the world. The SDGs added much weight to sustainability narratives and triggered education institutions and systems to consider the implications of environment, climate change and social injustices in the curriculum. There was also much more of an effort to embed sustainability principles and practices into school, as seen in the Whole School Approach, which became the dominant concern in policy guidelines, learning resources and education research. Recognising the limits of the modern educational system, decolonising voices and proposals, often based on alternative development models, offered new ways of teaching and learning, based on principles of relationality, plurality, and respect and care for the earth.

2020s - Regeneration and Embracing Uncertainty:

The 2020s will be defining for the future of humanity and the Earth as a whole. Agenda 2030 has set clear goals with which to work towards, and education is a vital component in this endeavour. It is, however, difficult to gauge how education and learning for the environment and sustainability will continue into this decade and the future. On the one hand, exciting new strands, often connected to eco-feminism and posthumanism, are emerging which propose a reconciliation with the Earth, and which critically confront colonial legacies and modern paradigms of development which have shaped the role of education today. On the other hand, while the limitations to the transmissive, classroom approach to sustainability education have become clear, the consequences of this paradigm can be seen in the immense frustration and ecoanxiety of learners who seem to have the knowledge and



The Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) - WED 2010 © UNEP / Montserrat Valeiras

awareness of environmental issues such as climate change, but not the tools to address such complex issue, and the capabilities to change deeply ingrained systems of power and control. One major difference between the current times and the early seventies, is that where environmental education was rather supply driven and at the margins of education and governance, today it and, indeed, ESD are much more demand driven and moving to the mainstream of education and governance.

Conclusion: As we define key recommendations for the United Nations Environment programme and look beyond 2030, we acknowl-

edge the uncertainty that awaits us but also the knowledge that education and learning can make a difference to our future prospects. UNEP must work in partnership with UNESCO and other agencies to connect issues of climate, biodiversity and natural environment with justice, equity and human rights and to support learning pedagogies that engage learners actively in sustainability through formal, non-formal and informal and life-long education. This can only be achieved by raising the status of education and learning in international agreements and by investing in international co-operation in this area.

EMERGENT TRENDS IN EDUCATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

EDUCATIONAL TRENDS

Inform and Experience

- Raising awareness and concern of global environmental issues
- Education as an instrument for changing learners behaviour, e.g., through early nature experiences leading to positive environmental decision-making later in life.

Investigate and 'Solve'

- Citizen science approaches that support inquiry and investigation of environmental issues.
- Focus on learners problem-solving their way out of environmental and human development issues.

Rethink and Engage

- Rethinking what we already know and how we engage with our natural environment.
- Providing practical hands-on experience and participatory learning - focus primarily on single and group actions that support the environment.

Connect and Change

- Asking questions about the root causes of socio-environmental concerns as well as learning to connect people's interests with these issues.
- Learn to change lifestyles and develop change strategies and skills.

Reframe and Transform Futures

- A focus on reframing learning pedagogies as well as education systems with moves towards whole-school approaches.
- Environmental learning as a transformative experience rather than a content to be added to curricular and learning situations.

Regenerate and Embrace Uncertainty

- Learning to repair and restore, accepting the damage of human intervention on planet earth.
- Learning for complexity and uncertainty rather than simply to problem solve or act.

INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

1970

1972 STOCKHOLM CONFERENCE

1975 BELGRADE CHARTER

1977 TBILISI DECLARATION

1980

1980 IUCN WORLD CONSERVATION STRATEGY

1987 BRUNDTLAND REPORT

1990

1992 THE RIO DECLARATION

1997 TIBLISI PLUS 20 CONFERENCE

2000

2002 JOHANNESBURG DECLARATION

2005

UN DESD 2005-2014

2010

2014

2015 UN SD SUMMIT – AGENDA 2030 & SDGS

2020

2021 UNFCCC ACE

2021 Berlin Declaration on ESD

2022 Transformative Education Summit

2030

2030 END OF AGENDA 2030



Circularity of plastic. From use, reuse, recycling and production © UNEP / Miranda Grant

Fifty Years of Education and Learning for the Environment and Sustainability

by **Dr. Thomas Macintyre**, Project leader Fundación Mentes en Transición
Prof. Daniella Tilbury, HMGoG Commissioner for Sustainable Development
and Future Generations and Hon Fellow, St Catharines College, University of Cambridge.
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Wageningen UR, UNESCO Chair of Social Learning and Sustainable Development.

Commissioned to inform the Stockholm+50 conference in 2022, this paper provides an analysis on how our understanding of the relationship between the environment and education has evolved over the last 50 years. The starting point is the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden, which was the first world conference to place the environment at the heart of global dialogues, bringing together delegations from 114 governments to carve collaborative pathways towards the future. The Stockholm conference is also celebrated for being the first international meeting to formally recognise the vital role that education plays in limiting human impact on the environment and seeking a healthy relationship between people and planet.

Fifty years on, it is time to take stock of what has been achieved and what remains to be done. This paper is concerned with how, over the years, our understanding of learning and education in support of the environment has changed. It maps the evolution of educational approaches, contexts and themes over the decades, from the 1970s until the 2020s, as well as the paradigm shifts that have shaped engagement with formal, informal and non-formal learning for the environment and sustainability.

Stockholm+50 reminds us of the urgency to address global issues such as climate change, ocean acidification, loss of biodiversity, deforestation and air pollution, as well as the need to employ all means and tools available to improve the health of our planet. As the world looks forward, this paper recognises that education and learning must play their part in helping to navigate our urgent efforts towards more sustainable futures. It provides a set of timely recommendations for UNEP, UNESCO and member states to upscale, improve and connect efforts in education and learning for a better environment, concluding with a set of key policy and governance considerations for the following decades.

Section 1: Introduction

1.1. Roots of environmental education, learning and engagement

Human's dependence on the environment has been historically recorded through the folklore of numerous races and tribes (Naess, 1990; Botzler and Armstrong, 1993; Weston, 1999). Diverse cultures manifest different epistemological relationships with nature, and these have also evolved over time, with an increasing foregrounding of indigenous knowledge in response to environmental issues and risks (Van Damme and Neluvhalani, 2004).

Western conceptions can be traced back to the early 18th century, with influential figures such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau writing about the importance of education focussed on the environment, providing the foundation of nature study. In the 1920 and 1930s, conservation issues began to emerge from the great depression, which saw a change in Nature Study, away from natural history, towards rigorous scientific study on issues such as the destructive sandstorms of the 1930s, which deeply affected the ecology and agriculture of the American prairies.

The 1950s and 60s brought increasingly strong signals that water, soil, and air quality were decreasing, and that this was affecting human health. Rachel Carlson's book the "silent spring" (1962), on the detrimental effects of pesticide use, was a wake-up call on increasing environmental degradation. Likewise, the book "Limits to Growth", by the club of Rome, provided stark, scientific warnings that the Earth's resources would not be able to support the current, exponential rates of economic growth and population (Meadows et al., 1972). With global environmental pressures growing, organisations such as the WWF and Greenpeace began raising the alarm (Hicks, 2012), and in a political context of cold war, Sweden proposed what would become the United Nations Conference on the

Human Environment, in Stockholm, which took place between June 5 to 16, 1972.

As the first of the environmental 'mega conferences', Stockholm 1972 was fundamental to providing a reflection on the overall trajectory of human development and its relationship to the environment as a whole (Seyfang, 2003). It was the first global meeting to recognize the interconnections between development, poverty, and the environment, and saw a large presence and influence of non-state actors, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and scholars. It was also ground-breaking in that it sought global policy consensus on issues related to the environment (Najam and Cleveland, 2005). Records document, however, that it was a contentious meeting: most Soviet bloc countries boycotted the meeting due to the exclusion of then East Germany. There was also strong scepticism from developing countries that were apprehensive of the global North's environmental focus and were concerned about how this would override their human development priorities (Najam and Cleveland, 2005).

Despite these obstacles, the 1972 Stockholm conference was successful in developing a global environmental discourse. Participants adopted a series of principles for sound management of the environment, including the Stockholm Declaration and Action Plan for the Human Environment, whose ideas have been carried forth to subsequent summits. Another important result was the establishment of the annual 'World Environment Day', which is now observed in most countries each June and has a strong focus on environmental awareness, learning and engagement. The 1972 Stockholm declaration, which contained 26 principles, placed environmental issues at the



Field visit to Nairobi National Park. The 4th United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 4). March 2019. Nairobi, Kenya © UNEP / Natalia Mroz

forefront of international concerns. It marked the start of a dialogue between industrialised and developing countries on the link between economic growth, the pollution of the air, water, and oceans and the well-being of people around the world, highlighting the finite nature of Earth's resources and the necessity for humanity to safeguard them. The major institutional legacy was the creation of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). The 1972 Stockholm conference also cemented the importance of the environment on the international agenda, and through its principle 19, identified education as an environmental strategy, laying the foundation for the Environmental Education movement:

“Education in environmental matters, for the younger generation as well as adults, giving due consideration to the underprivileged, is essential in order to broaden the basis for an enlightened opinion and responsible conduct by individuals, enterprises and communities in protecting and improving the environment in its full human dimension. It is also essential that mass media of communications avoid contributing to the deterioration of the environment, but, on the contrary, disseminate information of an educational nature on the need to protect and improve the environment in order to enable man to develop in every respect.”

(Principle 19)

Stockholm 1972 was successful in terms of establishing environmental governance structures and principles, as well as positioning education as an international strategy requiring collaborative action for the protection of the planet. Today, as we review Stockholm's legacy, we also acknowledge critiques that few concrete changes occurred in the major conferences (including Rio 1992), despite the widespread support for the pledges and principles and evolving social contexts. As noted by Clarke and Timberlake (1982), UNEP met in Nairobi for a 'Stockholm+10' conference and similarly concluded that small steps had been taken in reaching the declaration's goals.

1.2. Stockholm+50

The Stockholm+50 conference comes at an important moment in history. First, it celebrates 50 years of global environmental action, recognising the fundamental importance of multilateralism in bringing member states together to discuss future pathways. Second, humanity is at an existential turning point in terms of addressing the Earth's triple planetary crisis – climate, nature, and pollution – which in addition to environmental aspects, recognises the important social and economic dimensions which require deep transformations in how we relate to one another and the environment. Third, anchored in the UN Decade of Action, Stockholm+50 contributes to accelerating the transformations needed to reach the sustainable development goals of Agenda 2030. This involves quality education for all, sustainable and green economies, zero hunger and no poverty, as well as climate action and strong

institutions. Stockholm+50 will be advancing transformational, whole-of-society solutions to shared environmental challenges that require urgent international action.

This will be no easy task, however. Fifty years on from Stockholm 1972, and 27 COP climate summits have taken place, as well as 15 COP biodiversity summits, and three overarching Earth Summits. It is an open question as to the extent to which these international summits have been successful in moving humanity in a direction to which it can eventually live with-in the limits of what our natural environment can sustain. What is becoming clearer, however, is the fundamental role of education and learning in establishing a more balanced relationship with our planet and creating alternative futures. Recognising this relationship, brought to mainstream attention by the 1972 Stockholm conference, the Stockholm+50 conference identified education and the environment as one of the five legacy themes critical to environmental progress.¹

The next fifty years will be crucial for finding the balance between meeting our needs as a collective humanity, and respecting the life and limits of our planet. The authors of this paper recognise that this is a journey of learning to live in solidarity, and striving to be bold and creative in our ambitions and actions. This paper is only a snapshot of where learning and education for the environment is at this point, but we hope it can contribute to the reflections, recommendations and concrete actions that emerge from Stockholm+50, thus marking a historic milestone in our collective journey.

¹ The five themes are as follows: 1) Environmental Rights, Human Rights and Environmental Justice, 2) Connecting the dots – making a forceful canon of the Rio Conventions and the MEAs, 3) Reimagining Environmental Multilateralism, 4) Fifty Years of Education and Learning for the Environment and Sustainability, 5) UNEP, science and the environment – a necessary partnership to save the planet.

1.3. Outline of paper

The paper is divided into three parts. Moving on from the introductory section, in which we provided a background and context to the 1972 Stockholm declaration, section two provides a decade-by-decade overview of the last 50 years, exploring key narratives and educational trends, as well as international landmark events that have shaped educational responses to environmental challenges. These trends are summarised in figure 1, presented at the end of section two. Section three finishes with a focus on policy and governance issues, framing a set of recommendations for UNEP, UNESCO and member states to upscale, improve and connect efforts in education and learning for a better environment. These recommendations will take into consideration current and future trends which are likely to shape education, learning and engagement for the environment.

Section 2: Key educational trends through the decades (1970-2020)

2.1. Introduction

The context of the Stockholm 1972 conference provided the initial entry point into international collaboration and agreements in relation to education and engagement in support of a better environment. Over the years, the changing context and shifting narratives on education have shaped the evolution of our understanding and approaches to learning for the environment. This section tracks the development of educational and learning-based responses to environmental and sustainability concerns from the 1970s until the 2020s. Each decade addresses the following key elements, which are summarised at the end of the section.

*i) **The role of education:*** As efforts focus in support of education and learning for the environment, a fundamental question is how the

role of education has been evolving. Over the decades, we see changes in the underlying educational philosophy and assumptions questioning how, and to what end, we can best educate for the planet.

*ii) **Thematic entry points for education:*** As social, economic and ecological contexts evolve and our science knowledge deepens, we see shifts in the environmental issues that become the focus of learning and education efforts in this area. This element will track the different thematic entry points for each decade.

*iii) **Where learning happens:*** Learning takes place within the context of relationships among educators, families, communities and their environments. As we move through the decades, we will highlight these relationships but also how sites of learning for the environment have been extended or evolved over time.

*iv) **Role of experts and involvement of stakeholders:*** Education involves diverse stakeholders, which have interests in advancing ideas, or investing in education's successful development. Stakeholders affect decision-making, and so we track the shifting role of diverse stakeholders and the crucial role played in the education system through the decades.

*v) **Narratives and paradigms influencing education and environment:*** This element explores how we see the world and how this has evolved over time. We track the assumptions and aspirations underpinning the paradigms and how they influence how we see and engage with education and learning for the environment over the years.

As we move more in depth to a decade-by-decade description of these educational currents, it is important to remember that elements of all the different trends and narratives described below still co-exist today. Also, we recognise

that there is overlap between the interconnected decades, with some important ideas being introduced in one decade, but not having educational implications until later on; nevertheless, we consider it still possible to identify patterns, as well as a number of considerations that transcend the different decades.

Last, a few words on the methodology of this paper, which is a collaborative product involving three authors with extensive expertise and experience in the field of education and the environment. Writing this paper was a multi-step process of reading, classifying and discussing diverse written material which we considered has contributed to the education and environment nexus. We are aware that this process is influenced by our own preconceptions, biases and life experiences. To address this limitation, we have engaged in a reflexive discourse, critiquing amongst ourselves the material we have engaged with. We have sought to question how our own experiences may create blind spots and limit our engagement with this material but recognise that this is just the beginning of a process. We invite others interested in understanding the roots of environmental learning and education to help us map the trajectory that has shaped our current understanding in the field. We believe this work can help us learn from experience, question practices and see more clearly the intentions and future opportunities for learning and education in this area.

The importance of being aware and reflective of past trends in education and the environment can be seen as new stakeholders enter this space, and commit to learning for the planet. These stakeholders sometimes push for approaches and paradigms that have shown not to be effective in our quest for a healthier planet; they are unfamiliar with the history and learnings in education. The authors recognise the importance of engaging a broader group of stakeholders in the educational process but also of the concern that this lack of context

can delay or sidetrack our efforts to learn for a better planetary future. It is for this reason that we seek to trigger a dialogue that will improve the accuracy of our record and also enhance debates about the why, what and how of education for the environment in the context of sustainability.

2.2. The 1970s – Inform and Experience

2.2.1. The emergence of Environmental Education

As we start this historical review, it is important to imagine what the world was like leading up to the Stockholm 1972 conference. In 1957, amid the cold war, the USSR launched a satellite into orbit called the Sputnik, leading to a rush in the western world to accelerate investment and efforts in science and technology education to compete with the Soviets. In parallel, there were rising concerns about rapid population growth, increasing pollution, and the economic growth paradigm which underlined it (Gómez-Baggethun and Naredo, 2015). The struggle between these two conflicting agendas dates back over a century (Pepper, 1984), but it was Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, which raised consciousness of the severity of the environmental impact of human activities (Carson, 1962).

Other influential texts of the time, such the *The Population Bomb*, written by Stanford University Professor Paul Ehrlich (1968), predicted worldwide famine in the 1970s and 1980s due to overpopulation, whilst the 1972 book, *Limits to Growth*, further warned that the exponential rates of economic and population growth would not be able to be supported by the Earth's resources, and would collapse before the end of this century (Meadows et al., 1972). It was science and technology that took man to space that same year and gave humanity a new vision of the future, but ironi-



The Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) - WED 2010 © UNEP / Montserrat Valeiras

cally, Apollo 17's first colour photo of the Earth from space - called the Blue Marble - provided a different perspective of the earth demonstrating our vulnerability and reliance on the natural environment.

Critiques of mainstream economics of the 1970s began to emerge with the work of E.F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as If People Mattered* (1973), striking a chord with many from different walks of life. In it, Schumacher argues that the modern economy is unsustainable, and makes a case for education as the greatest resource, philosophically highlighting the type and scale of changes necessary to address environmental challenges, highlighted by the term 'small is beautiful'. David Pepper, author of the book *The Roots of Modern Environmentalism* (1984) highlights the importance of Schumacher's

work in demonstrating how our value systems influence what we consider the roles of work and education to be, a debate which continues to this day. During this time, Environmental Education began to slowly emerge as a concept, with William Stapp publishing *The Concept of Environmental Education* in the first issue of 'The Journal of Environmental Education' (Stapp, 1969), laying the academic platform for environmental learning and engaging interest in this area for many years to come.

2.2.2. From awareness raising to behaviour change

There were various educational responses to the increasing environmental threats in the 1970s. Initially, most countries responded with a series of resources and learning objectives

that sought to raise awareness of the global issues that challenged planetary health, as captured in text box 1 below. This approach, often referred to as education *about* the environment, in its simplest form, sought to heighten awareness of environmental concerns. It incorrectly assumed that the fear arising from environmental threats and the knowledge of how ecosystems worked would trigger an action response from the learner. Over the years, it has been recognised that education *about* the environment can improve environmental literacy but that by itself it will have limited impact in addressing the environmental situation. Instead, this approach should be taught alongside other learning activities that clarify values and develop action competence of the learner (Tilbury and Wortman, 2004).

Text box 1. Education as an instrument, pro-environmental attitudes, behaviour

This decade saw environmental campaigns in schools using slogans like 'Don't be a hood, don't pollute' and 'If you don't recycle, you're throwing it all away'. The assumption was that environmental concerns such as littering should be addressed through developing precise behavioural practices for motivating groups of individuals towards pro-environmental behaviour. Research at the time shows how anti-litter programs at schools, based on feedback to schools on cleanliness of schoolyards, and activities such as school movies contingent on clean yards, was shown to be effective in reducing litter at schools (Gendrich et al., 1982), but there was little evidence that the desired environmental behaviour lasted or transferred to positive environmental attitudes or actions (Clayton, 2012).

The 1970s saw the US dominating discourses with its focus on *education as an instrument to change environmental behaviour* in an at-

tempt to limit the impact of human activities (see Trent, 1983). This can be seen, for example, by 'infusion' approaches, which seek to incorporate environmental content and knowledge into existing or planned courses of instruction in teacher education programs (Hungerford et al., 1988). Alongside this perspective, there was also increasing support for the *nature narrative*, with an assumed correlation between developing a connection with nature at an early age in life, and making positive environmental decision-making later in life (Tanner, 1980). This view was of great interest to those who were dedicated to protecting natural habitats and working in national parks or field centres whose voice had gained in strength thanks to recently established professional associations and membership bodies. This perspective assumed a linear relationship between knowledge, awareness and behaviour and greatly influenced how environmental learning and education activities were assessed or evaluated (Tilbury, 1993). The strength of this lobby was such that it took many years for the educational model to be questioned. Two decades later, research demonstrated that this relationship is somewhat problematic, as there is not often a direct correlation between the variables (Hart and Nolan, 1999; Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002; Scoullos and Malotidi, 2004).

2.2.3. The importance of socio-economic issues

Another response was the recognition that education needed to consider socio-economic issues. As noted by Tilbury (1993), there was growing international grassroots concern over the ability of scientists and 'experts' to address environmental concerns (Williams, 1985; Robottom, 1987). In the late 1970s, this led to a paradigm shift away from a predominantly natural science framework, to one that began to include human and social science interpretations of environmental issues. This shift is visible in the 1977 Tbilisi declaration, which highlighted the need to understand the com-

plex relations between socioeconomic development and the improvement of the environment (Fensham, 1978; Hungerford, 2009). Disinger (1986) emphasises that this represented a natural evolution in environmental learning and education in terms of interactions of science and technology with society, and the 'environment of concerns', including the human environment.

At the same time, critical approaches to education were beginning to emerge, such as the critical pedagogy of Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, who brought a social liberating approach that would lead to a conscientization, and an awareness of communities living in poverty, who are illiterate and lack the power to improve their livelihoods (Freire, 1970). These power discourses existed in pockets and had little influence in the practice of environmental learning and education in these early years. However, they gained in importance over later decades, becoming a critical component of learning for the environment in eco-pedagogical approaches that place a strong emphasis on social and environmental justice (see Kahn, 2008; 2010).

2.2.4. Environmental Education emerges as an international policy commitment

The 1970s also saw increasing interest in environmental learning and how organisations such as the United Nations made this new area of learning its concern. The Swedish delegation of the United Nations led the drive to acknowledge that environmental issues were affecting all peoples, regardless of race, socio-economic standing, and both developed and developing countries, leading to the 1972 Stockholm conference. This context led to an international policy commitment to education at the UN level. Principle 19 of the 1972 Stockholm declaration cemented this through demonstrating the important role of education in addressing environmental challenges, as well as recognis-

ing the scale of the response needed, from the local to the global.

While the 1972 declaration was instrumental in establishing a status for the new area of learning called Environmental Education and providing broad policy goals and objectives, it did not provide detailed normative positions (Handl, 2012). What followed, in 1975, was a global framework for education in the form of the Belgrade Charter on Environmental Education (UNESCO, 1975), which gave form to what was outlined in Principle 19. This declaration stated that Environmental Education constitutes a comprehensive lifelong education responsive to changes in a rapidly changing world, with the goal of developing a world population that is aware of, and concerned about, the environment and its associated problems. The UNESCO-UNEP Tbilisi conference on Environmental Education of 1977 updated, clarified and expanded the Stockholm declaration guided by the Belgrade Charter. The conference proposed new goals, objectives, characteristics and guiding principles of education concerned with the environment; restating the importance of promoting awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills, and participation, as well as positioning education as a continuous life-long learning process. The Tbilisi Declaration (UNESCO-UNEP, 1977), was the first international policy document pointing to the importance of changing prevailing growth and expansion centred economic logic through education. The following are the goals of Environmental Education, as stated in the Tbilisi conference, highlighting the focus on awareness raising and environmental behaviour (UNESCO, 1978, pp 26-27):

- (a) to foster clear awareness of, and concern about, economic, social, political and ecological interdependence in urban and rural areas.
- (b) to provide every person with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes,

commitment and skills needed to protect and improve the environment.

(c) to create new patterns of behaviour of individuals, groups and society as a whole towards the environment.

As noted by Le Grange and Reddy, (2007), the Tbilisi conference was important for stating that Environmental Education should consider the environment in its totality, including the interactions between social and ecological dimensions. This required an interdisciplinary approach to learning, where learners should be active participants in planning their own learning experiences.

2.2.5. Quality of life and environment

It was in the 1970s that environmental writers and international policy frameworks converged on one key message: quality of life is dependent on the quality of the environment (Schumacher, 1973), and the quality of the environment is itself dependent on the type and intensity of human activity. Major documents at the time restated the nature of this interdependence and sought to develop a social consciousness underpinned by our treatment of the planet. However, rather than reframing mindsets and deeply questioning daily life choices and its impact on natural systems, efforts remained focused on developing positive relationships with nature, with outdoor, natural science and wilderness education becoming a popular frame for education (Hungerford, 2009).

This was reflected in policy and practice, where environmental learning and education was primarily focused on raising awareness about environmental issues, establishing connections with the natural environment and developing technical and scientific responses to global environmental challenges (Gough, 2006; Hungerford, 2009). Education belonged to a whole basket of instruments and tools for

changing environmental behaviour which included technological development, legislation, and financial incentives, whereby education was seen as one instrument that could be used to combat environmental degradation.

It is important to note that some acute observers such as Fensham (1978) did point out that environmental learning and education was frequently misunderstood or misinterpreted, and that its core intention was to not raise awareness but to directly address the mindset shifts, economic models and social engagement levels required to get to the root causes of environmental degradation and transition to a more environmentally sustainable future. However, pedagogically, learning opportunities remained teacher-centred and driven with exploratory elements restricted to natural environments. This meant that formal environmental learning took place at visitor centres, in school gardens and playgrounds, in field centres, wilderness areas, and sometimes in environmental education centres that were being formed at that time. In higher education, new course offerings on environmental studies and environmental science began to appear.

2.2.6. Summary of the 1970s

Following the influence of the 1972 Stockholm meeting, this decade saw environmental learning defined by a nature-based narrative that would aspire to rebuild our relationship with the natural environment. At the same time, the decade was shaped by a dominant and perhaps contradictory view, that science and technology would solve our environmental plight. Awareness raising and heightened concern were seen as triggers for environmental action. Behaviour-change techniques, with prescribed environmental outcomes, were the flavour of the day, as was the assumption that more information, awareness and appreciation of both nature and the environmental challenges at hand would lead to positive environmental behaviour. Over the years, we have learnt the lim-

“Quality of life is dependent on the quality of the environment”

Schumacher, 1973

itations of these perspectives and approaches to learning. While the decade’s key contribution was perhaps its ability to instil the notion that quality of life is dependent on the quality of the environment, a simmering tension arising in the late 1970s would underlie the following decades as the role of education in addressing structures and practices that exploit the planet came into question.

nuclear disaster of 1986 were reminders of the horrific consequences of man-made environmental disasters, but also of the gradual loss of public confidence in the science that failed to prevent them (Ashley, 2000). These environmental issues occurred against a backdrop of social and political issues arising out of the cold war and nuclear war being an overriding concern amongst young people (Hicks and Holden, 1995a).

2.3. The 1980s – Investigate and ‘Solve’

2.3.1. Emerging tensions

The 1980s brought new and more engaging visions of environmental learning. However, it also drew out social and educational tensions, many of which were rooted in the 1972 Stockholm Declaration. In the early years of the 1980s, the scientific approach gained ground in environmental circles with efforts focussed on identifying cause-and-effect relationships whilst educational experts sought data to show that scientific knowledge and skills could lead to improved environmental outcomes. However, wider society was divided as to the role science should play in determining policy and social advancements.

An environmental success story was the global action, culminating in the Montreal Protocol of 1987, to phase out chemicals called chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), which were leading to a hole in the ozone layer. Conversely, the Bhopal gas chemical disaster in 1984, and the Chernobyl

2.3.2. Scientific problem-solving and the rise of the NGOs

The 1980s continued to place importance on science education, which had become the dominant pathway for young people to learn about the environment in school (Lucas, 1980), overtaking the more outdoor learning and nature approaches seen in the 1970s. This period framed environmental issues as a scientific problem to be solved and not just as a science to be understood. This influence saw a more linear approach to learning about the environment; environmental problems were identified, and individuals and small groups were expected to solve the big problems the world was facing. The approach was still predominantly cognitive, as factual knowledge was considered necessary for more appropriate environmental decision-making (Sauvé, 2005), but with an extended responsibility to citizens with the science remit no longer limited to qualified professionals (see text box 2).

Text box 2. Citizenship, engagement, science

'Riverwatch' and 'Adopt-Stream' in North America and, in Europe, the 'Blue Flag program' and Ireland-based 'Coastwatch' are examples of citizenship science programmes designed to monitor and improve the health of the coastline. It involves volunteers from all walks of life checking their chosen 500m stretch of coast (survey unit) once around low tide, and jotting observations down on the survey questionnaire while on the shore. This citizen science work is often augmented with water tests. Data is then collected and pooled to provide a snapshot of the environmental state of the coastline areas surveyed at that time (source: <http://coastwatch.org/europe/>). Such programs demonstrate the increasing engagement of citizens in scientific fields in the 1980s, areas normally reserved for experts.

Responding to ecosystem decline and social stresses, international NGOs claimed their place in the social dialogues of the 1980s (Caldwell, 1988). This provided a critical counterweight to dominant trends in the global political economy, at all levels, from the local to the global (Finger and Princen, 2013). For example, NGOs have been widely credited with performing an instrumental role in pushing for the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, owing largely due to UNEP's policy to involve non-state actors, whereby NGOs participated directly in the preparatory and actual negotiations (Finger and Princen, 2013). In countries such as Brazil, environmental NGOs played an important role in the process of expanding non-formal environmental learning, catalysing governmental initiatives and providing support to private organisations working on environmental learning initiatives (Tristão and Tristão, 2016).

Over the 1980s, NGOs increasingly influenced educational responses to the environment as

they pushed the notion that science was not enough, arguing that human activity, which was causing environmental degradation, needed to be addressed through a people's perspective. They also questioned the increasing influence of environmental experts on what was perceived as a social problem. This emerging trend can be illustrated in a series of teachers activity guide books developed by WWF-UK entitled the *Global Environmental Education Programme*. Its *What We Consume* module, written by John Huckle (1988), positioned environmental learning within the economic, political, social, and philosophical structures that direct human activity, and influenced social values (Martin, 1985). Greig et al.'s (1987) *Earthrights: Education as If the Planet Really Mattered*, was another seminal document of the 1980s that captured the interest of educators who had previously failed to connect with the purely techno-scientific thrust of the environmental agenda (Tilbury, 1993). The latter also supported boundary crossing and made the case for aligning environmental concerns within the broader umbrella of adjectival educations such as futures education, global education, citizenship education and multicultural education – an idea which gained significant traction at the time.

Robottom and Hart (1993) were also key influencers who called for broadening the scope of environmental issues taught in schools and for exploring issues through socially-critical frames. They advocated a shift away from traditional approaches to learning *in* and *about* the environment, which were knowledge and science centred, to a focus on questioning the root causes and socio-cultural frames that led to the exploitation of the environment (Tilbury, Coleman and Garlick, 2005). Alongside this call to refresh how we perceived environmental concerns was an increasing educational interest in the field of development and its social justice and human rights perspectives. The latter brought a focus on the political and socio-cultural threads that helped get to the

bottom of why it would prove difficult to address the root causes of environmental issues through science or behaviour change models.

2.3.3. Questioning the educational benefits

A further response was a kickback from education specialists concerned with the lack of educational frames in education and learning. A dominant concern of the 1980s was the emphasis on solving environmental problems ‘for the good of the planet’ rather than for the benefit of learners. Many in schools, colleges and higher education were suspicious of the lack of clear educational frames or outcomes. A few experts labelled environmental education as instrumentalist in nature and its activities as indoctrination (Hart and Stevenson, 2019). Such experts rejected a values-inculcation approach as well as the implantation of knowledge which lacked any form of interrogation or co-creation process.

Fritjof Capra’s *The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture* (1983), provided an alternative pathway seeking to break silos and parallel streams by advocating a more organic and systems approach to understanding reality. In educational terms, this meant moving away from a reductionist and fragmented worldview, where learners are passive vessels, to where teachers act to facilitate the development of students, and where not just the natural environment is important, but also the social and cultural connections. The work of Bill Stapp and his students at the University of Michigan, working with inner-city Detroit Middle Schools engaging youth in their local environment and working on self-identified issues of concern, illustrates this new trend towards student-centred learning as well as boundary crossing between the social and the environmental (Wals, Beringer and Stapp, 1990). Such trends promoted cross-curriculum learning, which explores the linkages between society and environment, global and local issues as well as politics and power from an intercultural perspective.

The influences of these approaches can still be seen in many schools’ national curricula today.

2.3.4. Sustainable Development

The later part of the 1980s saw other shifts in the way environmental issues were framed.

The ‘Our Common Future’ report, also referred to as the Brundtland report, directed nations towards the goal of sustainable development, highlighting the moral issue of how today’s actions affect future generations (WCED, 1987). It presented environmental problems as not just ecological in nature, but also with social, cultural and economic dimensions, bringing into focus the now ubiquitous concept of Sustainable Development that had been introduced a few years earlier in the IUCN’s World Conservation Strategy (IUCN, 1982). Compared to environmental reports of the 1970s, such as the 1972 Stockholm report, in which the role of economic growth was seen as a growing concern in terms of ecological decline, the Brundtland report instead presented growth as the solution to social and environmental problems (Gómez-Baggethun and Naredo, 2015).

The Brundtland report was thus seen as reformist, rather than transformative of current social or economic systems. The report anthropocentrically treated the natural environment as part of policy options, with the need for technological and economic tools, and advocated a shift in individual and industry behaviour towards a more sustainable road of economic development (Fien and Tilbury, 2002). This would generate increasing tensions and extend debates in educational and environmental circles for decades to come.

2.3.5. Summary of the 1980s

It took ten years for the key Stockholm messages to take root in the education world. The early 1980s represented a focus on science and technology, targeting individual values and behav-

iors but also saw some significant questioning, from educational circles, about the value of this learning. As the decade progressed, a shift was witnessed in the narratives with the realisation that environmental problems were no longer a 'clean up' problem, solved by increasing awareness to the issues and technological and scientific solutions. Instead, an understanding of socio-political and economic contexts were seen as vital to get to the root causes. At the same time, citizenship and learner engagement grew as a learning strategy for environmental learning thanks to NGO involvement and the critique of education professionals. Transboundary learning and critical inquiry entered the frame with educational practices seeking to question the socio-cultural lens that led to the exploitation of the environment. These innovations served to strengthen the educational processes underpinning environmental learning and brought the agenda into an increasing number of schools, colleges and universities. This complemented the outdoor and natural studies offerings that gained ground in the previous decade.

2.4. The 1990s – Rethink and Engage

2.4.1. The emergence of Education for Sustainable Development

The 1990s saw the end of the Cold War caused by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the widespread proliferation of communication channels such as the Internet. In this relative peace and prosperity, new environmental issues began to catch the attention of the public, such as protecting tropical rainforests from destruction, biodiversity conservation, as well as the major concern of global warming as an aspect of climate change. Having emerged in the 1980s, the notion of sustainability and sustainable development entered the public

imagination in the 1990s. Although these concepts did not take root in educational policy or practice during the decade, debates about the influence and implications of sustainability for environmental learning dominated academic journals and professional magazines of the time.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio in 1992, also known as the Earth Summit, redefined the issues identified at Stockholm within the new language of sustainable development. Chapter 36 of Agenda 21 was a key contribution of the Earth Summit, consolidating arguments that education is critical to the achievement of sustainable development and identified core strategies to improve learning opportunities in this area (Tilbury, 2012). Agenda 21 was seminal in that it provided a basis for international collaboration as well as a case for investment in learning for change. At the time, however, Smyth (1999) recalls that many in government and NGO bodies were committed to the call for education for sustainable development but misunderstood the role and process of education expecting it to be a linear or infusion process that determined behavioural outcomes. The Earth Summit redefined the issues identified at Stockholm 1972, into the new language of sustainable development, and broadened the agenda to cover social as well as environmental concerns (Seyfang, 2003). In parallel, the Earth Charter, first proposed at the Earth Summit in 1992 and launched in 2002, after widespread discussion and debate throughout global civil society, presented 16 principles for building a global society based on respect for nature; universal human rights; economic justice; and a culture of peace (Initiative, no date). Notably, at Rio+5 in 1997, UNESCO reported that education seemed to be 'the forgotten priority of Rio' since there had been little national reporting of action or global funding (Tilbury and Cooke, 2005).



Youth gather in Karura forest, Nairobi, in solidarity with the global climate youth marches. 2019 © UNEP

2.4.2. The Great Divide

The Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) discourse emphasised North-South inequities and interdependencies, rather than promoting individual behaviour change or developing attitudes that aligned with the environment. While ESD was (and still is) championed by UNESCO, the 1990s saw tensions between Environmental Education and ESD emerge, from being one and the same, to being subsets of each other, with others calling for more radical, critical and liberatory educational policy and practice. Tilbury (1995), for example, interpreted sustainability as a new approach to Environmental Education and one which challenged the apolitical, naturalist and scientific learning activities that dominated the previous decade. Tilbury argued that it brought a new pedagogical frame to the learning dynamic, which awakened the interest of the

learner by giving them choices on how to respond to the global crisis.

The 1997 Tbilisi+20 conference in Thessaloniki, Greece highlighted many of the divides that had arisen as a result of the sustainability paradigm entering educational frames. Some stakeholders sought to make ESD the core label and framework for advancing efforts in environmental learning. This idea gained the support of many member states and UNESCO itself which provided special funds to increase support and visibility of ESD. Others present rejected this positioning and extended the debate to the academic literature. Bob Jickling, for example, argued '*why I do not want my children to be educated for sustainability*' (1992) highlighting the need for more dialogue and discussion on the role and purpose of education. For others, such as Huckle (1991), ESD had generated irreconcilable interpretations of ed-

ucation, with technocentrists on the one side, and ecocentrists on the other. Paraphrasing David Orr, this difference was between a tendency towards a global technocracy who wanted a more efficient path of development, and those who wanted a regeneration of civic culture alongside the rise of an ecologically literate and competent citizenry who could understand global issues (Orr, 1992). Underlying the debates of the time is what Disinger (1990) describes as the potential oxymoron between 'sustainable' and 'development', highlighting that the underlying assumption of the need for economic growth is not sustainable on a finite planet. This was a tension that had also plagued Environmental Education efforts in the 1970s and 80s. Our understanding of teaching and learning for sustainable development has moved on significantly from these initial conceptions, with few still holding on to the need to separate environment, economy and development in education.

2.4.3. Critical pedagogical shifts

Important for moving the social dimension of education dialogues forward was the work of the Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, who brought a social liberating approach to education through the concept of 'conscientization'. This approach voiced an awareness of communities living in poverty, and the marginalisation of illiterate populations who lack the power and agency to improve their livelihoods (Freire, 1970). While Freire's work began to emerge in the 1970s and question the power relationships in the education process itself, it was not until the 1990s that critical pedagogical debates began to gain traction in environmental learning and education and aligned it more closely to ESD theoretical frameworks. Such pedagogies critically question how the learner is engaged in the learning process, displacing the traditional power of the teacher over the learner. More learner-centred and cross-curriculum driven approaches became visible in school, college and universi-

ty practice, though they faced resistance to established educational structures (see text box 3 below). In their critical review of Environmental Education in the 1990s, Hart and Nolan (1999) also note that due to the emerging critical voices to what and how Environmental Education was taught, the focus of the current organisation structure of schools and teacher education systems were also brought to question.

Text box 3. Learner-centred, cross-curriculum, critical education

'Reaching out' was the World Wide Fund for Nature UK's program for professional development. It provides a critical education for sustainability, seeking to engage teachers with ethical, philosophical and pedagogical foundations of education for sustainability. With a cross-curriculum approach, the program had the aim of integrating sustainability principles into all education and training environments, especially through linking education with political projects beyond the school. At the time, as noted by its author, John Huckle, the programme gained limited success as teachers struggled to accept it due to the conservative educational reforms of the time, whereby teachers were focussing on effective delivery and assessment of the national curriculum's core and foundational subjects, rather than cross-curriculum themes such as sustainability (Huckle, 1998). Over time, however, the resource has been influential in reframing school textbooks and changing discourse, as well as what was seen as an example of good practice, even being used in China to teach education for sustainable development to students.

These socially critical movements also drew attention to feminist perspectives questioning power relationships between men and women. This particularly focussed on the connec-

tion between the domination of women and the domination of nature by Man, with the view that harmony with nature requires critically addressing inequities in human relations. Similar to critical education research of the 1990s (for example, Gough and Robottom, 1993), ecofeminism focuses on politics and power, paying special attention to excluded and formerly silenced groups so as to challenge dominant approaches to learning and definitions of knowledge (Gough, 1999). From the 1970s, women began formulating ecological feminist responses to environmental impacts of encroaching modernisation. Ecofeminists such as Vandava Shiva (Shiva and Mies, 2014) have highlighted the issue of reductionist, mechanistic science and the attitude of conquest over nature as an expression of capitalist patriarchy. In terms of education and learning for the environment and sustainability, Li (2007) highlights it is necessary to critique the idea that Environmental Education is about celebrating and preserving nature, instead highlighting the need to examine, critique, and rectify the unequal social relations embedded in contemporary society. At the same time, emancipatory democratic approaches were becoming more important, with figures such as Wendell Berry (1997) and David Orr (1992) highlighting the importance of reinhabiting place, as well as critical place based pedagogy (Gruenewald, 2003), which merged critical pedagogies and a place-based approach with an emphasis on experiencing the environment physically (Payne, 1997).

The 1990s also began to more seriously recognize that early childhood education and care was critical, whereby the early years were crucial to developing attitudes and behaviours in Environmental Education, led by the work of Joy Palmer (see Palmer and Neal, 1994; Palmer, 2002). While young children have an innate ability to see things in a relational and moral way early on, they lose this as they spend more time in schools. An important question therefore was how to bring back into formal education notions of relational ways of thinking, play-

fulness, and art (Wilson, 1996). There is also the important work of Roy Ballantyne who was one of the first to undertake research that documented the impact of children on parents in regards to Environmental Education, giving currency to the need to bridge the intergenerational divide through education (Ballantyne, Connell and Fien, 1998).

2.4.4. Transformative perspectives to education

Another educational response was a transformative perspective to education as well as society. Rather than the traditional practice of transmission of facts, skills, and values to student, with closed learning outcomes decided on by experts, a transformative perspective sees knowledge and understanding as being co-constructed within a social context—new learning is shaped by prior knowledge and diverging cultural perspectives (O’Sullivan, 1999). This socially critical perspective provides space for autonomy and self-determination on the part of the learner. In this sense, a function of this form of environmental learning is to encourage students to become critically aware of how they perceive the world with the intention of fostering citizen engagement with social and environmental issues and participation in decision-making processes (Jickling and Wals, 2008). Jickling and Wals (2008) point out that when deprived from this space and function, Environmental Education runs the risk of facilitating ‘Big Brother’ sustainable development, characterised by policy statements and government directives, transmissive goals and authoritative approaches to learning to generate an obedient population.

Important for addressing these concerns is the process of instilling a transformative perspective which engages learners in critical reflection and action-based change with an overt agenda of social change (Tilbury and Cooke, 2005). From this point of view, education is more about teaching students *how* to ques-

tion and reflect in their thinking, rather than *what* to think. In this vein, the work of Jack Mezirow on transformative learning in the mid 1990's (Mezirow, 1997), portrayed learning as a process of deep, constructive, and meaningful learning that goes beyond simple knowledge acquisition and supports critical ways in which learners consciously make meaning of their lives (Taylor, 1998). This can be seen in the shift in awareness raising and engaging learners in isolated environmental activities such as picking up rubbish, whereby a transformative perspective instead encourages learners to develop critical and systematic thinking skills, which address the root of the problem (such as consumerist culture in this case). With little evidence to show that particular values correspond with specific action, there was a move away from more instrumentalist objectives of acquiring a specific set of values and attitudes for the environment. The focus instead moved to value clarification (rather than values education or inculcation), whereby learners critically assess their own beliefs, values and worldviews (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002).

In this vein, new fields began to gain traction, such as futures thinking, which considers potential futures through the exploration of trends and drivers for change that may lead to different future scenarios (Hicks and Holden, 1995b; Hicks, 1998). In line with the future-oriented emphasis of the sustainable development definition of the Brundtland report—"meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"—this perspective was thought to transform the way people relate to their future, helping to motivate engagement and create opportunities for change. While this strand became more prominent in later decades, the seeds were planted in the 1990s.

2.4.5. Community-based learning and education

Another educational response was the rise of community-based learning and education, based on the realisation that the local and global are deeply intertwined and connected. Global issues such as inequality, injustice, conflict and the environment are found in various parts of the world, but are experienced locally. As the saying goes, "think globally, act locally." This 'glocal' perspective built upon the Tbilisi Declaration of 1977, which was the first declaration giving international recognition to the importance of community educational approaches in creating change for the environment. The Rio declaration in 1992 and Agenda 21 further promoted the role of community education by repositioning education at the centre stage of community building for a sustainable future (Leicht et al., 2018; Pozo-Llorente et al., 2019). Governments and non-government organisations were encouraged to define their roles and establish priorities for community learning, leading to multi-stakeholder and participatory approaches that sought to improve local environmental issues. Derived from Agenda 21, Local Agenda 21 (LA21) sought to build upon existing local government strategies and resources to implement sustainability goals. As demonstrated by Tilbury and colleagues (2005), in the context of Australia, LA21 had an important impact on how local communities engaged with sustainability issues, encouraging municipalities to participate, influence, and share the decision-making process.

An important aspect of community learning and education is engaging the community in participatory learning, which aims to build capacity for change towards sustainability. William Stapp and colleagues (1996) further



Youth and Sports event at the 4th United Nations Environment Assembly UNEA 4. Nairobi, Kenya. 2019
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developed an action learning model for community problem solving, which they initiated in the late eighties, engaging young people in a participatory initiative to resolve a socio-environmental problem perceived in their own community. Beyond the problem-solving approach, an action research approach requires constant reflection and an action-oriented focus. The added 'participatory' component of Participatory Action Research, developed by Fals Borda, emphasises the importance of engaging with political action aimed at enacting participants' agency to bringing about radical changes in asymmetrical power relations and narratives that maintain oppressive and exploitative conditions (Fals Borda, 1987;1988).

2.4.6. Summary of the 1990s

Although environmental learning of the last two decades led to a more environmental-

ly aware population at the end of the 1990s, it was argued that people still lacked the necessary knowledge about the roots of sustainability problems and specifically what actions they

could or should take (Gigliotti, 1990). Hart and Nolan (1999) note that environmental learning and education was a more complex and controversial field than it was at the start of the decade, with diverging ideas on reformist versus radical concepts of sustainable development, and the central question of the role of education for addressing environmental concerns. From a focus in the 1970s and 1980s on applied science, the 1990s saw the theme 're-think and engage' dominate practice and calls for more interpretive, critical and postmodern lines of inquiry through environmental learning and education (Gough, 1999; Hart and Nolan, 1999; Palmer, 2002). We also see a shift for experiences to move outside the academy and

beyond national parks and into communities (Malone, 1999), which framed the foundations for what would develop into the whole school approach in the following decade.

2.5. The 2000s – Connect and Change

2.5.1. Education in a globalising world

The 2000s saw an important shift in how we relate to as well as how we engage *with* the environment, with a move away from single actions of individuals towards the role of education in change-making at a larger societal level. This decade saw a strong and emerging globalisation, aided by the exponential growth of the Internet, and strong economic development in countries such as China. The connections across communities and peoples were heightened with the strengthening of international relationships and partnerships becoming centre stage, not only in terms of the environment conventions that took place, but also in terms of how learning for the environment was being perceived.

At the same time, globalisation brought fragmentation and polarisation through terrorism, epitomised by 9/11, as well as increasing social and economic disparities between people and countries. The twin pillars of development and environment—already identified in Stockholm 1972, and forged into the concept of sustainable development in the 1980s and 1990s—began to more seriously shape education and the environment, illustrated by the agreement within the UN to call for a Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). At the same time, with increasing individualisation and expanding economic and cultural uniformity, alongside the availability of a rapidly growing amount of information, tensions continued to grow regarding the purpose of edu-

cation, and its role in an increasingly complex world. Currents such as ecofeminist and decolonial pedagogies began gaining a foothold in educational debates, critiquing the way we see and relate to the environment (Selby, 2008; Harvester and Blenkinsop, 2010).

2.5.2. The increasing influence of Education for Sustainable Development

The first educational response in the 1990s was the influence from education *for* sustainable development (ESD), which gained significant momentum. The momentum for ESD had been stimulated by the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and Agenda 21, and revitalised at the World Summit for Sustainable Development, which took place in Johannesburg in 2002. As noted by Tilbury and Cooke (2005), summit discussions reflected how education in the context of sustainability had evolved from mostly reorienting formal systems and training, towards capacity building and learning based strategies for change. In other words, it was no longer just about developing sustainability literacy or receiving qualifications in this area, but about understanding education as an approach to making social change, questioning mindsets that generate the untenable relationships with our planet, and looking at ways in which we can bring about transitions (see text box 4 below). The Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) was announced at the Johannesburg summit, which saw sustainability become embedded in different fields such as business education (Bridges and Wilhelm, 2008). However, as noted by Stephen Sterling, sustainability does not simply act as an 'add-on' to existing structures and curricula, but implies a change of fundamental epistemology in our culture, and hence also in our educational thinking and practice (Sterling, 2004).

Text box 4. Connectivity, real world thinking, complexity

Based on work by Sterling (2005), *Linking Thinking* is a professional development toolkit based on the recognition that sustainability issues are complex, and cannot easily be 'solved'. In an interdependent world, what is required is learning to think in a more connected way (Dornan, Keast and King, 2009). The toolkit promotes 'joined up thinking' skills in problem solving, based on real world issues such as climate change, food and resource use that are relevant to pupil's lives, as well as encouraging connections across the curriculum.

the historical and material systems that individuals (and societies) are unevenly locked into (Spaargaren, 2011).

Text box 5. Action competence, critical action, engagement

The Action Competence approach, presented by Jensen and Schnack (1997) is a response to an Environmental Education paradigm characterised by individualisation and behaviour modification. This approach highlights a readiness to act in a way that meets the challenges of a given situation through the development of competencies (understandings and skills) that enable learners to take critical action.

Although *Education for Sustainable Development* and *Education for Sustainability* were often used interchangeably, the latter placed more emphasis on critical approaches to environmental sustainability. The questions became 'what is the role of education in creating changes socially' and 'what pedagogies can critique the way we see and relate to the environment, the natural world, and one another'. It led to a reliance on the newer educational methodologies including systemic thinking, values clarification, and critical reflective practice (Tilbury and Wortman, 2005), which sought to challenge power structures and placing praxis, and the practical application of this learning, at the heart of educational experiences.

2.5.3. People as 'agents of change'

Closely tied to the notion of *Education for Sustainability* was a move away from seeing people as 'the problem' of environmental concerns that needed to be fixed, or behaviours to be changed, towards seeing people as 'agents of change' (see text box 5; Jensen and Schnack, 1997; Tilbury and Cooke, 2005). This worldview encouraged the learner's active engagement in decision-making and developing policy (Tilbury and Cooke, 2005), while recognising

Further in response to the limits of traditional, science-oriented approaches to Environmental Education, an important reminder is that humans are social creatures, given opportunities as well as limits by their social environments. This saw the field of social learning gain traction, which encourages learning that takes place in a context of divergent interests, norms, values and constructions of reality (Wals, 2007b). The idea is that facilitated social learning can develop knowledge, values and action competence which can increase the participation in environmental scenarios at an individual, group or network level. This is especially important as interpretations of social organisation and economic development are inevitably value-laden and aimed at achieving particular ends and serving some interests more than others. Environmental change requires understanding the invisible threads that connect socio-economic activities to the natural environment. This necessitates critical responses (Fien and Tilbury, 2002), as well as a reflexive approach (Wals, 2007a), which are important elements of social learning.

2.5.4. Challenging Dominant Discourses: Decolonisation and Ecofeminism

These fundamental critiques in how individuals and societies relate to the environment can also be seen in decolonial educational responses, reacting to Western imposed paradigms of development (de Sousa Santos, 2007). Decolonial currents address the narrow rationalities characterised by colonial and imperialist thinking (see Dussel, 1998). Decolonization specifically refers to a historical process whereby countries that were colonised by foreign powers obtain their independence. Yet, while countries may have been politically decolonised, there is what is called neocolonialism in education, whereby western paradigms have and continue to shape and influence educational systems through the process of globalisation (e.g. through colonial languages such as English and French (Obondo, 2007), and with the perceived pressure to modernise and reform education so as to attain high international standards (Nguyen *et al.*, 2009; Wals *et al.*, 2022). As the work by Wals *et al.* (2022) notes, there has been resistance to this neoliberal focus on standardised assessment (see text box 6).

Text box 6. Competency framework

Resistance to this can be seen in work in Malaysia by Dzulkifli and Afendras (2014) using a specially designed Competency Framework which avoids a 'ticked box' format, instead relying on tools such as storytelling and visual presentations to evaluate students. This frames education in terms of building competences, rather than prescribed skills.

Aiming for epistemic plurality (Andreotti, Ahenakew and Cooper, 2011), decolonial pedagogies promote marginalised forms of knowledge, such as indigenous and local knowledge, which has a strong tradition in Latin America

in line with Freirean emancipatory pedagogies and Environmental Education (Walsh, 2010), as well as African movements such as Ubuntu (Le Grange, 2016; Chilisa, 2017; Tavernaro-Haidarian, 2019). Decolonisation has been put forward as a future frame for environmental and sustainability education (Lotz-Sisitka, 2017), opening up opportunities for emergent, generative models for education. However, as highlighted by Lotz-Sisitka and others, a danger in decolonising western models is replacing a dominant paradigm with a marginal paradigm, resulting in an equally homogenistic and static model (2017; Macintyre *et al.*, 2020; Lotz-Sisitka *et al.*, 2022). Rather, a focus should be on recognizing that all knowledge traditions are saturated with power and inequalities, and constantly changing through an exchange of ideas and practices. We can understand these diverse and dynamic expressions as an ecology of knowledge (de Sousa Santos, 2014).

These new frames have helped environmentalists better understand how educational paradigms and frames serve particular purposes. As noted by Gough and Whitehouse (2003), the "founding tongues" of Environmental Education were males from scientific backgrounds, with certain biases and assumptions in regards to learning and the environment. The authors note how it is necessary to move away from representations of universalised subjects, such as "Man" and "nature" towards recognising diverse subjectivities. The seeds for these ideas were planted much earlier, such as in eco-feminism in the 1990s, but gained traction in the 1990s as the need for a fundamental change in how we live on Earth became clearer to more people. While we can see openings towards decolonization, and other ways of 'being' in the world in UNESCO documents (see the Berlin declaration UNESCO, 2021a), Silova *et al.*, (2020) has noted that UNESCO represents a form of "Re-westernisation" through the re-affirmation of the liberal western model of the universal (see Mignolo, 2013).



The World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. Left to right: WSSD Secretary-General **Nitin Desai** and WSSD President **Thabo Mbeki** delivered closing statements. 2022 © UNEP

2.5.4. The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

The 2002 Johannesburg Summit was the most significant of all the environmental conferences from an education perspective. It reviewed progress made towards Sustainable Development over the past 10 years and sought to work towards commitments to action (UN General Assembly Resolution 55/199). It saw the largest ever gathering of world leaders and over 21,000 participants from 191 government, intergovernmental and non-government organisations, the private sector, academia and the scientific community. The mere presence of these stakeholders, willing to engage in the process, demonstrated the continued interest and relevance of sustainable development (Tilbury, 2003). Non-governmental stakeholders attending this Summit powered on the agenda of education and calling for people engagement and shaped negotiating agen-

das calling for significant investment as well as international collaboration in these areas. Tilbury and Wortman (2004) document the dialogues as well as the call for education to go beyond technical responses to promote vision, values and participation for change. Education was enshrined as a foundation of sustainable development, and was reaffirmed in the Johannesburg Declaration (UNESCO, 2002b). While the Johannesburg Summit was considered a move towards understanding the achievement of sustainable development as a learning process since Rio in 1992 (UNESCO, 2002a), and authors such as Tilbury (2003) notes the summit served to reinvigorate global commitments and actions to sustainable development, there were several critical voices who lamented the lack of consensus on specific targets (Von Frantzius, 2004), and, for example, the fact that the summit did not ratify the more holistic, non-anthropocentric Earth Charter educational framework (Kahn, 2008).

The Johannesburg Declaration led to the adoption of the United Nations Decade of Education (DESD) that took place between 2005 and 2014. As a platform, the DESD aimed to embed sustainable development into all learning spheres through a reorientation of education and developing initiatives that could showcase the special role of education for sustainable development (Wals, 2009, 2012). Despite notable critiques (see González-Gaudiano, 2005; Pérez and Llorente, 2005; Sauvé and Berryman, 2005; Jickling, 2006), there was support and high expectations across many stakeholders from across the globe for the opportunities presented by the DESD (Mulà and Tilbury, 2009).

The DESD was seen as a way to renew the curricula of formal educational systems, whereby Agenda 21's 36th chapter calls for a re-orientation of existent educational policies and programs through potential platforms such as Environmental Education and initiatives like the Earth Charter (Gadotti, 2008). Sustainability in higher education also began to dominate academic and stakeholder policy dialogues (Tilbury, 2004, 2012; Tilbury, Keogh, et al., 2005; Ryan et al., 2010). In addition to acquiring and generating knowledge, Higher Education for Sustainable Development (HESD) encourages students to reflect on the complexity of behaviour and decisions in a future-oriented and global perspective of responsibility (Barth et al., 2007). However, Stevenson (2007) highlights the remaining tensions between Environmental Education and schooling systems, concerns which were later deepened by Sterling and Huckle's work calling for transforming education systems towards sustainability (Sterling and Huckle, 2014).

In the 2000s, over thirty years on from the 1972 Stockholm conference, both Gough (2006) and Wals (2007a) noted that the DESD policy framings were very similar to the framing of the Belgrade Charter Framework from 1975 (UNESCO, 1975), and the 1977 Tbilisi Declaration (UNESCO-UNEP, 1977). This raised the question

of what had really been learnt about the role of education in addressing environmental concerns. Towards the end of the 2000s, at the half-way mark of the DESD, it is noted that despite the ambitious agenda—with a more holistic focus on social, economic and cultural dimensions—there is a lack of deep engagement and implementation by governments to invest and support the development of educators and researchers in ESD, as well as to develop different mechanisms to evaluate these experiences and capture lessons learned (Mulà and Tilbury, 2009; Wals, 2009).

2.5.5. Summary of the 2000s

This decade perhaps saw the most significant changes to educational frames and responses to environmental issues. It consolidated and mainstreamed many of the more emergent approaches and marginal narratives that were brewing over the previous twenty years. The result was a very different pedagogical style and learner focus which critiqued the way we see the environment, the way we see one another, and the way society engages with the natural world. Issue-resolution learning, single action outcomes or behaviour change approaches still existed but were no longer the dominant aspirational goals for the Environmental Education movement, instead more integrative and emancipatory approaches were on the rise.

2.6. The 2010s – Reframe and Transform Futures

2.6.1. From ad-hoc to systemic educational responses and deep learning

While each of the previous decades had their particular issues to deal with—from pollution and the threat of nuclear war, to globalisation and digitalisation—the 2010s saw a convergence of global concerns such as food, water and energy shortages bringing home the hard

truth that time was running out to change humanity's path towards a more sustainable direction. While the education and environment field had developed substantial theoretical and practical expertise on environmental issues, there were now mounting concerns as to the role education could play in addressing these challenges. Systems thinking gained attention and became a means to understand the complexity of sustainability (Williams et al., 2017), while sustainability is seen less as a topic to be added to education, but rather as a catalyst for educational innovation in light of global challenges. As we will see, this was illustrated by the rise of whole school approaches. A key document from this era comes from UNESCO's Global Education Monitor (GEM) team, which concluded that education needed a major transformation to fulfil its potential and meet the current challenges facing humanity and the planet (UNESCO, 2016). The report is also one of the first UN reports referring to dysfunctional economic systems and pointing to the need for systemic whole school and whole institution approaches.

2.6.2. Institutional responses to the global environmental crisis DESD/SDGs

The 2010s saw the end of the DESD in 2014, which though contentious in its design and engagement, had a big impact on the framing of education and learning for the environment and sustainability. For example, the

DESD saw the critical role of higher education in the global vision and pathway for sustainable development, successfully raising the profile of ESD, embedding it into curricula, and generating partnerships for higher education institutions. This all happened while generating international debate about the role of higher education in promoting change for a sustainable future (Tilbury, 2013). On a critical note, Tilbury (2014) does note that a 'rebooting' of higher education towards sustainable development had not yet taken place, which

would require systemic change at institutional and other sectoral levels, including an important role for academic leadership. This critical sentiment is shared by Huckle and Wals (2015), who consider the DESD to have been 'business as usual' due to the inability to acknowledge or challenge neoliberalism as a hegemonic force blocking transitions towards genuine sustainability. Wals and Huckle suggest that global education for sustainability citizenship (GESC) would have provided a more realistic focus for such an initiative, with too little focus on power, politics and citizenship in the DESD. Furthermore, while acknowledging the importance of multiple perspectives and dialogue within ESD (e.g. Jickling and Wals, 2008), Kopnina (2014) warns that the anthropocentric agenda of ESD may in fact be counterproductive to the efficacy of environmental learning and education in fostering a citizenry that is, as stated by the Belgrade Charter, 'aware of, and concerned about, the environment and its associated problems,' (UNESCO, 1975). Kopnina notes that if learners do not become aware of the deep interlinkages between humanity and nature, then what they are learning may simply continue reproducing the existing status quo, instead of leading to necessary transformations in society. This argument becomes a bone of contention that still divides Education for Sustainable Development and Environmental Education experts in the field as some educationists argue that you do not need to know natural or health sciences to understand that daily reliance on fossil fuels is exploitative on the environment and damaging to people's health. What is important is for learners to understand that daily choices related to how we chose to travel, for example, have implications for people and planet.

Following on from the DESD, in January 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development officially came into force, following the adoption by world leaders in the 2015 historic UN Summit. Though not legally

binding, the SDGs require governments to take ownership and mobilise efforts to fight poverty, inequality and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. Member states have the responsibility to establish national frameworks for the achievement of the 17 Goals and review implementation progress. ESD is explicitly stated in SDG 4 on quality education, in target 4.7:

'By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.'

The Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD, the follow-up programme to the DESD (2005-2014), sought to scale-up education efforts to accelerate progress towards sustainable development. The GAP focused around five priority action areas: to advance policy, transform learning and training environments, build the capacities of educators and trainers, empower and mobilise youth, and accelerate sustainable solutions at a local level.

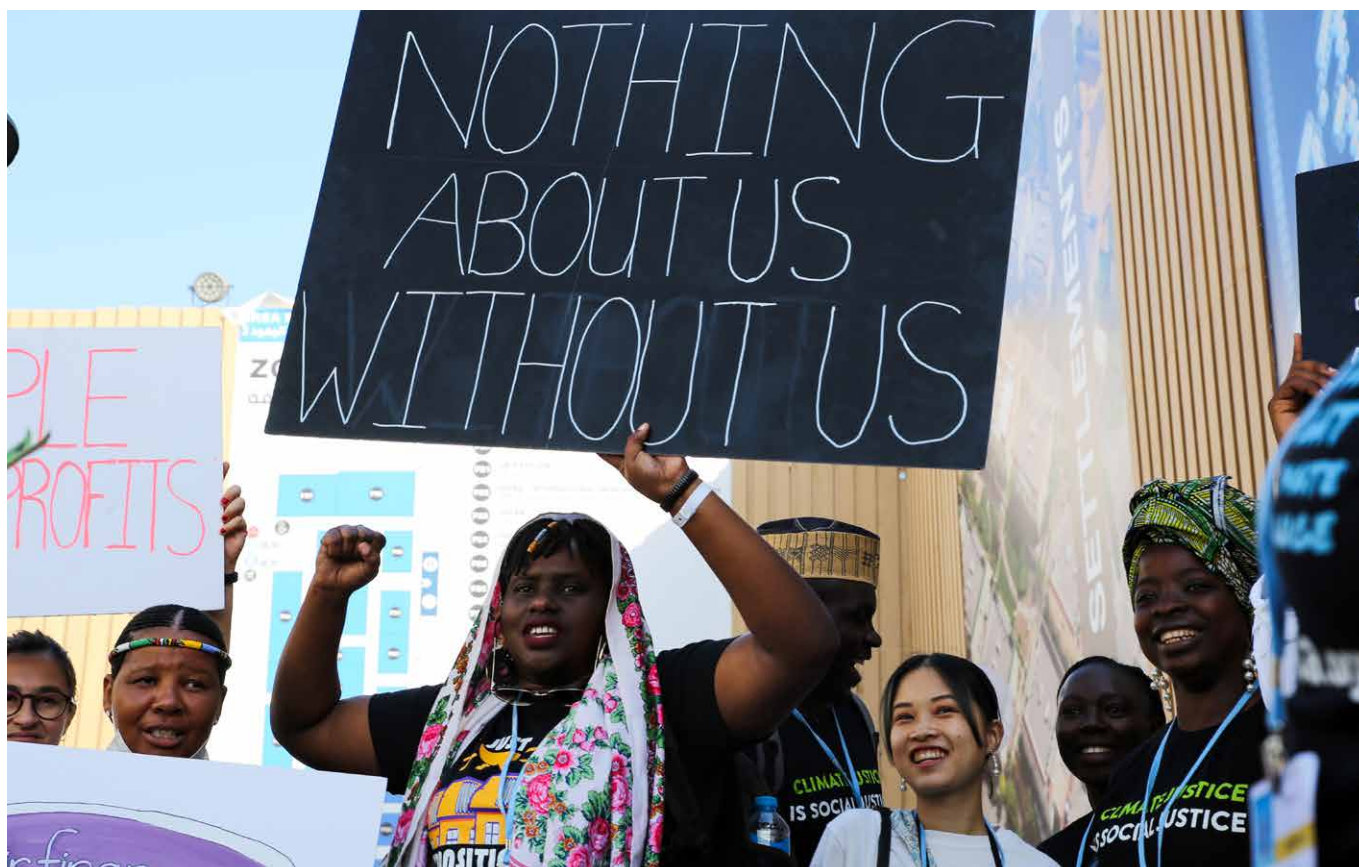
Although the SDGs represent a momentous opportunity for transformations in society, with an important role for education, it is important to note that UNESCO and other organisations such as the OECD and the World Bank are about scaling up and scaling out educational activities. While there is undoubtedly the need for wide scale changes to take place, Reid et al. (2021) remind us to consider, much as in the philosophy of Schumachers 'Small is Beautiful' (1973), the effects of such actions on local ecological contexts, traditions and ways of living, as well as what conditions are needed for transformative and transgressive changes in an uncertain, complex and complicated world. These

conditions rely heavily on policy environments that are conducive to such actions (Stratford and Wals, 2020).

2.6.3. Whole school approaches to sustainability

Another educational response is the recognition that global and local issues are inextricably intertwined and addressing them requires collective action (Hicks, 2012). This sees a convergence of different planetary adjectival education that have been around since the 1980s, such as health education, peace education, human rights education, biodiversity education, in addition to newer ESD frames. Each of these educations address some planetary issue, related to citizenship, health, wellbeing, good care of the environment, protection of species. What we see in the 2010s is that these issues are very much interconnected and deeply entangled. They require what we might call boundary crossing (Akkerman and Bakker, 2011; Fortuin, 2015), as well as the interdisciplinarity of past decades, as well as transdisciplinarity (Keitsch and Vermeulen, 2020). We can see this in the blurring between formal, informal and non-formal learning, between genders, between generations, between disciplines, between sectors of society, and between different knowledge systems (for example, scientific, indigenous, and local/experiential).

An interesting convergence is between science education and Environmental Education. As discussed by Wals et al. (2014), science education, which focuses on understanding natural systems and processes through teaching knowledge and skills, has traditionally been disconnected to Environmental Education, which explores the sociopolitical, value-laden, place-based, and emotional contexts in which environmental issues take place. The authors identify the citizen science—which enables people and local communities to engage with sci-



COP27 - UN Climate Change Conference. Egypt, 2022 © UNEP

ence on relevant environmental issues in collaboration with scientists in place-based contexts (Bonney *et al.*, 2014; Dillon, Stevenson and Wals, 2016)—to provide opportunities for people, communities, organisations and scientists across science and Environmental Education to work together on generating new knowledge and in taking the actions necessary to address social-ecological challenges. Once again, in this decade, we see educational movements started in the 80s and 90s, taking root in mainstream practice related to environmental learning and education.

Although we still see the dominant educational configuration in classrooms where the teacher stands at the front, leading conversations, rather than seeking participation through facilitating discussion, it has become increasingly clear the need to connect and make spaces for bringing students' inter-

ests outside of the classroom into the classroom. Likewise, the need to take students to experience the environment and sustainability outside of the classroom. Whole school approaches to sustainability are one way to create this connection, having emerged in the 2000s and 2010s (see Henderson and Tilbury, 2004). Whole school approaches are now increasingly becoming part of policy initiatives, such as the Green Deal in the European Union (Tilbury, 2022), and impacting school organisation such as in the school grounds, curriculum, and the relationship with the local community (see text box 7; Mathie and Wals (2022)). Research in early childhood has also begun to argue for ESD not only as content, but also as a way of teaching to children, though this is controversial, with an opposing view holding that children should be sheltered from global problems (Pearson and Degotardi, 2009; Pramling-Samuelsson, 2011).

Text box 7. Sustainable schools, global dimension, future

In his practical resource for teachers 'Sustainable Schools, Sustainable Futures' David Hicks highlights the nature of sustainable schools, and their vital role in preparing young people for an uncertain future. Hicks argues that education has to have a global dimension and a futures perspective to truly tackle sustainability challenges, thus helping young people envision and work towards more sustainable futures (Hicks, 2012). A particular emphasis is placed on a futures perspective, which encourages critical and creative thinking about the future.

2.6.4. The rise of relational approaches to teaching and learning

What has become increasingly clear in the 2010s is that to remain relevant, education needs to be reconfigured to contribute to the sustainability movement in society and to restore and regenerate relations and connections between people, places, and the more-than-human world. This is the task of all education, from early childhood education and care to vocational, higher and continuing education. Systems thinking (Dunnion and O'Donovan, 2014), but also notions of entanglement (Verlie, 2017; Hofverberg, 2020; Wessels et al., 2022) begin to take a more prominent role in education, requiring that we see connections and interdependencies, and learn to see ourselves as part of a system. Addressing anthropocentric concerns over dominant development paradigms, there are also those who argue that we should connect with different species as well, moving towards post-human perspectives where we decentre the human and become more eco-centric, biocentric, and less anthropocentric, so as to address the complex nature of current sustainability challenges, and the need for competent citizens who can adequately re-

spond to them (see Lloro-Bidart, 2018; Malone, Tesar and Arndt, 2020). These perspectives have been around for a long time historically and had early roots in systems thinking approaches, but received more societal traction in the 2010s.

2.6.5. Decolonising our ways of thinking

Another response to the effects of the neoliberal ideology on the educational system (Apple, 2013) is the interest in decolonization education. This strand examines the limitations and biases of curriculum and teacher education and training, and the social, political and environmental legacies of colonisation, and how they have influenced education policies (see text box 8 below). Like other critical strands, the decolonial current highlights how the sustainability-through-growth paradigm increases inequalities and linked biodiversity loss, climate change and social tensions. Kothari et al. (2020), for example, notes that Sustainable Development Goal 4 (quality education) adopts a particularly dominant view of education and development, which needs to be deeply critiqued in terms of the skills which are to be learnt and taught. While decolonial education has been around for decades, what we begin to see in the 2010s is that the decolonial approach finds more clarity and relevance in educational circles through movements such as the 2015 #DecoloniseTheCurriculum movement, and the 2016 #FeesMustFall in South Africa. These movements brought students to streets, and resulted in public discussions on curriculum renewal and decoloniality. While Le Grange et al. (2020) note the importance of the decolonisation question and provide alternatives to the western imposed outcomes-based approach used in South African higher education, the authors also note concerns of institutions turning to instrumentalist and quick-fix solutions to decolonise curricula, which can result in decolonial-washing rather than transformative change.



UN Environment participates in the Global Goals World Cup in Nairobi. The all-women team played for SDG Goal #14 Life Below Water. 2017. © UNEP



Text box 8. Decoloniality, worldviews, power relations.

According to Sund and Pashby (2020), environmental and sustainability education needs to explicitly interrogate coloniality as a central condition of today's global issues through a process of 'delinking as a decolonial praxis.' Such a praxis requires attention to the: 1) Exploration of multiple perspectives that reflect different worldviews and narratives and explore and engage with the complexities and contractions between them; 2) "Denaturalization" of dominant one-sided narratives (on progress, development, consumption, etc.), and recognition how these concepts are socially and politically constituted; 3) Acknowledgement of that what it means to be human is entrenched in the colonial matrix of power, and also who was/is included in the human concept (nature as outside of human in colonial matrix of power); 4) Historicization/contextualization of how contemporary views such as progress, development and consumption in the global North have gained prominence and why other views have been pushed to the margins; and, 5) Recognition of the lingering impact of colonisation persistence of unequal power relations and how these are directly related to today's pressing issues, including climate change and environmental degradation.

There have been many new models which attempt to reconfigure the system towards regenerative and distributive economies, balancing the needs of humanity within planetary limits, which are then less dependent on global capitalist and neo-colonial extractive models (Morseletto, 2020). Some examples are donut economics (Raworth, 2017) the circular economy (Kirchherr, Reike and Hekkert, 2017), as well as degrowth (Schneider, Kallis and Martinez-Alier, 2010). There is also increasing interest in areas such Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and indigenous Environmental Education, which conceptualise knowledge as holistic, organic and relational, being made up of connections to living and non-living beings and entities (Kayira et al., 2022). From a teaching and learning for the environment perspective, such decolonised models of education are rooted in connections to place, and empower students to establish links to their local community, striving to restore local, traditional and cultural knowledge. Rather than forcing one dominant ideology on students, decolonisation education promotes intercultural and inclusive learning, recognising pluriversal ways of being in the world. Kopnina (2020) and Kothari et al. (2020) highlight the critical analysis and reflexivity involved in therefore engaging with alternative development models that question taken-for-granted assumptions and suggest alternatives (see text box 9). While such alternative paradigms were taken more seriously in the 2010s, Maina-Okori et al. (2018) call for increased attention in education to include indigenous and black feminist approaches, alongside renewed attention to social justice and indigenous systems of knowledge, with a territorial understanding and focus on education.



Text box 9. Alternative development models, relationality, plurality

Buen Vivir (integrative and collective well-being) is based on indigenous forms of knowledge, critical intellectuals, and political movements in Latin America (Gudynas, 2011; Cortina and Earl, 2021). It is a multidimensional and plural concept, which presents a fundamental challenge to the modern development paradigm, including an educational system which is complicit with current economic models (Brown and McCowan, 2018). Buen Vivir has also made its way into international documents recognising other knowledge systems (UNESCO, 2016). Another example is the traditional concept of Sejahtera, which is a philosophy of sustainable living and balanced coexistence in the Malay language (Razak, 2018), while Ubuntu is an African concept encapsulated in the proverb 'I am because you are,' and ecological Swaraj, encapsulates radical ecological democracy in India (Kothari, Demaria and Acosta, 2014). While these alternative models have their own cultural and historical contexts, they share common characteristics, such as relationality, plurality, and respect and care for the earth.

2.6.6. Summary of the 2010s

The 2010s saw a convergence of educational streams around the drive towards addressing sustainability concerns, which only seemed to be increasing in societies around the world. The SDGs added much weight to the narratives and triggered education institutions and systems to consider the implications of environment, climate change and social injustices in the curriculum. There was also much more of an effort to embed sustainability principles and practices into schools, as seen in the whole school approach which became domi-

nant in education. Last, recognising the limits of the modern educational system, decolonising voices and proposals, often based on alternative development models, offered new ways of teaching and learning, based on principles of relationality, plurality, and respect and care for the earth. These strands continued to question the role of education and learning in the quest for a sustainable planet.

2.7. The 2020s – Regenerate and Embrace Uncertainty

2.7.1. The transformation of education

As we arrive at the beginning of the 2020s, it is a very different ball game in terms of how we understand learning and the environment. As we write these words in 2022, a mega drought is affecting the American West, a third of Pakistan is under water due to flooding, and an unprecedented heat wave has hit Europe (Harvey, 2022). After the early warning signs presented at the 1972 Stockholm conference, and decades of increasingly strong worded reports on human induced climate change, we have become more aware (and worried) about high level reports and statements that highlight the urgency for changes to our education systems for social transformation (IPBES, 2019; IPCC, 2022). This has culminated in the recently released UNESCO report calling for a 'new social contract', affirming the transformative and empowering potential of education: 'to shape peaceful, just and sustainable futures, education itself must be transformed' (UNESCO, 2021c, p. 1).

2.7.2. Education as relevant and responsive to current challenges

What has finally become clear are the limitations to the transmissive, classroom approach to teaching and learning, with the recognition of the critical role of learner engagement and student-centred learning. This is nowhere more apparent than the current climate change cri-

sis. The conversation has continued to move away from individual responsibility and single actions to a level above where politicians, leaders, heads of schools, are all talking and committing to urgent action for the environment. Yet parallel to this a lot of people are pointing fingers saying we are failing our students and young people as well as our planet.

As noted by Kvamme et al. (2022), leading figures like Greta Thunberg have reported learning about global warming and the climate emergency in school, highlighting the formal education focus on awareness building. However, the school strikes saw students leaving the school building and their lessons, in favour of political protests on the street. On the one hand, Kvamme et al. (2022) suggest that the students participating in these strikes are being transformed into young citizens. On the other hand, for engaged students to leave the classroom raises difficult questions about the relevance and responsiveness of formal education (Tilbury, 2021). Greta Thunberg and the Fridays for Future movement, exemplifies how many young people consider that school is failing to give them an adequate understanding of climate change, the environment, and how to live, work and act more sustainably. It would appear that developments in paradigms and approaches noted in the previous decades have never truly translated into mainstream practice. While educational systems are helping students understand and become aware of the urgent action needed—much like the focus of Environmental Education in the 1970s—these approaches have proved ineffectual in providing the capabilities to help learners make the changes within their own societies. Instead, this lack of empowerment has resulted in the rapidly growing phenomenon of eco-anxiety amongst individuals (Pihkala, 2020; Ojala et al., 2021). This highlights once again the need to focus on an education that benefits the planet as well as the learner. In the words of educator David Orr, (1991), “...it is especially important that we critically assess and respond to the

call that all education is reoriented towards sustainability worldwide in ways that make sense to the contexts and challenges that citizens— young and old—face.”

At an institutional level, important policy developments have come out of the European Council on learning for environmental sustainability. In response to commitments made by the European Commission to the Green Deal, its Council issued a clear policy recommendation to member states defining the importance of what they define as ‘learning for environmental sustainability’ and transforming education so that it includes youth voices on the climate and biodiversity crises; shifts to whole institution approaches to environmental learning, and that engages in teacher development and training across the European Union (European Council, 2022). Alongside the continued impetus to work towards the UN Agenda 2030, this bold move has the possibility to dramatically change the policy environment across Europe with significant incentives provided for the change via financial support and diverse program platforms.

The special emphasis which the above report places on the environmental pillar can be witnessed in what we can term the (re)turn to the ecological in education and learning. There is a strong push towards the redesigning ‘sustainable smart’ cities (Ahad et al., 2020), and the greening of cities in response to the crises of climate change (Bayulken, Huisingh and Fisher, 2021), as well as the greening of school yards (van Dijk-Wesselius et al., 2018). In response to the growing pressures of urbanisation and technology, there is also a renewed push for outdoor education (Gilbertson et al., 2022) and in living labs, which are intentional spaces for innovation and experimentation in sustainability solutions (Macintyre et al., 2019; von Wirth et al., 2019).



Youth gather in Karura forest, Nairobi, in solidarity with the global climate youth marches © UNEP

Last, it is important to remember that an important characteristic of emerging educational responses is the move beyond purely cognitive ways of knowing. As demonstrated by the climate strikes, the fees-must-fall movement in South Africa, and the yellow vests protests in France, there is a great amount of frustration, anger, and eco-anxiety (Ojala, 2021; Ojala et al., 2021), whereby people go to the streets to protest is the only way they think they can have an impact.

2.7.3. Youth and marginalised voices in education and the environment

An issue that has come through strongly in recent debates, such as on the climate strikes, is that the learner and marginalised peoples have little voice in terms of bringing about educational changes. While participation became a buzzword in the 2000s (Alejandro Leal, 2007), children and young learners who are the main beneficiaries of our education system have

been underrepresented in the design of the educational process and the curriculum; this despite representing a powerful force for social change (Bentz and O'Brien, 2019). We see an interest again in futures thinking, which was around in the 70s and 80s as a smaller strand of work, but suddenly gets a lot of momentum as we start to talk about intergenerational justice. We also see that NGOs and scientists have a lot to say in what is being taught in school, and one of the key things that begins to emerge as a thematic in this decade is the need to elicit spaces for more involvement from our young people and marginalised voices. This group is, ironically, the most vulnerable to changes in climate at the same time as they are least responsible, in what can be seen as the double injustice of climate change (Füssel, 2010).

An important issue to note is that as the climate crisis worsens, young people are reclaiming agency in building their own futures. This is shown by school strikes, legal challenges to

governments, and online and offline climate activism. There is a clear role for education to provide ways to conceptualise futures; to recreate, transgress and transform imperfect presents by engaging learners in defining and meeting the needs of a future that they are reimagining (Corcoran, Weakland and Wals, 2017). As Trott (2021) notes, while the sheer massive scale of climate challenges may suggest that only structural and policy top-down changes will make a sufficient impact on lowering carbon emissions, the increasing everyday climate activism of children and youth, and its substantial transformative potential, represents another means to assess progress towards a more sustainable future.

2.7.4. New transgressive and regenerative strands of education

The rise of climate change education is another important educational response, highlighting the importance of education in addressing the climate crisis. This is recognised in SDG target 13.3, which relates climate change to ESD in the need to “*improve education, awareness raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning.*” However, while decades of rigorous research has shown that education *about* the environmental and social issues is not enough create meaningful change (Iyengar and Kwauk, 2021), González-Gaudiano and Meira-Cartea (2022) argue that, instead of focussing on the socio-environmental roots of environmental concerns, climate change education is using the same failed strategy of ‘climate literacy’, hoping that information on climate change will raise awareness and lead to behavioural change (mostly through science education). The authors argue that this cognitive literacy has contributed to the perpetuation of the climate crisis, as individuals and society are disconnected at the emotional level. Instead, a reorientation of educational processes are needed for learners to think substantially differently. To add to this de-

bate, the examples above on climate strikes illustrate how bottom-up de-institutionalised forms of environmental learning can lead to engagement and action in terms of addressing climate change, which are beginning to receive support from the scientific community in terms of their value and significance (Fisher, 2019). Interestingly, the rising public and political interest in climate change have raised environmental concern since its relative decline since the 1992 UN Conference in Rio (González-Gaudiano and Meira-Cartea, 2010).

A pertinent branch of emerging education that recognises the above shortcomings is that of ‘regenerative education’, which has been described as the next wave of sustainability (Gibbons, 2020). Transgressing the goals of sustainability, regenerative education aims for “living systems in which whole-system health and wellbeing increase continually” (Gibbons, 2020, p. 1). Based on a holistic worldview and paradigm, regenerative sustainability integrates science and practice, different ways of knowing, and inner and outer dimensions of sustainability necessary for systemic transformation. On the one hand, regenerative education involves empathic qualities of healing and restoration, accepting the damage of human intervention on planet earth, and working on how to heal this damage (Mehmood et al., 2020). As Reed (2007) notes, we can best engage in healing in the places we inhabit, in the communities we live. In this sense, place-based learning processes and research carried out in community contexts assume a key role in this perspective of regenerative education. On the other hand, regenerative education also involves disruptive elements of breaking with the status quo, addressing power structures and norms which act as barriers to bringing about more regenerative futures. The aforementioned characteristics of regenerative education strongly resonate with strong counter-hegemonic traditions (Escobar, 2020), both in terms of education and development, as well as indigenous worldviews based on a non-binary understand-



World Environmental Day (WED). Planting trees at Kibera informal settlement. Kenya, 2018 © UNEP

ings of mind and body, and humanity and nature, providing interesting sites to refine this emergent conception of education. The concept of regeneration is embryonic in UNESCO's educational approaches, being introduced into documents such as the Futures of Education initiative (UNESCO, 2021b).

A note of caution is given by Vickers et al. (2022) regarding the dangers of co-option of emerging concepts by dominant world order systems. A regenerative education from a human capital perspective could mean reskilling workers in the face of technology-induced obsolescence. As mentioned earlier, in response to the straight-jacketing effects of neoliberalism on more humanistic expressions of education, it is important for educational responses to be aware of the power dynamics involved when different worldviews come into contact. As already highlighted in the 1972 Stockholm declaration (in principle 19), an important player in

this issue is the mass media, who play a fundamental role in generating societal narratives on sustainability, education and human development. In a current age of fake news and misinformation, and political polarisation, it is ever more important to cultivate critical thinking amongst learners, thus being able to separate facts from myths and distinguish healthy scepticism from intentionally cultivated doubt to confuse people or to delay action. Such forms of learning can be seen in emerging fields such as transgressive learning, that seeks to explore counter-hegemonic encounters that identify and uproot systems of oppression and marginalisation (Lotz-Sisitka et al., 2015; Macintyre et al., 2018). Such learning based approaches to addressing climate change can involve arts-based and participatory methods (Bentz and O'Brien, 2019; Macintyre et al., 2019), as well as transgressing the boundaries between higher education and community based learning (Macintyre et al., 2020).

2.7.5. Summary of 2020s

Early as we are in the 2020s, it is palpable to the authors of this paper that the 2020s will be defining for the future of mankind. Agenda 2030 has set clear goals with which to work towards, and education is a vital component in this endeavour. It is, however, difficult to gauge how education and learning for the environment and sustainability will continue into this decade and the future. On the one hand, exciting new strands of education are (re)emerging, which propose a reconciliation with the earth, and which critically confront colonial legacies and modern paradigms of development which have shaped the role of education today. On the other hand, while the limitations to the transmissive, classroom approach to sustainability education have become clear, the consequences of this paradigm can be seen in the immense frustration and eco-anxiety of learners who seem to have the knowledge and awareness of environmental issues such as climate change, but not the ability to address such complex issues, and the capabilities to change deeply ingrained systems of power and control. An uncertain future awaits us, and education needs to embrace this uncertainty and complexity in its learning approaches and outcomes.

2.8. Summarising the key elements of the decades

Since the 1972 Stockholm Conference, learning and education for the environment and sustainability has been identified as the primary vehicle for teaching and learning about the stewardship of the environment as our 'common home'. This includes an ethics of care towards one another and those with which we share life on this planet. Subsequent decades have seen international efforts to embed environmental learning and education throughout education sectors, systems and activities. To summarise this section, the following figure 1 presents a timeline of the educational trends

and international frameworks discussed above, followed by a summary over the decades of the key educational elements listed in the introduction to this section.

2.8.1. The role of education

As we try to support education and learning for the planet, a fundamental question is how the role of education has been changing over the decades. This paper has sought to track the development of narratives, thinking and practice of learning and education in support of the environment and sustainability. It identified some clear differences in the way education and learning for the environment has been approached through the decades. We can see an initial focus in the 1970s on *informing* young people (and later to adults) about the environment, with an instrumental focus on changing individual behaviour. This ran in parallel to efforts to *raise awareness* of environmental problems. Moving into the 1980s, there was a move towards clarifying and *understanding the science* of environmental problems, with a strong technological focus. In the 1990s, this evolved to a focus on more *interpretive and critical lines of inquiry* through increasing citizen engagement and participation. In the 2000s, there was the tendency to treat education as a method for delivering and propagating expert ideas on education, rather than as a participatory and emancipatory engagement with learners. In the 2010s, we find education and learning that seeks to *reframe and transform* our relationship with the environment, leading to current focus on *regeneration and embracing uncertainty and complexity*, while being aware of the structures and systems that influence how we think, feel and act.

2.8.2. Thematic entry points for education

As social contexts evolve and our knowledge deepens, we see shifts in the focus of learning



Figure 1. Emergent trends and international frameworks in education and the environment (1970s-2020s)

and education. The initial focus on connecting with nature, and the conservation of endangered species in the early 20th century moves to themes of pollution of water, soil and air in the late 1960s and 1970s. In the 1980s, issues such as addressing ozone damaging chlorofluorocarbons and acid rain, but also the risk of environmental disasters (e.g. Bhopal, India) received worldwide attention, as well the dangers of nuclear energy, after the fallout from Chernobyl. Many of these issues remained and new ones arrived in the 1990s but they were viewed as symptomatic of deeper issues rooted in economic structures and connected to deeper socio-ecological issues related to biodiversity, energy, climate change, inequality and the marginalisation of indigenous knowledge. There is also increasing engagement and participation in sustainable development issues, particularly the connections between environment, economy, culture and ecology. In the 2000s, the role of values and ethics in realising social and environmental justice gained prominence. Building upon a trend started in the decade prior, there is a movement away from single issue themes such as reducing littering, and promoting recycling, towards talking about a more systemic approach, about understanding where things come from, go to, and how things can be reused, as is illustrated by new concepts that come into play such as the circular economy. Moving into the 2010s, the word 'carbon' starts entering our vocabulary, in terms of transport and energy and food systems, carbon compensation, carbon miles, carbon footprint. Marine life becomes a very important topic in schools as we shift away from the panda effect, and the protecting of single species, the caring for particular relatable animals, to looking at the importance of oceans, and interconnected ecosystems. More recently, in the 2020s, futures education and regenerative education have become themes of interest, as well as intergenerational rights. From an initial anthropocentric view of nature, in constant tension with ecocentric views, we are currently seeing themes such as the rights of

nature and posthumanism and inclusivity (interspecies equity) gain traction in educational debates. In parallel, doughnut economics and related perspectives also attract interest in secondary and university circles.

2.8.3. Where learning happens

Over the decades, sites of learning for the environment have evolved and extended. In the 1970s, environmental learning carried on its traditional role, in forest and wilderness areas as well as national parks, extending its reach to urban studies and natural education centres. In the 1980s, this saw a shift towards optional and general courses, with the science of technology focus of the 1980s contributing to the emergence of the geoscience field. Environmental education centres, identified above, continued to support schools and also developed learning activities for neighbourhoods and community groups. The 1990s saw a shift towards the inclusion of the social dimension in education, with increased attention to the arts, religious studies, computer studies, literature and languages. Another focus was on the recognition in the 90s that early childhood years were crucial to developing affinity, engagement, appreciation and an ethic of care. At the same time there were calls from researchers who critiqued the organisational structure of schools (and capacities developed in teacher education) arguing they were not conducive to educating young people *about*, *in* and *for* the environment. In the 2000s, this began to manifest beyond traditional subjects like science and geography, to for example, the environment being a key consideration in business schools, with the rise of corporate sustainability. We then saw the embedding of sustainability across the curriculum and the emergence of whole-school approaches which took it beyond the classroom assessed learning. In parallel, adult education and lifelong learning gained much attention with 'third age' programmes beginning to emerge. Alongside out-of-the-classroom learning such as field trips, there has been an in-



creasing importance attributed to engaging with the local community, such as through citizen science. Later the whole school approach sees environmental learning connecting the traditional classroom with school buildings and grounds as well as real community and world issues. This is currently being dramatically displayed in the 2020s, with school climate strikes, and strikes against student fees in South Africa, where we witness students leaving the classroom to protest on the streets against a society and an educational system which students feel have abandoned them. Finally, the 2020s has also seen a returning emphasis on utilising out-of-school learning environments under different labels to include outdoor education, place-based education and transformation laboratories, where different stakeholders learn together around local sustainability issues.

2.8.4. The role of experts and involvement of stakeholders

Various stakeholders have shaped education and learning over time. The science and technology focus of the 1970s and 1980s saw an initial focus on experts in carrying out teaching and research, consultations with users, with limited involvement of selected stakeholders. This began to shift in the 1990s, with for example the preamble to Agenda 21 requesting that nations not only unify themselves in the quest for sustainable development, but affirming the importance of public participation and the involvement of NGOs in this process. This statement emphasised the value of their varied experiences, specialised knowledge and capacity for action in order to analyse and implement sustainable development. This saw

more of a multi-stakeholder engagement in strategy development and delivery of education, with different forms of knowledge (e.g. local and indigenous) beginning to play more of a role. The 2000s saw an increasing emphasis on social learning facilitation, which continued a shift in the power dynamics between the expert-subject, and can be seen in the increasing focus on action research, which focuses on participation and empowerment of local peoples and communities. The influence of parents and the home environment in the education dynamic also began to surface. The 2010s continued this trend, with whole school approaches and citizen science involving new community stakeholders in the fields of education and learning for sustainability and the environment. In the 2020s, we see the increasing presence of new stakeholders in education taking Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development dialogues back to the earlier narratives of the 1970s and 1980s with a call to a return to nature studies and a focus on STEM subject specialisation. These new actors and interest groups have not been part of the journey that has seen the shifts in thinking due to increasing experiences and evidence base in education.

2.8.5. Narratives and paradigms influencing education and environment

How education is perceived and what role it should play in relation to the environment has changed over the years. Distilled to its basics, we can distinguish different education-related responses over the decades. From the late 19th century, up to the late 1960s, nature education focussed on connecting with nature, understanding the web of life and developing a sense of wonder. Leading up to the Stockholm declaration and until the late 1980s, the narrative turned to Environmental Education, with a focus on developing ecological literacy and changing environmental behaviour and lifestyles around issues such as pollution, water, soil and air. From the late 1980s to the end of

the United Nations decade of education for sustainable development (2014), the paradigm shifted to sustainability education, with increasing citizen participation in sustainable development issues (Tilbury, 1995). Although heavily critiqued for not addressing root causes of environmental degradation, such as capitalism and globalisation, and for running the risk of being overly prescriptive, essentially undermining the purpose of education (e.g. Jickling and Wals, 2008), Education for Sustainable Development received broad support, spearheaded by UNESCO. From the mid 2010s until the present, we have seen a convergence of educational strands, with a focus on an education based on rethinking humanity's place in the world and global citizenship, characterised by a focus on ethics of care and caring for the earth.

2.8.6. Concluding remarks

To conclude, as we move further into the last decade of the SDGs (UNESCO, 2019), a key message is that Environmental Education or Education for Sustainable Development, climate education, or any education that we decide to call the learning that supports a healthy planet, has to be educational and transformative. These components sometimes get missed when educators and policy makers' efforts revolve around science information, facts and figures and/or a focus on getting people to behave in the 'right' way. Doing so tends to occur at the expense of clarifying values and assumptions, or developing the abilities and capacities people need to respond to complex and urgent sustainability challenges (Tilbury and Cooke, 2005, p. 19). One major difference between the current times and the early seventies, is that where Environmental Education was rather supply driven and at the margins of education and governance, today Environmental Education (and, indeed, Education for Sustainable Development) is much more demand driven and has moved more to the mainstream of education and gov-

ernance. While education cannot be the only solution to environmental and societal problems (Pepper, 1984; Huckle, 1991), it can play a key role in crafting the future people choose to be part of rather than forced to adapt to. As we noted in the introduction, this is a work in progress, which necessarily needs new perspectives and critiques.²

Section 3: Concrete recommendations for Stockholm+50

This closing section distils some key recommendations for the United Nations Environment Programme as it looks forward to 2030 and beyond. The recommendations are drawn from the learning in education for the environment and sustainable development, identified in the decades above in section 2. Each recommendation begins with a note on its context and importance, followed by the concrete recommendation.

The interconnected nature of sustainability concerns

While the 1972 Stockholm conference was ground-breaking in recognising the interconnections between development, poverty, and the environment, subsequent years saw a reductionist paradigm emerge, based on formalised science and technology. The gradual emergence of the concept of sustainability, and Education for Sustainable Development is demonstrating the interconnections and interdependencies inherent in sustainability challenges, and the need to promote systemic and transdisciplinary approaches to addressing them.

• *Bearing in mind that issues around climate, justice, peace, human rights, and conservation of biodiversity are intricately connected and that learning about them requires understanding context and connections, UNEP supports a systemic and holistic engagement of these issues in formal, non-formal and informal education.*

The importance of learning and education in the early years

Early research has shown that childhood education and care is critical for developing environmental attitudes and an ethic of care, which are foundational for citizens' capacities to address environmental and sustainability challenges.

• Considering the importance of learning and education at primary level and early years, on addressing environmental and sustainability challenges, UNEP commits to increasing its focus on these formative years, and creating opportunities to build ability and capability of young learners through participatory, embodied and experiential forms of learning so that they can grow up engaged and able to respond to environmental and sustainability challenges.

The need for transformative and inclusive education

As evidence gathers about the short-lived outcomes arising out of behaviour change campaigns and the promotion of pro-environmental behaviour, shifts are needed to embed environmental sustainability concerns through social and critical learning approaches that en-

² We invite the reader to reflect on this paper and contact the lead author to share insights and constructive feedback (thomas.macintyre@gmail.com). The authors will be revisiting this work periodically over the coming years.

gage in deeper learning and empower people to respond to these challenges. There is the need for transformational, whole of society solutions to shared environmental challenges that require urgent international action. Such transformations and solutions can only unfold meaningfully when people with different backgrounds, capacities and challenges are included.

- Considering the need for a more transformative and inclusive education to address environmental and sustainability challenges, UNEP commits to moving away from individualistic behaviour change approaches to promoting learning approaches that challenge mindsets and worldviews, promote collective change and do not seek single actions or specific behaviours for the environment.

Education and learning as a tool for empowering stakeholders

Providing information and raising awareness is not enough to address environmental concerns. Building up in the 2010s and exploding now in the 2020s, young people and the disenfranchised are going to the streets to protest their limited agency in making a difference to their lives and to the planet. Education and learning must therefore become more relevant and responsive to urgent environmental concerns.

- Noting the substantial challenges to the health of people and planet, UNEP commits to invest in the promotion of pedagogies and learning opportunities that build competences and empower the stakeholders of the future to contribute to social and economic change in support of the environment and sustainability.

Climate justice

As decolonial and ecofeminist perspectives to education highlight, populations and regions with the lowest carbon footprint, and least education, are those most affected by environmental impacts. It is the moral responsibility of the global community to support, through policies and resources, opportunities to marginalised groups to learn about and develop competences and tools to respond to environmental challenges.

- In light of increasing inequality, continued poverty, and the prospects of increased displacement and war brought about by climate change, UNEP commits particular policies and resources to marginalised peoples, regions and contexts, to ensure those most affected by environmental impacts have the resources and opportunities to learn about, effectively prepare and respond to these changes.

International perspectives in education and learning in the context of the environment

As demonstrated by the 1972 Stockholm conference, and subsequent summits like the 1992 Earth Summit, and the 2002 Johannesburg Summit, the negotiation, collaboration and agreements between member states can significantly influence the overall trajectory of human development and its relationship to the environment as a whole. With a new wave of nationalism and authoritarianism taking hold of countries around the world, it is ever more important to reinforce an international perspective to the role of education and learning in addressing interlinked and global sustainability challenges.

- To counter increased nationalism and authoritarianism worldwide, UNEP commits to promoting collaboration between member states to raise the profile and status of education and learning in the context of peace-building and achieving social and environmental justice.

Institutional responses to global environmental concerns

At the global level, UNESCO is the official agency responsible for Education for Sustainable Development, whilst UNEP continues to work in informal and nonformal contexts to support environmental learning opportunities. As environmental learning evolves to becoming closer to sustainability and the formal efforts connect more deeply with social learning opportunities, it is important to create spaces for the agencies to come together and bridge current efforts on this important strategic agenda.

- UNEP commits to working alongside UNESCO in the launch of an interagency initiative that seeks to improve the access to, and embedding of, learning for the environment across the UN family as well as support the establishment of a SG Special Envoy on ESD to create greater connections and opportunities for transformative learning for the environment across sectors and UN agencies.

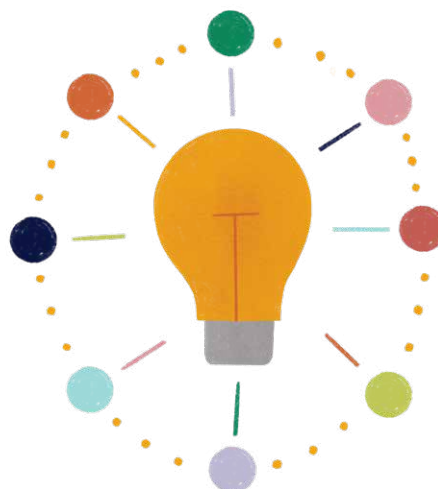
Societal polarisation in an age of misinformation

Already in the 1972 declaration, a strong reference is made in principle 19 concerning the dangers of misinformation to the environment:

“...It is also essential that mass media of communications avoid contributing to the deterioration of the environment, but, on the contrary, disseminate information of an educational nature on the need to protect and improve the environment in order to enable man to develop in every respect”.

The importance of mass media has only grown since these words were written, where we are currently witnessing immense political and societal polarisation around the world, in part fuelled by fake news and alternative facts spread through social media. The role of the media in separating facts from myths and distinguishing healthy doubt from intentionally cultivated doubt to confuse people or to delay action, is more important than ever. At the same time education needs to develop critical thinking and associated critical media literacy in society.

- Recognising the dangers of societal polarisation in an age of misinformation, UNEP commits to the development of responsible journalism, media use and critical media literacy in society to safeguard the potential of scientific and other forms of knowledge in contributing to sustainable development.



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Training of the Arhuaca indigenous community ecological restoration strategies. Executive director of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), and the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, **Carlos Eduardo Correa**, delivered in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, training certificates to 21 nurseries from the Arhuaca indigenous community, who were trained in nursery management, ecological restoration strategies, ecology of species to be established, monitoring and information reporting. Santa Marta, Colombia © UNEP

You have just read a Legacy Paper, one of five, which is an integral element of the report: **The People's Environment Narrative** celebrating 50 years of work between civil society and UNEP to safeguard the environment. The report is created, published and owned by Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future, SF, and can be downloaded in its entirety for free at:

www.stakeholderforum.org

www.unep.org

Section Four: the five Legacy Papers
Fifty Years of Education and Learning for the Environment and Sustainability

Authors: Dr. Thomas Macintyre, Professors Daniella Tilbury & Arjen Wals

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Illustrations and graphic design by María Andrea Miranda Serna

Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future

Company no. 05243470 / Registered in England and Wales and Utrecht, the Netherlands

Registered Office: 2 The Links, Herne Bay,
Kent, CT6 7GQ, UK

www.stakeholderforum.org

info@stakeholderforum.org

twitter @stakeholders

linkedin @stakeholderforum





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UNEP, science and the environment – a necessary partnership to save the planet?

by Professor **Raymond Saner** & Professor **Lichia Yiu**

Executive Summary

Download the complete Legacy Paper by clicking on the PDF icon



This chapter provides an assessment of the current importance of Science for the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). Science has been considered a key enabler of the mandate of UNEP to catalyze environmental policies, strategies and actions for the benefit of world citizens and the planet. As stated in “Making Peace with Nature”, (UNEP, 2021)¹

With science as our guiding light, UNEP’s Medium-Term Strategy (2022-2025) seeks to ensure the link between science, policy and decision-making remains stronger than ever, sustained by strong environmental governance and supported by economic policies that can be the foundation of a catalytic response to the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

Has science contributed sufficiently to the fulfilment of its mandate since the beginning of UNEP in 1972? How effectively did UNEP play this broker role and what are the successful practices and challenges?

Scope of this chapter

This Legacy Paper is also based on semi-structured qualitative interviews with renowned international experts about their views on UNEP’s role and contributions to the international multilateral environmental system and on the emerging challenges and needs of knowledge production through science. Highlights exemplify the impact of proposed policy choices, the monitoring mechanisms created to track scientific knowledge – how it was translated, popularized and utilized - since UNEP’s inception in 1972. Observations made by these experts on UNEP’s challenges and shortfalls are presented in the main paper.

¹ Inger Andersen, UNEP Executive Director, Foreword, p. 5; <https://wedocs.unep.org/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/34948/MPN.pdf>

Discussion of main findings

Science is one of the three core functions of UNEP. In this context, UNEP is to carry out the following activities:

1. To provide scientific information and background information for decision making,
2. To provide political guidance for political decisions regarding environmental issues,
3. To catalyse actions among some key IOs, such as UNDP and other members of the Environment Management Group.²

UNEP's record in these regards, according to the information communicated by the participants of the semi-structured interviews is mixed.

Through its flagship publication, the Global Environmental Outlook (GEOs), UNEP has curated cutting edge scientific knowledge and provided state of the art analysis to the policy community for policy making and political decisions. However, when it comes to catalysing actions among some of the key global organisations and to ensure environmental policy coherence, UNEP has not been able to maintain its coordination function and address the social-economic and ecological linkages throughout the UN system. In other words, UNEP was not sufficiently empowered to take a whole-of-system approach and to exercise environmental governance authority in ensuring environmental policy coherence across the whole UN system.

Nevertheless, major progress has been made in the science-policy domain during the past

50 years of UNEP's life span. These successes unfortunately remain mostly in the domain of norm-setting and international agreements, less in the actual outcome of arresting of deteriorating environmental conditions at global and local levels.

Three scenarios could be proposed concerning the role and function of UNEP and its contribution to the science-policy deliberation on environmental sustainability over the years.

Scenario 1: UNEP has been successful in its natural science-based advocacy and awareness raising leading to a broadening of systemic understanding of the planetary crisis and identifying possible solutions. The remaining work is therefore more for the application of social sciences/human science and economics to ensure the change of people's minds and hearts including their daily behavior and practices. The paramount question regarding this transition within Scenario 1 is how to implement the environmental policies in a transversal manner and to achieve behavioral change at scale. Therefore, at the next phase of environmental governance and science including sustainable development, the task of UNEP needs to focus ever more on interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches and pursue problem solving at a socio-ecosystem interface.

Attempts to bridge the silos and shed lights on the academic disciplinary blind spots could be a major challenge and call for ongoing dialogue and reforms on the side of science. Similarly, inter-ministerial coordination and policy coherence regarding national development plans

² Established in 2001 and chaired by the Executive Director of UNEP and supported by a secretariat provided by UNEP in Geneva, Switzerland, the UN Environment Management Group (EMG) is a system-wide coordination body on environment and human settlements. The EMG membership consists of 51 specialized agencies, programmes and organs of the UN including the secretariats of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements. The EMG identifies issues on the international environmental agenda that warrant cooperation, and finds ways of engaging its collective capacity in coherent management responses to those issues, Civil society can be invited to its meetings (from the EMG website), <https://unemg.org/>



Science Policy Business Forum UNEA 3, Closing Session. Nairobi, Kenya. 2017 © UNEP / Natalia Mroz

and international development governance needs to be high on the UNEP agenda which could serve as an intermediary between these communities of interest (governments, business, civil society, academics). Therefore, the central role of UNEP should be to act as the intermediary that fosters dialogue and collaboration within a community (science or policy) and among communities (science-policy). The convening power of UNEP with its unique mandate is a key factor of effectiveness in influencing the dominant narratives in favor of radical changes.

Scenario 2: UNEP has been to some extent, successful in trying to incrementally stop the environmental and climate deterioration. What remains to be resolved and agreed to, with regard to international environmental treaties to this effect, are the more wicked and entrenched long-term challenges. They require greater systemic knowledge and transdisciplinary insights from environmental and social sciences including long-term commit-

ment from the science-policy community. The role of UNEP should therefore be centered on closing the knowledge and data gap while continuing its role of curating, interpreting and translating scientific knowledge and finding ways to implement the state-of-the-art solutions through policy making and action-oriented resolutions on environmental problems. It is also the role and function of UNEP to identify incentives and pressures to sustain the needed political will in tackling these difficult systemic problems that continue to cause the deterioration of the planetary health. Science diplomacy needs to become a major tool for influencing and advocacy at UNEP.

Scenario 3: Environmental issues are seen as part of the total ecological system and cannot be resolved in isolation. Linked to this are issues concerning green economy and consumer and producer behavior. Specific stakeholders are gaining momentum in formulating mitigation strategies concerning these issues. Demands for policy synergy and clear

policy trade-offs between the economic, social and environmental objectives are needed to solve these complex problems. UNEP in this new operational context has started to shift towards an integration of interdisciplinary issues by looking at the synergy of environmental science with social and human science as well as economic science and in seeking new working methods to bring the dispersed and independent actors together under one unit. The rise of sustainability science and its ensuing values and principles will play a stronger hand in determining the quality and direction of future scientific inquiry and help the policy makers to address pressing environmental issues such as disasters that leave vulnerable populations behind. The role of UNEP in this regard would be to work with frontier science and technology in forestalling and preventing emerging sustainability challenges. This could include collecting and generating data to assess untested technologies such as geo-engineering. In addition, the process related knowhow that promotes collaboration at scale across multiple boundaries needs also to be part of the organizational capability of UNEP to complement the content knowledge in meeting its leading role of mitigating the environmental sustainability crisis.

Regardless of which scenario is closer to the reality, one thing is clear: For the world to be more effective in managing its environmental and sustainability crisis, efficient and effective knowledge management must undergird impactful policies and actions. In this context, international organizations and specialized agencies need to be the custodians of both explicit and tacit knowledge. Perhaps one way of approaching this complex issue during the next decades is to intensify and upgrade the position of the Environment Management Group as the coordinator of environmental and sus-

tainability policies within the UN itself. To do so, allowing relevant civil society organisations to participate more often, could be an innovative and pro-active step in the right direction.

Science-Policy Interface: searching for the right strategy

UNEP has grappled with the challenge of finding the best approach to ensure an effective science-policy interface. In 2017, UNEP published a study titled “Strengthening the Science-Policy Interface A Gap Analysis” which was initiated by the then UNEP Executive Director Erik Solheim³. The executive summary highlighted several key areas needing improvements; the first mentioned was improving coordination of different actors around the globe. The report observed that scientific evidence is not often understood or used by policy makers and that science and policy were at a crossroad. The solution proposed was to making science-policy interface more dynamic while engaging the right actors in achieving the SDGs.

Ms. Inger Andersen who succeeded Mr. Solheim was also concerned about the science-policy interface and exclaimed with the closing words of her presse release titled “A new science-policy interface for UNEP at 50” on 3 March 2022⁴ that

(In a nutshell), we must rapidly develop specific and relevant solutions through the engagement of diverse stakeholders – and get those solutions out there quickly through real-time digital tools. If we do this, science will become more accessible, more trusted, more democratic, and therefore more useful. The whole of society will be involved in producing and acting on science. Decision makers will have a

3 <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/strengthening-science-policy-interface-gap-analysis>

4 <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/speech/new-science-policy-interface-unep-50>



Science Policy Business Forum UNEA 3. Nairobi, Kenya. 2017 © UNEP / Natalia Mroz

wider range of solutions, quickly produced, upon which to act. We will brighten the light of science so that it serves as a beacon for all to follow, in policy and action, as we walk the path towards ending the triple planetary crisis.

Taking a further step towards developing specific and relevant solutions quickly through real-time digital tools, two divisions of UNEP were renamed on 4th February in 2023. The former Science Division is now named Early Warning and Assessment Division and the former Economics Division is now named the Industry and Economy Division⁵.

The renaming can have positive but also some more risky implications. Focusing on Early Warning and Assessments can cut the time of bringing to the attention of policy makers and the public at large that dangerous developments are in the making and needing immediate attention (e.g. typhoons, tsunamis). At the same time, one can wonder whether the longer term, but equally crucial environmental developments are no longer being followed by UNEP (e.g. warming of glaciers and oceans or emer-

gence of plant diseases). In addition, shorter term and longer-term environment threatening development affect each other and need to be continuously watched. Such an earlier warning and assessment system needs also to be carefully calibrated in order to be distinct from what the World Meteorological Organisation and its global network is delivering and excelling in. Such duplication may inadvertently undermine the needed collaboration and render the use of limited resources suboptimal.

Regarding the renaming of the former economics division to Industry and Economic Division puts emphasis on the industry seemingly leaving out the rural-agricultural part of the economy and also seemingly to exclude the whole interaction between financial markets on supply of commodities and other macro-economic impacts on the real economy.

By becoming more specific, the larger scope of science and economics might become very narrow generating on one hand more application oriented solutions while at the same time running the risk of losing sight on the larger realities covered by science and economics.

5 Memo dated 4 February 2023 by Radhika Ochalik, Secretary of Governing Bodies, Director, Governance Affairs Office, UNEP



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UNEP, science and the environment – a necessary partnership to save the planet

by Professor **Raymond Saner** & **Lichia Yiu**

Abstract

This chapter provides an assessment of the current relation, interaction and importance of Science for the UN Environment Programme, UNEP, as a key enabler of its mandate to catalyze environmental policies, strategies and actions for the benefit of world citizens and the planet. UNEP's mission (2013) ¹states

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading environmental authority in the United Nations system. UNEP uses its expertise to strengthen environmental standards and practices while helping implement environmental obligations at the country, regional and global levels. UNEP's mission is to provide leadership and encourage 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.

The mission statement lists six strategic areas of concentration namely 1. Climate Change, 2. Post-Conflict and Disaster Management, 3. Ecosystem Management, 4. Environmental Governance 5. Harmful Substances and 6. Resource Efficiency/Sustainable consumption and production. The strategic areas 3, 4 and 6 make reference to sustainable development and 6 states explicitly “sustainable consumption and production” which fits with the SDG 12 of the 2030 Agenda. UNEP's is the leading environment organization in the UN system.

¹ <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2013/08/unep-united-nations-environment-programme/>

Scope of this chapter

This review is based on semi-structured qualitative interviews with renowned international experts about their views on UNEP's role and contributions to the international multilateral environmental system and on the emerging challenges and needs of knowledge production through science. Highlights will be given to exemplify the impact of proposed policy choices, the monitoring mechanisms created to track scientific knowledge - how it got translated and popularized - since UNEP's inception in 1972. Observations made by these experts on UNEP's challenges and shortfalls will also be reported.

The authors conclude with recommendations on how UNEP could strengthen its science-policy-society interface and strengthen its role as key international advocate and custodian of sustained environmental development through effective science-policy-society dialogue and mutual learning.

Objective of this Chapter

This book chapter is part of the legacy book which was conceived to commemorate UNEP's 50-year anniversary. The idea of the book came about as a follow up to the conference on Stockholm +50 of 2022 which was organized to recall the 50 years since the UN Conference on the Human Environment and its outcome documents. The book concept was developed by the Stockholm+50 Consortium consisting of the Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future (NL) and the forum for Environment and Development (N). Input to the project was also provided by various Major Groups accredited to UNEP including NGOs and stakeholders from the 6 UNEP regions.

UNEP has since its inception worked on many different aspects of the environment and issues strongly related to the environment. The five Legacy Themes, which are presented in this

section of the People's Environment Narrative, could be understood as five dominant themes for UNEP as they have followed UNEP since its inception. This chapter has the following approach to one of these 'Legacy Themes'. Science has always been an integral element of UNEP's work and science was used as one of the convincing arguments to carry out the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment. When the conference opened in 1972, 80 countries had provided their first environmental assessments. This was also a first in international contexts. Since then, such assessments have developed in quality and depth, providing the world with detailed, in-depth analysis and assessment of the environment on a national, regional and global level.

UNEP has its own scientific staff and chief scientists and in addition contracts well known researchers and scientists to provide reports on key issues, often in connection with UNEP's work programme and UNEA's five-year work plans – the Medium-Term Strategies.

UNEP's environmental assessment and environmental research have often identified emerging issues, which subsequently have found their ways into resolutions or work-programmes. Today these findings are also published in UNEP's many flagship reports, of which the Global Environment Outlook, GEO, is a key one.

This chapter of the Legacy Themes attempts to map important aspects of UNEP's work on science and research. A more in-depth narration of UNEP's historical engagement of science and research is given in Jan-Gustav's chapter of this report named the People's Environment Narrative, the PEN. The authors of this chapter focus rather on some of the themes and areas of research that relate to society and policy making as conveyed by the experts who shared their views on UNEP's engagement over the years with science, research and policy uptake. Comments will also be shared on some of the

contextual conditions that UNEP finds or found itself in which might have hindered UNEP's fulfilment of its mandate.

The overall objective of this chapter pertains to the question as to what has been researched and what has not been researched – and if not-why? and finally - are scientific methodologies appropriate for the purpose of strengthening UNEP's mandate to safeguard the environmental sustainability? How does science underpin UNEP's work programme and create novel work items?

Journey from 1972 to Today

Over the 50 years of UNEP's existence, the member countries' stance on UNEP's vision and mission has been at times hesitant with wavering commitments to what might be labeled direct environment/nature problems and since 1992, environmentally related sustainable development goals and activities. Member countries seem also reluctant to agree that bold or transformative actions are needed to stop environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity. Equally reluctant, these member states shy away from radical reconfiguration of economic and social-ecological relations to ensure the survival of nature and the human species who is facing life-threatening environmental deterioration. Averting the trend of existing life-style - that has cumulatively resulted in exceeding planetary boundaries of carrying capacity - has been deemed, albeit silently, as politically unpalatable.

Summarizing some of the main points since UNEP's foundation, a few important historical milestones are identifiable. Following up on the United Nations Conference on the Human

Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was established as the leading UN body in the field of environment. Two considerable steps were taken: one was to locate the newly founded UNEP in Nairobi, a very first in locating an international body in a developing country; the second was to construe that the UNEP is a crosscutting body that oversees the environmental component in all other UN bodies. It is its mandate and public expectation to ensure policy coherence and coordination from an environmental perspective in different sectoral domains and across UN family.

In the post-Stockholm years, increasing concern over continuing environmental degradation led the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to convene the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1983. The report of the Commission (the Brundtland Report) was a catalyst for the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit in Rio. Among other outcomes, the Summit adopted Agenda 21, a comprehensive, yet non-binding plan of action for addressing both environment and development goals in the 21st century and the Rio Declaration.² It was also an action agenda for all other multilateral organizations and individual governments around the world that can be implemented at local, national, and global levels.³

The Agenda 21 consisted of a large number of very comprehensive articles (see Figure 1) agreed by the UN member states that covered a broad range of actions intended to ensure sustainable environmental development. Broadly six environmental dimensions were mentioned with water, land, and waste to top the list. It is interesting to note that climate

2 EU Commission, (2020) «Environment Issues, International Issues»; https://ec.europa.eu/environment/international_issues/relations_un_en.htm

3 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agenda_21

change has yet to emerge as a primary concern and threat to mankind at this stage.

(See Figure 1)

However, despite the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 and major global efforts, the overall environmental conditions at country, region and global levels did not improve sufficiently since then and environmental degradation continues today.

What followed were subsequent international environment agreements and major outcome documents such as the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 (1997), Outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002), The Future We Want (2012), The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, The 2030 Agenda (2015), the Paris Agreement (2015) and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development (2015) and several agreements pertaining to the environment as listed below. These international agreements shared a common objective which was to develop global consensus in tackling the worsening environmental crisis that affect the health and wellbeing of the world population and other societal conditions necessary to maintain peace and prosperity. A detailed inventory of international environmental treaties or instruments are presented in Table 2.

These international agreements consisted of articles focusing on improvement of environmental conditions for instance concerning water, waste, biodiversity, land, forests, pollution, ocean acidification etc. but included also other important dimensions of sustainability namely social and economic sustainability. Together, they can serve as a comprehensive

set of pathways and roadmaps to move the world away from pending catastrophic future events should right actions be taken in a timely manner and at extraordinary scale. Scientific knowledge embedded in these international agreements also pointed out the “window” for such transformation to achieve intended outcomes are narrowing.

With the concerted effort since 2000 in achieving MDG 7 “Ensure Environmental Sustainability”, all of these international agreements on the environment and sustainable development created from 1992 to 2015 helped improved the planetary conditions of environmental sustainability and ensured that principles of sustainable development, including the environment were indeed integrated into most nations’ policies and programmes.⁴ Some of these gains in the areas of “reversing the depletion of environmental resources”, a target of MDG 7, have unfortunately seen a regression in recent years due to the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic worldwide.

In view of the focus of this chapter being on the UNEP and its contribution to the science and policy interface on environmental issues, emphasis will be put on whether UNEP was able to draw on scientific knowledge and its convening power to influence the international policy discourse, and whether policy making institutions like governments and influential non-state actor organizations have been adequately informed about the potential impact of environmental risks but also of the potential positive externalities resulting from constructive and sensible environmental policy making.

At the time of the multilateral agreement on “Further Implementation” negotiated in 1997, UN member countries put a strong empha-

⁴ <https://www.mdgmonitor.org/mdg-7-ensure-environmental-sustainability/>

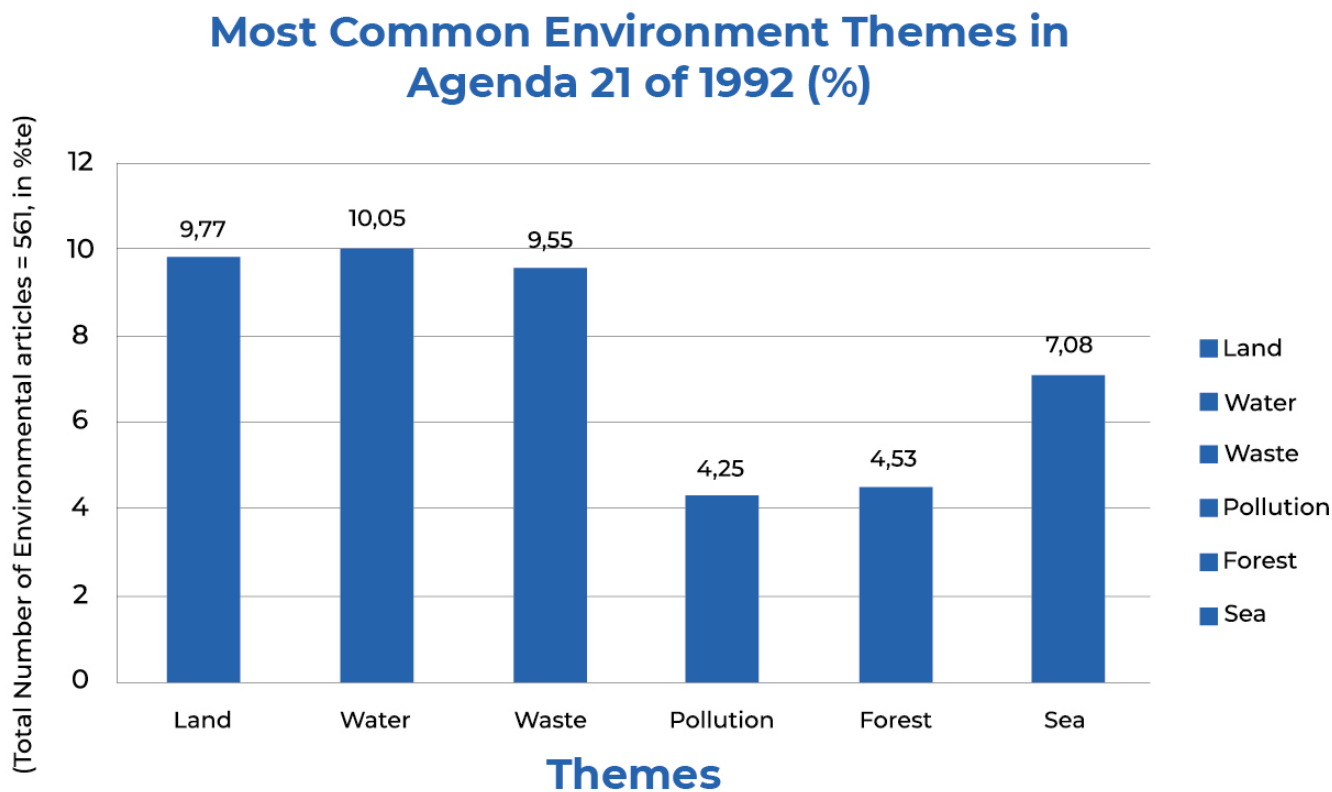
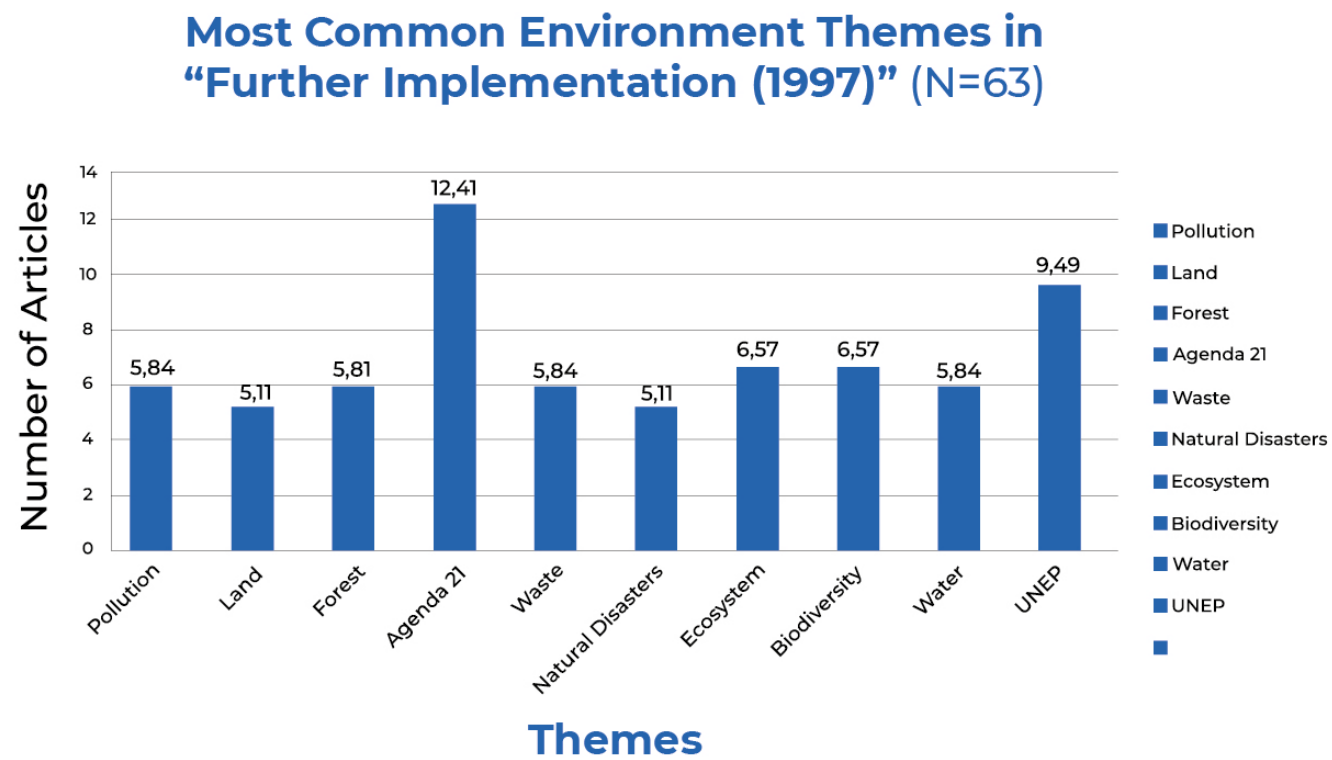


Figure 1: Most common environmental topics covered in the Agenda 21. (Source: Authors’ own elaboration)



(Figure 2: author's contribution)

sis on environmental issues⁵. Out of a total of 137 articles of the agreement, 63 pertained to environmental issues and UNEP was mentioned in 13 of the 63 articles focusing on environmental sustainability as shown in figure 2 on page 7.

As shown by the high score relating to UNEP, the international community of the 185 UN member countries in 1997⁶ recognized the prominent role of UNEP in implementing the Agenda 21 and in undertaking future actions to alert the world about what it was facing in regard to environmental problems and risks thanks to UNEP's authoritative voice based on scientific knowledge and evidence. As demonstrated by the high reference made to UNEP in the 1997 Agreement, UNEP is expected to initiate actions in favor of environmental sustainability and give policy advice to deal with countries' specific plights.

Over the following 18 years starting from the 1997 agreement "Further Implementation" to the 2030 Agenda signed in 2015, environmental issues re-appeared in the subsequent four agreements but to a much lower degree as indicated by the relatively low number of articles which addressed environmental issues (see figure 3 below). Nevertheless, of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), MDG 7 was dedicated to the environmental sustainability and to guaranteed access and use of natural resources, such as biodiversity, water and sanitation. By 2015, different target areas of the MDG 7 morphed into five SDGs with dedicated targets.

The relative decline in environment-related articles included in the four post Agenda 21 agreements, except the "Further Implementation"

agreement, is surprising especially amidst the facts that increasing evidence of environmental degradations and creeping rise of global temperature have been reported and discussed widely in the media. It was observed that these six international agreements tend to build on each other, not always in the most straightforward manner, but they constitute a complementary set of agreements documenting the existing knowledge and practices on sustainability development (Saner et al.2019)⁷. Deeper insights into meta-level governance could be obtained by leveraging the established consensus and knowledge through these international agreements by pursuing policy coherence across the whole global system.

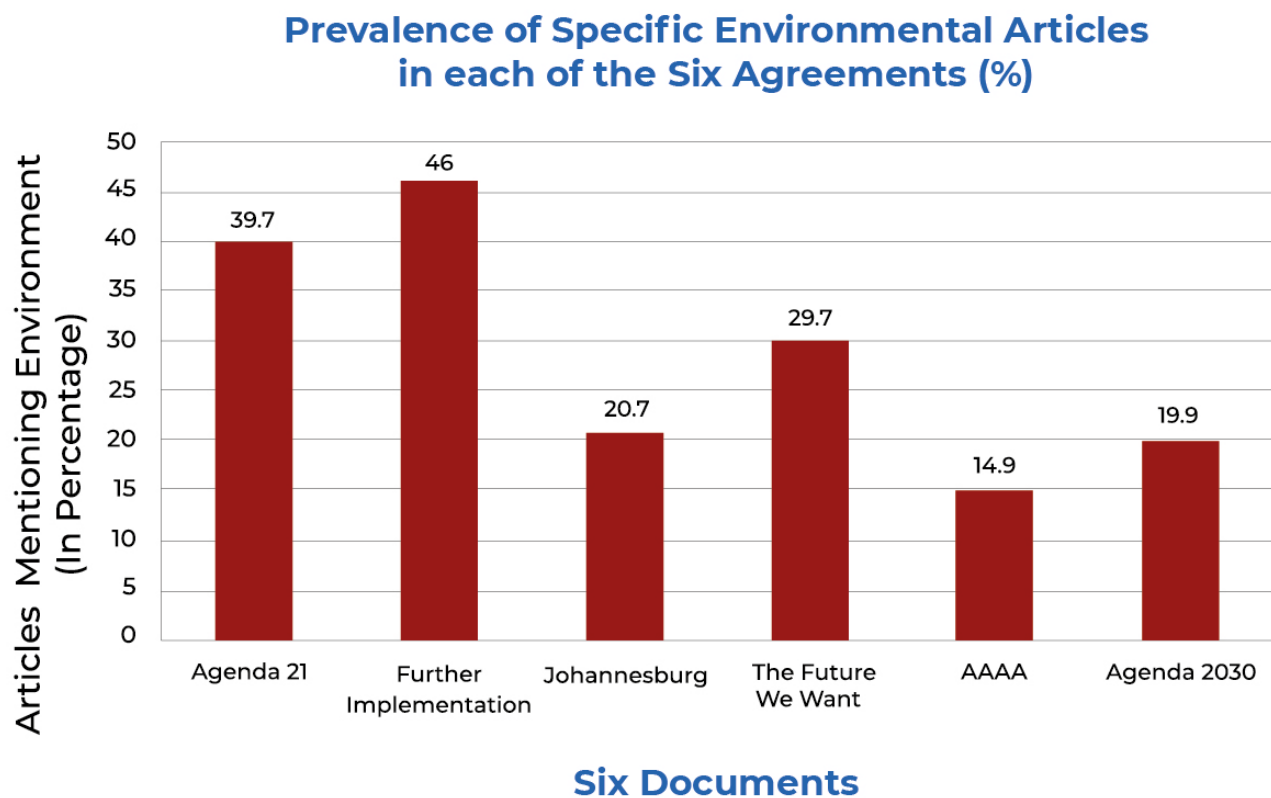
The environmental issues that were part of in these treaties included other environmental topics and not only climate change. This decrease could perhaps be attributed to the fact that the drafters/negotiators of multilateral agreements rotate mid-course and collective commitment to address environmental issues declined or were diluted due to preoccupations with other issues than environmental risks.

It is important to take note of this declining trend. The 2030 Agenda repositioned the importance of the environmental sustainability and allocated five SDGs out of seventeen goals to address different aspects of the ecosystems that affect human and natural survival and point to collective conduct that affect environmental survival. Most importantly, environment has been recognized as being one of the three dimensions of sustainable development which interact with the social-economic dimensions of the global ecosystem giving a boost to the necessity of interdisciplinary and

5 P.32, section B on Sectors and issues:https://www.diplomacydialogue.org/images/files/20190209-11625_2019_655_OnlinePDF.pdf

6 The current number of UN member states is 193

7 https://www.diplomacydialogue.org/images/files/20190209-11625_2019_655_OnlinePDF.pdf



(Figure 3: author’s contribution)

transdisciplinary science. Yet, it seems that the sense of urgency felt after the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 has gradually dissipated from the international community and the public consciousness. Except, of course, on the places on the earth and with the people living there who were gradually experiencing the negative consequences of disasters to nature and the environment.

The decrease could also be related to the disappearance of institutional history and knowledge. The same can be said about international agreements focusing on sustainable development and particularly on environmental sustainability as illustrated by figure 1 to 3. In other words, concern about environmental issues and readiness to commit to corrective poli-

cies and actions seem to have been lost over time and this most likely is also a challenge for UNEP.⁸

Current State of the Environment and Knowledge Gap

In the Preamble of the 2030 Agenda, it clearly states;

“This Agenda is a **plan of action for people, planet and prosperity**. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom. We recognize that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. All countries and all stakehold-

8 Saner, R; Yiu, L; Kingombe, Ch; (2019) “The 2030 Agenda compared with six related international agreements: valuable resources for SDG implementation”; Sustainability Science, Springer, Tokyo.

ers, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan. We are resolved to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to **heal and secure our planet**. We are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to **shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path**. As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets which we are announcing today demonstrate the scale and ambition of this new universal Agenda. They seek to build on the Millennium Development Goals and complete what these did not achieve. They seek to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. They are **integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development**: the economic, social and environmental.” (A/RES/70/1 - Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development)⁹ (Bold added).

Today, we are entering into the eighth year of implementation since these bold and inspiring words were announced. How far have we come in shifting onto a sustainable and resilient path?

According to the latest Global Sustainable Development Review (GSDR 2019)¹⁰ written by independent scientists, the Goals 12, 13, 14, 15 which are crucial for environmental sustainability are facing a negative long-term trend (p.10). The GSDR authors state that scientific analysis have been made of the environment and nature but there is no evidence that the negative trend has been stopped or, better, re-

versed. Specific mention is made in the GSDR of the following targets: 12.2, 14.1, 14.4., 15.5., 15.7 and Goal 12 in general in regard to Global GHG emissions relative to the Paris targets (see Figure 4). There continues to exist the “knowing to acting” gap signifying low uptake of scientific evidence and policy re-direction.

(See Figure 4)¹¹

There are plenty of studies in the fields of natural science that focus on the targets and goals mentioned above and labelled as being in “long-term negative trend”. What appears to be missing is complementary and ideally transdisciplinary social and economic science studies that focus on human behavior and the phenomenon of human resistance to change. Equally missing are additions pertaining to economic cost and benefit analysis of specific policy solutions in many of the developing countries. The affordability argument is genuine and needs to be taken on board through innovation, partnerships and burden sharing. The now emerging discussions concerning natural based solutions and indigenous knowledge might offer alternative and affordable solutions in a timelier manner.

The GSDR 2019 calls for the greater collaboration between non-traditional partners for building on sustainability science and states the following:

“In recent decades, scientists have begun to address the web of challenges facing humanity, with interdisciplinary research focused on coupled human- environment systems or socio-ecological systems. That has given birth

⁹ <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

¹⁰ GSDR is a quadrennial report and a key instrument of the HLPF to strengthen the science-policy interface and drafted by an independent group of scientists (IGS) supported by a task team of six UN entities (DESA, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO and the World Bank) - <https://sdgs.un.org/gsdrgsd2019>

¹¹ https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf

Table 1-1
Projected distance from reaching selected targets by 2030 (at current trends)

GOAL	WITHIN 5%	5–10%	>10%	NEGATIVE LONG-TERM TREND
 Goal 1		1.1. Eradicating extreme poverty	1.3. Social protection for all	
 Goal 2		2.1. Ending hunger (undernourishment)	2.2. Ending malnutrition (stunting) 2.5. Maintaining genetic diversity 2.a. Investment in agriculture*	2.2. Ending malnutrition (overweight)
 Goal 3	3.2. Under-5 mortality 3.2. Neonatal mortality		3.1. Maternal mortality 3.4. Premature deaths from non-communicable diseases	
 Goal 4	4.1 Enrolment in primary education	4.6 Literacy among youth and adults	4.2. Early childhood development 4.1 Enrolment in secondary education 4.3 Enrolment in tertiary education	
 Goal 5			5.5. Women political participation	
 Goal 6		6.2. Access to safe sanitation (open defecation practices)	6.1. Access to safely managed drinking water 6.2. Access to safely managed sanitation services	
 Goal 7		7.1. Access to electricity	7.2. Share of renewable energy* 7.3. Energy intensity	
 Goal 8			8.7. Use of child labour	
 Goal 9		9.5. Enhancing scientific research (R&D expenditure)	9.5. Enhancing scientific research (number of researchers)	
 Goal 10			10.e. Remittance costs	Inequality in income*
 Goal 11			11.1. Urban population living in slums*	
 Goal 12				12.2. Absolute material footprint, and DMC*
 Goal 13				Global GHG emissions relative to Paris targets*
 Goal 14				14.1. Continued deterioration of coastal waters* 14.4. Overfishing*
 Goal 15				15.5. Biodiversity loss* 15.7. Wildlife poaching and trafficking*
 Goal 16			16.9 Universal birth registration **	

Note: Selected indicators only. SDG 17 is not included as it consists of a wide range of indicators that cannot easily be captured using the methodology for assessing distance from reaching targets. Estimates of the distance from the target by 2030 are based on forecasted value of the corresponding indicator in 2030, relative to target. Forecasts based on best-fit trends of individual indicators, given the available data range.

* Quantitative target for 2030 is not specified in the SDG indicator framework; targets are estimated.

** Assessment is based on indicators outside the SDG indicator framework; inequality in income is based on data from household surveys.

Negative long-term trends of SDGs for which UNEP is the custodian

(Source: adapted from Global Sustainable Development Report, 2019, P. 10, Table 1-1)

to a new, more engaged academic discipline – sustainability science – that draws on all scientific disciplines, including social sciences and humanities in a problem-solving approach, and seeks to shed light on complex, often contentious and value-laden nature-society interactions, while generating **usable scientific knowledge** for sustainable development.

The four levers of change – governance, economy and finance, individual and collective action, and science and technology – should be coherently deployed and combined to bring about transformational change. All actors should strive for coordinated efforts and prioritize policy coherence and consistency across sectors.

Universities, policymakers and research funders must scale up support to **mission-oriented research**, guided by the 2030 Agenda, in sustainability science and other disciplines, with simultaneous strengthening of the *science-policy- society interface*¹² (GSDR, 2019, p. XXXiii)

UNEP needs to be the driving force of this «grand coalition» to fathom a new science and research agenda to stimulate greater science uptake into policy and ground level actions. With the stakeholder engagement and solidarity being at different system levels, there will emerge greater opportunities of moving the world onto the right path for a sustainable future.

Such an interpretation of the current environmental challenges goes beyond the initial mandate of UNEP and stretches its institutional ecosystem, process and resources. A related question could also be raised, does its structure remain fit for purpose? While operating creatively with limited resources for

a long while, this newly “renovated” mission agenda will need substantive injection of resources and networks to make UNEP effective and successful.

Solidarity is one of the key value propositions of the 2030 agenda and is not a traditional topic for scientific inquiry. UNEP has started to partner with other UN bodies and international actors such as the Major Stakeholder Groups of the HLPF to address the solidarity issue concerning the climate and environmental injustice inflicted on billions of people especially the younger generation, for example “Global Youth for Environment”. These projects could be the stepping-stones for the UNEP in finding new pathways to leverage its scientific knowledge and networks for making the grand coalition work and bring close alignment among science, policy and society together for a sustainable future.

Searching for Collective Narrative regarding UNEP’s Footprints and Contributions in Science and Policy Interface

Research Method Applied

Our research adopted a qualitative interview method and gathered detailed data from the participants in order to delineate the relationship between the UNEP and its constituencies and its contribution to the science-policy-society interface. A set of qualitative interviews were conducted with a select group of experts in a conversation and discussion style over Zoom during a period of three months in 2022. The advantage of using qualitative interviews is the relative absence of research bias due to direct interaction with participants. It also provides flexibility to address emerging subjects during the interview in a non-linear manner. It is also acknowledged that qualita-

¹² https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf

Profession	Number	Nationality	Number
Natural Scientists	6	French	1
Lawyer-Diplomat	1	Indian	2
Economist	1	Swiss	2
Social Scientists	2	South African	2
Total	10	USA	1
Affiliation	Number	Swedish	1
Academics	7	Italian	1
NGOs	2	Total	10
Civil Servant	1		
Total	10		

Table 1: Background of interviewees

tive interviews also carry the risk of observer bias. Secondary data obtained through literature search was also used to cross check the findings and conclusions.

References were made to existing literature such as the Global Sustainable Development Review (GSDR) 2019, the Stockholm +50: Unlocking a Better Future Report (2022), GEO 6; Making Peace with nature and Unleashing Science (ISC). Fifteen experts were contacted and ten agreed to be interviewed for this oral “history” analysis. The 10 experts represent diverse stakeholder groups, professional background and nationalities as captured in Table 1.

Table 1: Background of interviewees

Terms and Definition

Science

The role of science in tackling climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, and preventing other environmental challenges from emerging has been widely accepted in the policy community. Yet what is science? How does it differ from common sense or causal observations?

We structured our review and qualitative interviews with our expert informants along the short definition of science suggested by the University of Berkeley¹³ which states “Science is both a body of knowledge and a process. In school, science may sometimes seem like a collection of isolated and static facts listed in a textbook, but that’s only a small part of the story. Just as importantly, science is also a process of discovery that allows us to link isolated facts into coherent and comprehensive understandings of the natural world”.

At the same time, we also drew on suggestions provided by the expert-interviewees to bring to the fore the important task of science communication and diplomacy with policy makers and the public at large. Such communication needs to be conducted in the spirit of discovery and sharing of new information as well as with the understanding that knowledge should also generate actions for the preservation of the environment. Hence for the survival of the planet and its manifold species including the human society science-based actions are urgently needed.

¹³ <https://undsci.berkeley.edu/understanding-science-101/what-is-science/>

Therefore, scientific discovery needs to be translated into policy directives and actionable programmes to promote ecological and societal transformations. In between is the task of science diplomacy and public education that keep the dialogue going and the motivation to change sustained at different system levels.

Science Diplomacy

Science Diplomacy should be considered as “a means to reduce the many imbalances and as a vehicle to lift humanity up towards sustainable growth and development. It involves the use of scientific collaborations among nations to address common problems and to build constructive international partnerships” (Saner, 2015)¹⁴.

The Royal Society noted that, “science diplomacy” refers to three main types of activities¹⁵:

- informing foreign policy objectives with scientific advice (science in diplomacy)
- facilitating international science cooperation (diplomacy for science);
- using science cooperation to improve international relations between countries (science for diplomacy)

Applying this categorisation, one can see the «science diplomacy» roles enacted by UNEP in the following manner. 1) Science in diplomacy of informing policy makers with scientific advice concerning sustained environmental development of challenges; and 2) Diplomacy for Science of facilitating international science cooperation regarding research, information exchange and possibly technology transfer. Less evident seems to be the work in the domain of «science for diplomacy» that uses science coop-

eration to improve multilateralism and address the development needs of the Global South.

Main Findings

The key messages communicated by the 10 interviews are grouped into main themes. Each theme is given a title and in parenthesis are the number and professional backgrounds of the interviewees. The messages are indications and the group themes do not represent a statistically developed data nor is the selection of interviewees based on representative samples of interviewees. The findings should be taken as initial indications based on opinions expressed by the interviewees who were selected based on their many years of experience and accumulated know-how of environmental issues, of UNEP’s role in the field of science and of its science-policy making contribution.

1. UNEP-Science Strategy

Questions were raised concerning UNEP’s science strategy. Mentioning was made of an initial strategy during the early stages of UNEP’s life which was more aiming towards a horizontal reach involving other international organisations (IO) whose mandates also interact with environmental topics. The group had the impression that UNEP has given up on the horizontal strategy and instead opted for a more vertical strategy consisting of pursuing its research objectives, organising research programmes and projects within its domain without close consultation with other IOs before deciding on project themes of its research. The experts also mentioned that they see an absence in UNEP’s “oversight” coordination function in ensuring scientific and policy coherence

¹⁴ Science Diplomacy to support global implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Brief for GSDR 2015.

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/6654135-Saner-Science%20diplomacy%20suggested%20revisions%203%20final.pdf>

¹⁵ https://royalsociety.org/~media/Royal_Society_Content/policy/publications/2010/4294969468.pdf



UNEP in the Global Goals World Cup in Nairobi. 2017 © UNEP

when it comes to research on the sustainability of our planet.

Bob Watson was mentioned as a good example of the whole of the system approach when putting together a flag stone report titled “Making Peace with Nature”¹⁶. UNEP at its start-up stage initiated more contacts with other IOs trying to create a community of researchers based on mutual respect and two-way communications. UNEP was seen as being more engaged then in a pro-active manner in regard to coordinating policy research on key environmental issues. Some in the group consider the coordination efforts by the UNEP Geneva office could be improved and also include non-state actors be this private sector or civil society research centres to create an enriching environmental research community.

In regard to UNEP relevant research indicators, several experts consider that the Gross Domestic Product, GDP, measure should be less dominant and be more balanced by natural science indicators pertaining to environmental research. Many of the group thought that UNEP needs to have a more explicit governance system in regard to environmental science, for instance when and under what conditions should private sector and civil society think tanks be included in scientific research projects. Suggestions have gone even further by for instance suggesting inclusion of citizen science as means to collect ground level data on real-life problems and to achieve scale of transformation. Example of such a “crowd sourcing” approach can be seen as the UN Study on “The World that We Want” (2012)¹⁷ and the recent UNEP Inquiry into research designs that address questions pertaining to fac-

¹⁶ <https://www.unep.org/resources/making-peace-nature>

¹⁷ <https://www.un.org/en/exhibits/page/theworldwewant>

tors that could enable the creation of a comprehensive sustainable financial system (2021)¹⁸.

Several of the group members stated that the SDGs are not sufficiently included in UNEP's research undertakings and that the relation to the 2030 Agenda could be improved especially in scoping out the diverse impacts of environmental degradation, extreme weather conditions, loss of biodiversity, pollution etc. Citizen science focusing on generating and collecting data by ordinary citizens should be brought in to generate more granular data so that scientific analysis can better address the problems confronting different human communities. Critical schooling and support, it was said, could help mainstream the participation of citizenry as content producers and co-designers of locally sensitive solutions. It is also one more channel of delivering the solemn commitment made in the 2015 Declaration on "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (UN Resolution, A/RES/70/1)¹⁹ of "Partnerships".

Observations were also made that very few natural science NGOs of the UNEA Major Groups are present in New York during the annual HLPF of the 2030 Agenda Fora and concerns were raised that NGOs active in the UNEP consultative process are no longer able to engage in other important and relevant policies outside of UNEP and hence carry the risk of restricting themselves to a form of UNEP silo mentality which reduces UNEP's ability to catalyse actionable and useable environmental policy discussions in other international organisations of the United Nations.

Several experts also see tensions between the UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi and its own offices in Geneva and Paris as well as between

UNEP proper and the many secretariats which have been created to be in charge of environmental conventions and with other IOs that are seen to autonomously work on environmental issues. Worries were expressed on how the fragmentation of actors can be managed and the ensuing competition for budgets and for convening power be contained. These comments add an organisational challenge on how to maintain collaboration and coherence in the field of environmental and sustainable science.

2. What kind of Science is relevant for UNEP's mandate?

Experts of natural science as well as others of social science and economic science background agreed that UNEP's focus is too strongly based on nature and environmental science. Much more should be done to integrate the social science traditions. Particularly mentioned were the lack of integration of economic and social science in the Global Environmental Outlook (GEO) project and reporting. Mention was also made that the GEO focused too much on environmental risks and not enough on potential collaboration across sectors and disciplines to generate actionable solutions that would lead to real actions. Human behaviour is a key factor of environmental risk but UNEP studies often do not include psychology, sociology, economics, political and administrative science nor education and anthropology.

Linked to the above, a major concern expressed by the experts was that UNEP's research is not sufficiently inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary or transdisciplinary and hence no meaningful integration of the different knowledge fields is possible. It was also said that while a purely sectoral approach of environmental problems can generate important findings, if

¹⁸ <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/inquiry-design-sustainable-financial-system>

¹⁹ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/291/89/PDF/N1529189.pdf?OpenElement>



Science Policy Business Forum UNEA 3, Closing Session. Nairobi, Kenya. 2017 © UNEP / Natalia Mroz

these findings are not translated into societal realities, research projects can remain without transformative impact.

Another concern was raised about the perceived lack of applied research. While basic science, particularly in the field of environmental and natural sciences, is crucial for the future of this planet, UNEP should also engage in more applied science which could provide more opportunities to show local communities how science can contribute to solving and handling environmental crises in locality and provide practical solutions for long-term sustainable futures.

For scientists to be able to make important contributions to the wellbeing of society and safeguarding sustainable environmental or ecological futures, a re-assessment of the scientific sector is urgently needed. UNEP counts

on mostly unpaid contributions by environmental scientists which limits its access to scientists, especially the younger generation of scientists who depend on financial income from research work.

To be dependent on extra-budgetary funds and external scientists who are financed by their respective research institutions is not a sustainable solution to guarantee adequate investment in a transdisciplinary approach such as sustainability science. The latter is an emerging scientific field that depends on continued investment in tools, capacities, community of practices, and platforms for knowledge exchange. Without investment in such research infrastructure, sustainability science will remain a niche player, playing a catch-up game with the ever-evolving planetary ecologic challenges. The voluntary contributions to the research work of UNEP will also become more

difficult to find because of the change of financial situations of and working conditions in many universities.

Young researchers are less and less sure of obtaining tenure for their post and hence are engaged in sometimes fierce competition for ad-hoc research budgets. In addition, the proliferation of publication outlets and the abundant flow of information via digital means (internet, webinars, e-books etc.) increases fragmentation of scientific focus. The result of both tendencies is that young researchers are not interested to focus on mid-term to longer term research topics nor are they available for UNEP to provide research services on a gratuitous basis. Both trends will reduce UNEP's ability to draw on scientific resources for its research projects and the overall quality of research of the global science community.

The solution proposed by some of the experts is to reconsider how the funding of scientific work by external researchers could be re-organised. For instance, through core funding which would reduce UNEP's pressure of securing high quality research contributions. An increase of core funding would also strengthen UNEP's influence when it negotiates research consortia with other IOs or with think tanks of the private sector of civil society.

In addition, experts stated that UNEP does not seem to have interest or time to explore

the potential cooperation with universities except with the highest ranked universities of the world and best known researchers who are, however, often not available nor interested to provide gratuitous contributions for UNEP. In order to broaden options for scientific collaboration with the scientific communities, UNEP should re-think its incentives to attract good quality scientific contributions, especially by the younger qualified scientists.

3. Impact of UNEP on policy making of governments and other important stakeholders

Ms. Inger Andersen, executive director of UNEP mentioned that it took thirteen years from the first scientific results on the ozone layer to establish the Montreal Protocol in 1987 which subsequently quickly led to the phase out of CFCs²⁰ in developed industrialized countries. However, she also reminded us that we need a nimbler and more inclusive science-policy interface – one that will stimulate to accelerate effective policies and follow-up action.²¹

How to speed up the science-policy making process is not only the task of scientists and intergovernmental organisations, IGOs, like UNEP. One of the experts pointed out that politicians should ask scientists more often what solutions could be possible to solve environmental and sustainability problems rather than wait for the scientists to volunteer their know-

20 CFC CFCs, or chlorofluorocarbon, are any of several organic compounds composed of carbon, fluorine and chlorine. CFCs are also called Freons, a trademark of the E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company in Wilmington, Delaware, USA. CFCs were originally developed as refrigerants during the 1930s. Some of these compounds, especially trichlorofluoromethane (CFC-11) and dichlorodifluoromethane (CFC-12), found use as aerosol-spray propellants, solvents, and foam-blowing agents. Their commercial and industrial value notwithstanding, CFCs were eventually discovered to pose a serious environmental threat and was proved to damage the Ozone-layer in the atmosphere, protecting the earth from dangerous levels of different radiation. In 1990, 93 nations agreed, as part of the Montreal Protocol (established 1987), to end production of ozone-depleting chemicals by the end of the 20th century. From Britannica.com <https://www.britannica.com/science/chlorofluorocarbon>

21 Inger Anderes (2022) „A new Science-Policy Interface for UNEP at 50” / <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/speech/new-science-policy-interface-unep-50>



Science Policy Business Forum UNEA 3, Closing Session. Nairobi, Kenya. 2017 © UNEP / Natalia Mroz

how. Governments need to be advised on how to create meaningful dialogues and cooperation with the science community.

Mention was also made that in light of the inter-disciplinary nature of environmental and sustainable crises, key organisations that are part of the UNEP network need to broaden their own scope of scientific work. The example that was given was IPCC which remains very much natural science based which is of course valid in regard to the analysis of the climate problems as environmental risks but leaves out the human behavioural factor of environmental sustainability in regard to both the causes of environmental risks and the factors

that could contribute to reduced Green House Gasses, GHGs, and to a sustainable future.

The science-policy cooperation should also be broadened for instance in regard to sustainable finance and investments needed to improve sustainable physical and social infrastructure. Traditional considerations of Return of Investment, ROI,²² for public investment remains mostly oriented towards financial gains at the expense of including estimations of negative externalities. For instance, should investments in physical environment infrastructure lead to social inequalities which in turn might generate long term environmental costs? The example given was advising governments

22 A calculation of the monetary value of an investment versus its cost.

about policy trade-offs and synergies of the 17 SDGs and particularly how to avoid policies which could lead to more income inequality.

Other experts pointed out that UNEP needs to add in its policy advice more attention to the legal and institutional frameworks which might limit the ability of governments to implement scientific advice if their laws and regulatory frameworks do not allow for quick implementation of scientific policy advice, for instance if new policies might need parliamentary approval or voting by a country's citizens.

Some experts suggested that UNEP explains better the findings and impact of scientific research to government officials and to other important political stakeholders. UNEP could publish research outcomes for non-scientific audiences, for instance government officials and opinion leaders, in shorter intervals and not only every 7 years when the much appreciated GEO is produced and made available. One suggestion was made that publications similar to the Earthwatch system Earth Watch which was stopped in 2005²³ could be re-introduced.

Policy dialogue between the environmental science community (natural and social sciences) and governments should start early with effective education through modern teaching methods including digital platforms that could also give access to the public at large that is interested in increasing their understanding of the inter-connectedness between the environment and human behaviour. Some experts suggested a democratisation of knowl-

edge and explanation of what and how science can partner with society in making the world a less risky place in regard to nature based risks and crises.

4. UNEP: Incubator of environmental conventions & institutions

UNEP has made major contributions to the field of environmental science and to the United Nation system at large. All experts expressed appreciation of what UNEP has been able to achieve and to live up to its mission which is to provide leadership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing and enabling nations and their peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

Over the last 50 years, UNEP has played a major role in initiating and facilitating new conventions and institutions which have a bearing on important aspects of environmental sustainability. Table 2 below provides a chronology of UNEP's contribution in the field of treaty making, negotiating conventions and laying the foundations for new institutions.

UNEP has acted as an incubator of new legal and administrative solutions to combat a multitude of environmental crises. These new conventions and institutions are the outcome of scientific research and corresponding policy making by member countries. The question was raised by experts related to the overall science strategy and role of UNEP. Should it remain an incubator or a host for basic and ap-

²³ Established in 1972 at the UN Conference on the Human Environment as an assessment of the state of the global environment. Earthwatch coordination was later a service UNEP provided to the entire United Nations system in accordance with UN General Assembly resolutions, and later with Agenda 21 and decisions of the former Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). It also served as co-task manager with UN DESA for chapter 40 of Agenda 21: "Information for decision-making". The United Nations System-wide Earthwatch mechanism continued work from 1996 and was a broad UN initiative to coordinate, harmonize and catalyse environmental observation activities among all UN agencies for integrated assessment purposes. It ceased operations in 2005. <https://unepgrid.ch/en/activity/201>

plied research of environmental science and policy-making within its own headquarters thereby accumulating know-how in house or should it continue to support other IOs and IGOs and their environmental initiatives?

Arguments in favour of continued decentralisation is due to the fact that UNEP was seen to be too close to several international organisations, governmental and others, that were highly influential (in regard to know-how and financial means). The example given by an expert was

the location of the UNEP office in Geneva close to the global nexus of the chemical industry with health related issues. Other experts highlighted the importance of UNEP's headquarter being located in Nairobi, in the Global South, which gives greater access to governments and stakeholders in regions where environmental resources are located. What was stated as missing is a review and re-assessment of what UNEP's role could or should be - incubator or producer of scientific knowledge related to environmental sustainability.

Table 2: Non-exhaustive International Environmental Instruments Initiated or Incubated by the UNEP 1972-2022 (in chronological order)

International Environmental Instruments (by chronological order)	Date	Key Actor(s)	Secretariat/ HQs Location
Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (16 June 1972)	1972	CSOs	
The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands	1972	Civil Society and UNEP	Gland, Switzerland
CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora)	1973	UNEP IUCN	Initially in Bonn, Germany (1975) now Geneva, Switzerland
PACD (Plan of Action to Combat Desertification)	1977	UNEP/The Secretariat for the Consultative Group for Desertification Control (1978)	Nairobi, Kenya
World Charter for Nature	1982	UNEP, UN General Assembly	IUCN Portal
the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Agreement on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources	1985	ASEAN	Kuala Lumpur, Indonesia
CMS (Convention on Migratory Species)	signed in 1979, in force since 1983	UNEP	Bonn, Germany



International Environmental Instruments (by chronological order)	Date	Key Actor(s)	Secretariat/ HQs Location
Protection of the Ozone Layer: Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, a protocol to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer agreed to in 1985-87	1987	Work started in 1975 by UNEP. - WHO on Melanoma. - Agricultural experts on crops and the immune system of all species	Headquarters in Montreal, Canada
IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)	1988	UNEP, WMO	Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland
The Basel Convention	1989	UNEP, FAO, NGOs	Joint Secretariat with Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions since 2013 in Geneva, Switzerland
UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change)	1992	UNEP	Headquarters in Bonn, Germany
UNCBD, The Convention on Biological Diversity (Agenda 21)	1992	UNEP	Headquarters in Montreal, Canada
The Aichi biodiversity Targets (2011-2020)	2012		
UNCCD (Convention to Combat Desertification) (Binding)	1994	UNEP & UNECE	Bonn, Germany with a subsidiary office in New York, USA
Aarhus Convention (Binding) The UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice	1998	UNECE	Geneva, Switzerland
The Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade	1998	UNEP	Joint Secretariat with Basel and Stockholm Conventions since 2013 in Geneva, Switzerland
AEWA (Africa-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement) under the framework of CMS	1999	UNEP	Nairobi, Kenya
The Earth Charter	2000	CSOs with global consultation & UNESCO	Based in San Jose, Costa Rica

International Environmental Instruments (by chronological order)	Date	Key Actor(s)	Secretariat/ HQs Location
The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants	2001	UNEP/ IUCN/ NGOs	Joint Secretariat with Rotterdam and Basel Conventions since 2013 in Geneva, Switzerland
Biosafety Protocol CBC	2000	UN	Montreal, Canada
The Rio+20 Outcome Document, the Future we Want in 2012	2012		Negotiated in Rio, Brazil, follow-up by the UN-HLPF by UNDESA, New York, USA
Green Economy - Green Finance Initiative - Responsible Banking Initiative	2012	UNEP	Nairobi. Kenya
IPBES (The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services)	2012	UNEP, UN Family, NGOs	Panama City at the start, now Bonn, Germany
the Minamata Convention on Mercury	2013	UNEP Office	Geneva, Switzerland
Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean	2015	UNECE & ECLAC (secretariat ESCAZU)	Santiago de Chile
Expanded Aarhus Convention to include UN-LAC countries and Japan	2021	UNEA-UNEP	Geneva, Switzerland
UNEA 5 outcome resolution on plastics	2022	UNEP	Nairobi, Kenya With the first negotiations to develop a convention to ban plastics in Montevideo, Uruguay

The results of the non-exhaustive list of table 2 starting in 1972 indicate the following: The location of secretariats of environmental treaties and institutions is spread as follows: Geneva (9), Nairobi (4), Bonn (4), and Montreal (3) KL (1) and other locations (4).

Discussion of findings

Science is one of the three core functions of UNEP. In this context, UNEP is to carry out the following activities:

1. To provide scientific information and background for decision making.
2. To provide political guidance for political decisions
3. To catalyse actions among some key IOs, such as UNDP and other members of the Environment Management Group²⁴

UNEP's record in these regards, according to the information communicated by the participants of the semi-structured interviews is mixed.

Through its GEOs, UNEP has curated the cutting edge of scientific knowledge and provided state of the art analysis to the policy community for policy making and political decisions. However, when it comes to catalysing actions among some of the key global organisations and to ensure environmental policy coherence, UNEP was not able to maintain its coordination function and address the social-economic and ecological linkages throughout the UN system.

Major progress has been made in the past 50 years of UNEP's life span. These successes unfortunately remain mostly in the domain of norm-setting and international agreements, less in the actual arresting of deteriorating environmental conditions at global and local levels.

Three scenarios could be proposed concerning the role and function of UNEP and its contribution to the policy deliberation on environmental sustainability over the years.

Scenario 1: UNEP has been successful in its natural science-based advocacy and awareness raising leading to broadening of systemic understanding of the planetary crisis and possible solutions. The remaining work is therefore more for the social sciences/human science and economics to ensure the change of minds and hearts of the people and daily behavior and practices. The paramount question regarding this transition within this scenario is how to implement the environmental policies in a transversal manner and to achieve behavioral change at scale. Therefore, the task of UNEP at the next phase of environmental including sustainable development issues needs to focus ever more on interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach and pursue problem solving at socio-ecosystem interface.

Attempts to bridge the silos and shed lights on the academic disciplinary blind spots could be a major challenge and call for ongoing dialogue and reforms on the side of science. Similarly, inter-ministerial coordination and policy coherence regarding national development plans and international development governance needs to be high on the UNEP agenda who could serve as intermediary between these communities of interest (governments, business, civil society, academics). Therefore, the central role of UNEP should be to act as the intermediary that fosters dialogue and

²⁴ Established in 2001 and chaired by the Executive Director of UNEP and supported by a secretariat provided by UNEP in Geneva, Switzerland, the UN Environment Management Group (EMG) is a system-wide coordination body on environment and human settlements. The EMG membership consists of 51 specialized agencies, programmes and organs of the UN including the secretariats of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements. The EMG identifies issues on the international environmental agenda that warrant cooperation, and finds ways of engaging its collective capacity in coherent management responses to those issues, Civil society can be invited to its meetings (from the EMG website), <https://unemg.org/>



ROLAC Project “Support to Protected Areas in Mesoamerica” © UNEP / PNUMA

collaboration within a community (science or policy) and among communities (science-policy). The convening power of UNEP with its unique mandate is a key factor of effectiveness in influencing the dominant narratives in favor of radical changes.

Scenario 2. UNEP has been to some extent successful in trying to incrementally stop the environmental and climate deterioration. What remains to be resolved and recorded in these treaties to this effect are the more wicked and entrenched long-term challenges that require greater knowledge and deeper insight from environmental and social sciences including long-term commitment from the science-policy community. The role of UNEP should therefore be centered on closing the knowledge and data gap while continuing its role of curating, interpreting and translating scientific knowledge and finding ways to implement this by

the policy making and action oriented resolutions on environmental problems. It is also the role and function of the UNEP to identify incentives and pressures to sustain the needed political will in tackling these wicked systemic problems that continue to cause the deterioration of the planetary health. Science diplomacy needs to become a major tool for influence at the UNEP.

Scenario 3. Environmental issues are seen as part of the total ecological system and cannot be resolved in isolation. Other linking issues concerning the green economy, consumer and producer behavior and specific stakeholders are gaining momentum in formulating mitigation strategies. Demands for policy synergy and policy clear trade-offs between the economic, social and environmental objectives are needed to solve these complex problems. UNEP in this new operational context has start-

ed to shift towards an integration of interdisciplinary issues by looking at the synergy of environmental science with social and human science as well as economic science. The rise of sustainability science and its ensuing values and principles will play a higher hand in determining the quality and direction of future scientific inquiry and help the policy makers to address more pressing environmental disasters and greater vulnerability. The role of UNEP in this regard would be to work with the frontier science and technology in forestalling and preventing emerging sustainability challenges. This could include collecting and generating data to assess untested technologies such as geo-engineering.

Regardless of which scenario is closer to the reality, one thing is clear: For the world to be more effective in managing its environmental and sustainability crisis, efficient and effective knowledge management undergird impactful policies and actions. In this context, international organizations and specialized agencies need to be the custodians of both explicit and tacit knowledge. Perhaps one way of approaching this complex issue during the next decades is to intensify and upgrade the position of the Environment Management Group as the coordinator of environmental and sustainability policies within the UN itself. To do so, allowing relevant civil society organisations to participate more often, could be an innovative and pro-active step in this direction.

Enabling science and society to co-design environmental spaces and processes

Thinking outside the box, one can also imagine that besides curating or initiating new scientific research, UNEP might also want to initiate and spearhead more pilot applied research projects. By working with other societal actors closely, translation of science discoveries to local contexts could happen more often and with less interruptions. Such working relations or interfaces could be achieved through

more co-designing of solutions and partnership for actions.

Local residents and institutions could and should also be content producers and not just recipients of information by scientific organisations suggesting how to solve and manage environmental crises. Through active participation of local communities, climate science and related policies and regulations would generate more meaning and relevance for society.

UNEP cannot be expected to intervene at the local level. Yet, it could facilitate and help the creation of sustained local spaces for dialogue and co-design processes through promoting partnerships between science institutions with schools and other concerned organisations making an effort similar to that of UNESCO in promoting sustainability through educational efforts.

One of the key scaffolding structures for this effort is to adapt existing climate science information and data portals to fit the understanding and interests of the non-scientist community that plays a key role in knowledge transmission and knowledge adoption.

Creation of the co-design spaces and partnerships with citizens through effective scientific intermediaries would support a greater scale of transformation than is currently the case. Advising policy makers about how to mitigate and prevent the negative impact of destructive environmental practices is only one side of the coin. The missing link or the other side, for a successful implementation of pro-environmental policies, is understanding and support by society without which it is unlikely that policy adoption will succeed.

The social tipping point is insufficiently discussed in UNEP's environment including other deliberations, such as with bio-diversity loss, chemical pollution and climate change. A few well-placed centres or labs that would allow for



Mr. Green Kenya plastic recycling plant © UNEP / Ahmed Nayim Yussuf

experimental ways to excel in transdisciplinary “testing” of sustainable development solutions fitting diverse regional contexts could be part of a phase III development of UNEP. Such action-oriented research could also support the political interest for stop-gap actions and for moving onto sustainable pathways. Both are in short supply at the moment especially in resource constrained countries.

Future Outlook: Technologies and New Possibilities for Knowledge Production

As the leading global environmental authority, UNEP is the custodian for 25 SDG indicators – across SDG Goals 6, 8, 12, 14, 15 and 17. These indicators cover topics related to resource management and protection of water, marine and terrestrial ecosystems, circularity, and environmentally sound management of chemicals and waste. Nevertheless, it is worth to remember

that environment underpins the attainment of all other SDG Goals. For example, pollution greatly affects human health, be that water or air pollution. Yet, data to reflect the nexus effect of the intersections are often missing.

UNEP works with Member States on SDG methodologies and with national statistical authorities to collect, review and report SDG data to the SDG Global database. UNEP promotes the use of data for analysis, and preparation of the annual progress reports. In this process, UNEP has incorporated modern digital technologies, such as smart sensors, mobile phones, internet of things and computing capabilities in order to create more timely, nuanced and targeted analysis and knowledge base. Emerging tools that have been explored and experimented on, include citizen science, big data and data analytics, as well as traditional of indigenous knowledge. These new data

sources will complement the traditional means of data collection and offer novel opportunities for future environmental monitoring and assessments. Needless to say, these tools and new approaches will also strengthen the capacities of UNEP in monitoring large scale data sources, mitigating its funding restrictions, educating in much greater number the public about environmental issues and policies and using local knowledge to generate more sustainable local solutions.

In addition, UNEP facilitates avenues for cooperation between the UN, governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, businesses, and civil society organizations in order to initiate joint commitments and promote Multilateral Environmental Agreements.²⁵ Greater access to data and related analytics and modelling can better promote such collaboration where power imbalance exists and interests diverge. The brokering role of UNEP to bring about a whole-of-society approach to environmental and sustainability issues could be much enhanced by the future deployment of data science and other knowledge technology.

Fighting misinformation and fake news

For the scientists, especially the young ones, few opportunities exist to obtain funding for longer term and systemic research which would provide possibilities to engage in research on future risks. At the same time, the proliferation of scientific publications of varying stringency and quality generate a fragmentation of the environmental and sustainability fields of science making it more difficult to separate important from less important journal articles.

Secondly, the proliferation of falsehood through the internet and social media has cre-

ated an anti-science backlash. Citizens are in need of good basic science education in order to be able to separate fake news from serious science publications. A large portion of contemporary society is not equipped with sufficient critical thinking and becomes easily prey to sensationalism or different forms of fallacies. With the support of the Supreme Court, India is now implementing a policy to embed sustainability curriculum into all levels of schooling.

Thirdly, the sheer volume of information makes it impossible for individual citizens to fact check and validate the information that they receive from serious but also from sensationalist media products. Time constraints also make it more difficult to have enough time to undertake fact checking of today's media outlet.

Technology and hopefully artificial intelligence with the oversight provided by scientific groups could help build fact checking portals to support "real" and "truthful" evidence of published materials. UNEP could help by providing fact checking sites and observation centers.

Visualization, interactive database and modelling – democratizing scientific tools

The availability of other digital tools also makes it possible to democratize data science. Visualization is a powerful communication tool to convey complex information. It is more persuasive than words.

Besides using visualizations, interactive databases could allow interested parties to apply his/her own preferences in order to make chronological and terrestrial comparisons of environmental news. Citizens need to be given access to such powerful analytic tools and opportunities to follow debates on the environment and on sustainability where discussions

25 UNEP (2019) "UNEP and the SDGs", Nairobi, <https://www.unep.org/unep-and-sdgs>



UNEP@50 - World Environmental situation room © UNEP / Cyrill Villemiaín

are held about how costs need to be shared and who will benefit most and what will contribute to the much needed and urgent transformations of the environment.

Science-Policy Interface: searching for the right strategy

UNEP has grappled with the challenge of finding the best approach to ensure an effective Science-Policy Interface. In 2017, UNEP published a study titled “Strengthening the Science-Policy Interface- A Gap Analysis” which was initiated by the then UNEP Executive Secretary Erik Solheim²⁶. The executive summary highlighted several key areas needing improvements and the first mentioned was improving coordination of different actors around the globe observing that scientific evidence is not often understood or used by pol-

icy makers and that science and policy were at a crossroad. The solution proposed was to making science-policy interface more dynamic while engaging the right actors in achieving the SDGs...

Mrs Inger Andersen who succeeded Mr. Solheim was also concerned about the science-policy interface and exclaimed with the closing words of her presse release titled „A new science-policy interface for UNEP at 50” on 3 March 2022²⁷ that

(In a nutshell), we must rapidly develop specific and relevant solutions through the engagement of diverse stakeholders – and get those solutions out there quickly through real-time digital tools. If we do this, science will become more accessible, more trusted, more democratic, and therefore more use-

26 <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/strengthening-science-policy-interface-gap-analysis>

27 <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/speech/new-science-policy-interface-unep-50>

ful. The whole of society will be involved in producing and acting on science. Decision makers will have a wider range of solutions, quickly produced, upon which to act. We will brighten the light of science so that it serves as a beacon for all to follow, in policy and action, as we walk the path towards ending the triple planetary crisis.

Taking a further step towards developing specific and relevant solutions quickly through real-time digital tools, two divisions of UNEP were renamed on 4th February 2023. The former Science Division is now named Early Warning and Assessment Division and the former Economics Division is now named the Industry and Economy Division²⁸.

The renaming can have positive but also some more risky implications. Focusing on Early Warning and Assessments can cut the time of bringing to the attention of policy makers and the public at large that dangerous developments are in the making needing immediate attention (e.g. typhoons, tsunamis). At the same time, one can wonder whether the longer term but equally crucial environmental developments are no longer being followed by UNEP (e.g. warming of glaciers and oceans or emergence of plant diseases). In addition, shorter term and longer-term environment threatening development affect each other and need to be continuously watched.

Regarding the renaming of the former economics division to Industry and Economic Division puts emphasis on the industry seemingly leaving out the rural-agricultural part of the economy and also seemingly excluding the whole interaction between financial mar-

kets on supply of commodities and other macro-economic impacts on the real economy.

By becoming more specific, the larger scope of science and economics might become very narrow generating on one hand more application oriented solutions while at the same time running the risk of losing sight on the larger realities covered by science and economics.

Conclusion

To conclude, the authors quote the reminder from Ms. Inger Andersen, executive director of UNEP that “we need a nimbler and more inclusive science-policy interface – one that will accelerate effective policies and follow-up action”.²⁹

It is our view that this nimble and more inclusive science-policy interface, needs to place society in the centre of the current discussions and must fight to stop environmental deterioration in order to achieve a healthy planet for healthy people. It is our collective belief that together we can make it possible that wellbeing for all could be realised in the not too distant future. Science diplomacy creates space for dialogue and exchanges of views that eventually will lead to the discovery and support of shared interests and shared commitments to healthy environment and sustainable futures. This needs to be a 360-degree engagement. Through the combined forces of innovation, science and deployment of new technology, and accumulated social capital, UNEP in its next phase of development will continue to make its unique contributions to society and sustainable environmental futures.

28 Memo dated 4 February 2023 by Radhika Ochalik, Secretary of Governing Bodies, Director, Governance Affairs Office, UNEP

29 Inger Andersen (2022) „A new Science-Policy Interface for UNEP at 50” - <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/speech/new-science-policy-interface-unep-50>

You have just read a Legacy Paper, one of five, which is an integral element of the report: **The People's Environment Narrative** celebrating 50 years of work between civil society and UNEP to safeguard the environment. The report is created, published and owned by Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future, SF, and can be downloaded in its entirety for free at:

www.stakeholderforum.org
www.unep.org

Section Four: the five Legacy Papers

UNEP, science and the environment – a necessary partnership to save the planet

Authors: Raymond Saner & Lichia Yiu

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Illustrations and graphic design by María Andrea Miranda Serna

Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future

Company no. 05243470 / Registered in England and Wales and Utrecht, the Netherlands

Registered Office: 2 The Links, Herne Bay, Kent, CT6 7GQ, UK

www.stakeholderforum.org

info@stakeholderforum.org

twitter @stakeholders

linkedin @stakeholderforum



Section Five: Outcomes by UNEP



Opening of the UNEP Global Major Group and Stakeholders Forum prior to UNEA-2, Nairobi, Kenya. 2016.
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Regional Reports from Multi-Stakeholder Consultations for Stockholm+50 – A Comparative Analysis

by **Isis Alvarez**, Chief Programme Officer of
the Towards Stockholm+50 Project, Stakeholder Forum

A series of regional consultations organized by UNEP & Global opportunities for SDGs (GO4SDGS) took place between April & May 2022 in a virtual format. Participants representing a diversity of stakeholders, including youth, Indigenous Peoples, governments, and non-governmental organizations, came together to identify key messages from the region to take forward to the Stockholm+50 conference. Five comprehensive regional reports reflecting the rich content of the discussions in [Asia and the Pacific](#), [Latin America and the Caribbean](#), [Africa](#), [Europe and North America](#), and [West Asia](#), were published online¹.

We initially present a brief summary of consultation proceedings, and a further analysis of regional reports thus showing the convergence of some of the key messages emerging from each region but also the specific environmental issues that each region currently needs to address. Overall, although the consultation process tried to follow a standard format, some regions adjusted some of the themes and methods to fit their needs and aspirations, therefore, some of the consultations in specific regions seemed to have a more participative format, whereas other regions seemed to have conventional top-down approach dominated by panelists' input.

We present a comparative analysis of key input from the regions that we hope could benefit decision-makers, civil society and other non-state stakeholders that wish to continue the path for a sustainable future. Although Stockholm+50 failed to bring any political weight to the current environmental discussions and resumed into a mere commemorative event, civil society organizations, the indigenous peoples, and youth movements, among other active participants, feel that it provided momentum to revitalize the long overdue fight for a better and cleaner planet, where humans recognize our responsibilities in the multiple crises we face today, and take effective measures to address them. From fossil fuel phase-out to declaring 'ecocide' as a crime in international law, stakeholders demand accountability from private companies as well as their governments, and call for stronger articulation of efforts to fulfill environmental commitments, among others.

¹ Each full report can be accessed separately via <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/regions-highlight-development-priorities-ahead-of-stockholm50/>

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

1. Asia and the Pacific Regional Multi-Stakeholder Consultation for Stockholm+50²

The Asia and the Pacific Regional Multi-stakeholder Consultation for Stockholm+50 took place over two days in a virtual format that allowed for a lively, fluid conversation involving over 300 hundred participants from around the region; the program was explicitly participatory and gave space to a multitude of unique voices in productive, solutions-focused dialogue. The wide cross-section of ideas discussed mirrored the diversity of the Asia-Pacific region itself, both in terms of its people and the challenges it faces going forward.

Participants were reminded that the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm had placed environmental concerns at the forefront of the international agenda, but that 50 years after the first conference in Stockholm, the environment is much worse off than it was then and still far from achieving the healthy environment envisioned; regression against the SDG targets and lack of progress on the environment, regional challenges of air pollution, and the risk of mass extinction of species were noted.

“Stockholm+50 may be the last chance the world has for meaningful change; there are “systemic” barriers to progress, including increased sovereign debt, militarization, illicit financial flows, shrinking ODA and access to trade, and investor-state dispute settlement clauses in trade agreements that have increased “corporatization” in the region.”

- Wali Heider Farmers Constituency and Co-chair of Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement - Mechanism, Pakistan

2. Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Multi-Stakeholder Consultation for Stockholm+50³

The Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Regional Multi-Stakeholder Consultation took place on April 5-6, 2022, seeking to bring together regional stakeholders to, among other things, give voice to and facilitate engagement of as large a number of stakeholders as possible; ensure a bottom-up mapping of key elements and actions needed to safeguard the human environment in the 21st century in the context of each country's and each region's needs. The regional consultation was held on the theme, “Towards Stockholm+50: A Healthy Planet and Prosperity for All”. Participants recognized the urgent need for concrete and immediate action to protect the planet through solidarity and collaboration, ensuring that all groups, including youth, women, Indigenous Peoples, and other vulnerable groups, are fully engaged and involved not only in the discussions but also in implementation efforts.

“At this critical moment, we have a choice of breakthrough or breakdown. We can either continue down the path of the last 50 years or we can collectively pause and move forward with solidarity and collective actions for a better future; this is a call to raise voices to share ideas, and start building new narratives and the legacy that the region wants to offer to Stockholm+50”.

- Jacqueline Alvarez, Regional Director and Representative, UNEP

2 https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/39991/S50_APC.pdf

3 https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/40000/S50_LAC.pdf



A picture made available on 21 May 2015 shows an Indonesian Navy ship blowing up a foreign fishing vessel caught fishing illegally in the waters near Bitung, North Sulawesi, 20 May 2015 © UNEP / EPA / IMANK

3. Africa Regional Multi-Stakeholder Consultation for Stockholm+50⁴

The Africa Regional Multi-stakeholder Consultation took place from 12-13 April 2022. Participants underscored that the region must take charge of its destiny and map a path towards achieving the SDGs; they also identified the main actions to accelerate Africa's progress towards a healthy planet and prosperity for all, including environmental and sustainability education, progressing sustainable agri-food, and adopting a circular economy approach. Many reiterated the need for local solutions that include integration of indigenous and traditional knowledge, consumption of local produce, and encouraging trade among African countries.

“Stockholm+50 will provide the world with an opportunity to reflect on progress since the 1972 Stockholm Conference and to envision what is needed to create a better and healthier world. None of us is safe until all of us are safe thus the need to strengthen international cooperation to protect the environment and cohesion in the implementation of all multilateral environmental agreements, with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) playing a governing and coordinating role”.

- Chris Kiptoo, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forestry

⁴ https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/40001/S50_Africa.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

4. Europe and North America Regional Multi-Stakeholder Consultation for Stockholm+50

The Europe and North America Regional Multi-stakeholder Consultation took place on 5 May 2022 in a virtual format. Main messages: 1) need to phase out fossil fuel subsidies in order to transition away from reliance on fossil fuels towards a more sustainable world; 2) a declaration recognizing “the rights of nature,” as well as for governments to recognize “ecocide” as an international crime; 3) Throughout the consultation, participants underlined the need to protect environmental defenders, as well as the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

— *Top three actions that can accelerate progress towards a healthy planet and prosperity for all*

Protection and restoration of nature and ecosystems, taking bold action now to ensure a healthier planet, and hope for Stockholm+50 to achieve renewed and more ambitious commitments.

“There’s hope that Stockholm+50 will provide a space to bring together “all topics” in the spirit of strengthened multilateralism; the aim of the regional consultations is to ensure better implementation and interconnectivity.”

- Johanna Lissinger-Peitz, Ambassador, Ministry of Environment, Sweden.

5. West Asia Regional Multi-Stakeholder Consultation for Stockholm+50

The West Asia Regional Multi-stakeholder Consultation took place from 11-12 May 2022.

Participants highlighted issues of concern to the region, particularly relating to waste reduction and management, water resources management, sustainable agriculture, and poverty eradication.

They also made a variety of proposals on actions that should be taken to address the region’s challenges, with many emphasizing the need to enact and enforce laws relating to waste management and the protection of rights, and the need for behavioral change to implement a circular economy model. They called for engaging civil society organizations (CSOs), women, and youth in relevant actions.

“Late Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi spoke at the 1972 Stockholm Conference, and said “one cannot be truly human and civilized unless one looks upon not only all fellow-men but all creation with the eyes of a friend.” Now is the time for reflection and recovery, asking ourselves whether “we really are friends of nature.” According to global climate models, West Asia will experience a 20% reduction in rainfall over the next 50 years, we urge all, especially the youth, to work harder towards “a more precise strategy and greater determination and hope.”

- Sami Dimassi, Regional Director and Representative of UNEP for West Asia.



Kenneth Ize, one of the first designers supported by the African Fashion Fund, is giving back to communities across Ghana. Portable and packable looms have been donated to 130 villages to support women's cooperatives in weaving sustainable textiles © UNEP / African Fashion Fund

“Education should be the main focus since it is the root of many of the current issues, and policy discussions should include youth. Many of the goals discussed 50 years ago are still “active,” and translated into many agreements that are not well implemented. There’s a breach between environmental rights and their application in the region, particularly considering that many young people are afraid of demanding a healthy environment because of violence against environmental defenders”.

Alejandro Luque, Stockholm+50 Youth Task Force.

SECTION 2 – MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSIONS - PANEL/PLENARY ONE

Table 1. Comparative Multi-stakeholder Discussions Panel/Plenary One: Key messages for environmental action, vision, and priorities

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
<i>Reflecting on the 50 years of environmental action in Asia-Pacific and setting the vision for the next 50 years</i>	<i>Key messages and commitments for action</i>	<i>A summary of Africa's key environmental and sustainable development priorities from stakeholders</i>	<i>Key messages from the region</i>	<i>Reflections from West Asia on 50 years of environmental actions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Importance of collective action and stakeholder mobilization – Address conflicts of interest through both voluntary and binding forms of governance – Address the decades-old clash between environmental objectives and economic systems, which poses a “systemic” barrier to change – Global solutions to planetary problems – Breaking down sectoral silos – Recognizing indigenous and traditional knowledge systems, and incorporating them into solutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Education and youth engagement – Companies to implement solid reporting systems and review their supply chains – Preventing violence against environmental defenders – Promoting a more harmonious relationship with nature – Ending development focused on resource extraction and promoting a more holistic concept of development that provides for healthier conditions for people and the environment – Better protection of indigenous rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Work collectively “with one single voice” to achieve solutions for the many challenges of the region, as well as to hold governments accountable – Address the challenges facing small-scale farmers, who are mainly women and provide the most food – Adopt a multi-sectoral integration approach to implementing – Increase the role and participation of women in environmental policy and decision-making – Promote climate justice and provide enabling conditions to enhance implementation of climate change protection measures in LDCs, including by increasing climate adaptation finance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The world is capable of taking bold action now to ensure a healthier planet in the future – Integrated and coordinated approaches are needed to halt climate change and biodiversity loss – A declaration recognizing “the rights of nature,” as well as for governments to recognize “ecocide” as an international crime – High-impact sectors that drive climate change and biodiversity loss, such as food production and manufacturing, are also most affected by COVID-19 and must be urgently addressed – Gender-responsive environmental policies must be developed and strong support provided for grassroots women's movements to take part in the policymaking process. – Need to phase out fossil fuel subsidies in order to transition away from reliance on fossil fuels towards a more sustainable world (i.e. War in Ukraine) – There is a need to scale up finance, including through blended finance for MSMEs and combating illicit and harmful financial flows. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cooperation and collaboration between CSOs and governments, particularly in drafting legislation – Promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships for a green recovery – Taking the economy into account when promoting a green recovery – Limited seasons to ensure animal and fish stocks are not depleted – National initiatives, such as recycling and incineration, to help manage issues around garbage and waste – Early warning systems and disaster risk reduction plans – Citizens to use solar power and other renewable power sources – Reforming the energy sector to end reliance on fossil fuels and transition to renewable energy.

**Analysis → Multi-stakeholder discussions:
Key messages on environmental actions**

Key issues shared by two or more regions:

- Collective action
- Stakeholder & CSOs participation, particularly women and youth
- Accountability of the private sector and governments
- Recognizing human rights including indigenous peoples and women's rights
- Recognizing indigenous & traditional knowledge systems
- Transforming economic systems in line with environmental/sustainability goals
- Climate justice and ending reliance on fossil fuels including transitioning to renewable energies; making finance available
- Protection of environmental defenders

Main regional priorities:

- Africa - Climate justice and scaling-up finance
- Asia and the Pacific – Youth and intergenerational dialogue; environmental education and awareness raising
- Europe - Phasing out fossil fuels (in relation to the war in Ukraine)
- LAC - Stopping environmental defenders' murders and criminalization; reorienting current economic, social, and environmental trajectories to reach the SDGs
- West Asia – Garbage and waste; green energy transition and scaling-up finance



Sustainable fashion© UNEP / Nkwo Designs.

“Stockholm+50 comes at a time when there is an urgent need to address the root causes of the world’s unsustainable trajectory, including the profit- and market-driven, business-as-usual framework of the global capitalist economy. A wider understanding of intersectional power relations is critical for advancing women’s leadership and empowerment”.

**Wardarina, Asia Pacific Forum on Women,
Law and Development, Thailand.**

Table 2. Comparative Multi-stakeholder Discussions Panel/Plenary Two: REIMAGINE - Visions of the Future & Pathways for Sustainable Living

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
<i>REIMAGINE: Intergenerational [dialogue] visions of the future [and prosperity for all], Pathways for Sustainable Living under 1.5 degrees and a healthy planet</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensuring the future of work for youth will require a clean, healthy, sustainable environment – There is an urgent need to correct the world's economic, social, and environmental trajectories through a just and equitable transition – Intergenerational equity is paramount in addressing the triple crisis – Giving indigenous communities a platform to share their knowledge and practices, "in their own words" – Creating a new narrative for a positive vision of the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Stakeholder engagement, including youth engagement, at all levels – A reorientation from the present focus on economic growth to a focus on wellbeing, the inclusion of perspectives from different genders and races, and collaboration in community building – Renewed cooperation and trust building – Financial institutions to play an active role in scaling up sustainable development – Participatory actions among public and private actors – A "universal basic dividend," under which everyone will receive a share of the Earth's resources and benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Solutions to prevent youth exploitation by enacting laws that protect their labor rights – Promoting sustainable lifestyles among young people and changing regulations that prevent it – Consideration of social components such as health, education, poverty, and women and gender in discussions of sustainable development – Government support for activities such as regenerative agriculture, reducing electricity use, and organic farming – Historical marginalization of IPLCs thus the better implementation of policies in place to protect them from natural resource exploitation, land rights, and violence against environmental defenders – Importance of the "divestment movement"; shifting resources to sustainable investments – African societies' over-dependence on foreign aid; a goal for Africa deciding its own growth model based on traditional values (autonomy) 	– N.A.	– N.A.



World Environmental Day's cleanup and tree planting at Kibera informal settlement. Nairobi, Kenya. 2018 © UNEP

**Analysis → Multi-stakeholder discussions:
Visions of the future and pathways to sustainable living**

Key issues shared by two or more regions:

- Ensuring better jobs and labor rights for youth
- Correct and reorient the world's current trajectories that focus on economic growth, while integrating social components in sustainable development, especially in relation to gender
- Promoting sustainable lifestyles
- Support for a just transition including improved agricultural and energy-related practices and a financial architecture for securing sustainable investments
- Increased stakeholder participation especially improving IPLCs and youth participation at all levels

Main regional priorities:

- Africa- Foreign agendas have been historically imposed in the continent ("Africapitalism") without paying adequate attention to social components, including natural resources and their link to spiritual life; Africa needs to decide its own growth model based on traditional values rather than relying on models developed by others.
- Asia and the Pacific – Speed up progress to ensure a healthier planet in the future
- LAC - Remove inequalities (including extremes of poverty and wealth), and scale up efforts to respect and promote the implementation of the rights of children and youth

“The co-facilitators of the Working Group on Leadership Dialogue 3 on Renewal – accelerating the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development, highlighted the need to coordinate governance and bring the discussions of the original UN Conference on the Human Environment and Stockholm+50 to a common objective, and this Working Group provides a place to reflect on what has worked well and what needs to be done”.

**Working Group co-facilitator Pooja Rangaprasad, Society for International Development & Working Group co-facilitator Manjeet Dhakal,
Co-chair of the Least Developed Countries Group, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change**

Table 3. Comparative Multi-stakeholder Discussions - Parallel Working Group on Leadership Dialogue 1: REGENERATION: A healthy planet for the prosperity of all

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
<i>REGENERATION [REFLECTION]: (Actions for) A healthy planet for the prosperity of all</i>				
<p><i>Restoring and re-generating a positive relationship with nature:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Need to build capacity as industries (maritime) head toward decarbonization – Consider similar legislation (i.e. restore ecosystems by 2030 by the EU) – Shift to viewing nature as a unity of ecosystems, not just carbon sinks – Incorporate nature-based solutions in national action plans and financing schemes <p><i>Actions towards a healthy planet:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Integrate sustainability in the curriculum for education – Integrate and place a “sustainability purpose” at the core of politics, industry, and business, rather than as an add-on or peripheral to the main goals and values – Urgently address the transboundary issue of air pollution – Avoid haphazard planning (such as in road building, for example), and ensure there is better investment in planning ahead – Rethink consumption, including packaging, meat, and non-local or non-seasonal foods 	<p><i>Restoring and re-generating a positive relationship with nature:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increasing financing for developing countries – Providing training opportunities in natural resource management for developing countries – Including different types of knowledge in decision-making processes across governance levels – Reducing consumption patterns and being more mindful of the use of natural resources – Adopting sustainable practices and lifestyles – Increase awareness of people's environmental impact through public education – Promoting circularity and reuse policies in business. 	<p><i>Restoring and re-generating a positive relationship with nature:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Supporting education and promoting awareness raising of the need for sustainable development – Simplifying and redefining the discourse to reflect the local ecosystem without making it too technical – Supporting sustainable productive systems, such as organic farming and mixed farming approaches – Identifying the causes behind the “disconnect” from nature, rather than simply trying to reconnect with nature – Providing support to bridge the gap between nature and people and restore coexistence (i.e. conservation education and climate literacy for local communities and children) – Integrating local and traditional knowledge into national value systems – Promoting nature-based solutions and recognizing communities as custodians of nature by rewarding them – Increasing domestic climate finance – Supporting community-based adaptation, ecosystem-based adaptation, private sector involvement in nature restoration efforts, and incentive-driven landscape restoration 	<p><i>Transforming our relationship with nature:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Action to take care of all non-human species, especially endangered species – Adopting a declaration on the rights of nature – A focus on “total” sustainability, not “increased” sustainability – Recognizing the West's historical responsibility for climate change – Taking action on water management – Considering food, fuel, and rewilding areas on land and sea <p><i>Justice, inclusion, and intergenerational equity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Holding corporations accountable for their actions as their actions often breach human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples – Making the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment “implementable” at the national level – Specific reference to protecting environmental defenders – Implementing the rights established under the Aarhus Convention and Escazú Agreement – Inclusion of not just youth but also other vulnerable and marginalized communities and peoples, such as migrants, rural communities, and black, Indigenous, and people of color 	<p><i>Restoring and re-generating a positive relationship with nature:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enacting and implementing policies, laws, and regulations – Mandatory environmental projects in schools, and environmental and climate science in educational curricula – Enforcing an obligation to conduct environmental impact assessments – Following a human rights-based approach for a healthy planet – Promoting cross-sectoral environmental planning – Providing green funds for vulnerable countries and stakeholders and encouraging sustainable financing models – Engaging Major Groups in decision-making processes – Ensuring social inclusion – Stepping up climate and environmental protection ambition by accelerating action – Aligning all actions with integrated SDGs – Providing payments for ecosystem services to those who “inhabit and protect the environment” – Establishing tree planting projects – Improving the sustainability of agri-food systems and transforming the way food is produced and consumed – Promoting the “One Health” approach

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
REGENERATION [REFLECTION]: (Actions for) A healthy planet for the prosperity of all				
<p><i>On scaling up:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mobilize the masses to help implement good policies by educating people at an earlier age – Support better enforcement and regulation, especially of chemical pollution <p><i>On ensuring benefits for marginalized and vulnerable groups:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identify vulnerable and marginalized groups so that they can be supported as policies are developed – Reward Indigenous Peoples economically for their knowledge and work as guardians of nature – Governments should give equal rights to everyone to express their opinions so that policy-makers can incorporate those ideas into policy responses – Provide support to scientists from developing countries to participate in global meetings <p><i>On safeguarding the rights of people and nature:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Endorse international human rights instruments in domestic legislation – Make sure that people are aware of their rights and demand fulfillment – Fundamental to understand that people's rights emerge from nature, not the other way around – Criminalize the destruction of nature 	<p><i>On scaling up, policies and structures:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Funding civil society to push for the enforcement and improvement of environmental, climate, and human rights legislation and regulations – Ensuring that restoration policies and programs generate socioeconomic benefits for local populations – Raising awareness of the benefits that forests and other natural systems provide – Establishing food chain certifications and creating marketplaces for traditional production and seeds exchanges – Addressing plastic pollution and supporting those impacted by pollution <p><i>On ensuring benefits for marginalized and vulnerable groups:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Empowerment of marginalized and vulnerable groups through education and awareness raising – Advocacy and capacity building to incorporate these groups as part of the solution, including through policies that are designed with justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion – Policies and initiatives that increase knowledge transfer – Closing the gap between commitments and implementation – Promoting the diverse cultural values people place on landscapes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Facilitating youth engagement through workshops and training and creating a platform for youth to express their views – Protecting environmental defenders – Promoting and emphasizing sustainable livelihoods and livelihood improvements <p><i>On scaling-up:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Promoting Indigenous Peoples' rights, including land ownership – Adopting a human rights-based approach to environmental issues – Separating politics from environmental issues – Increasing investment in disaster risk reduction – Initiating a multi-stakeholder forum that involves the participation of all stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples, NGOs, and youth, to jointly take-action – Promoting "ecopreneurship" – Implementing and tracking adaptation policies and guidelines – Undertaking environmental restoration research to fill gaps in restoration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Respecting indigenous agriculture and food systems, and protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples – Working with grassroots people – Establishing an international crime of "ecocide" which would underpin all efforts to preserve and restore the health of the planet. This – would stop Indigenous Peoples and other environmental defenders from being viewed as criminals, as it would reverse the status quo where corporations are viewed as having the law on their side. It can be achieved by amending the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. <p><i>Producing and consuming sustainably and fighting pollution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A global phaseout of fossil fuel subsidies, which can be achieved at Stockholm+50 by countries adopting voluntary commitments to end new direct public support for the international fossil fuel energy sector by the end of 2022 – Decoupling growth from resources by promoting circular economy models – Shifting to plant-based diets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Implementing an integrated strategy for environmental protection <p><i>Regarding actions that can help scale up the change towards a healthy planet:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reducing toxic and other waste, including by making and enforcing relevant regulations – Providing guidelines, knowledge outputs, and best practices for the sustainable use of natural resources – "Rationalizing" water use for all sectors and reusing wastewater in agriculture to relieve pressure on fresh water resources – Developing and training leaders that can make good decisions and initiate the needed change – Establishing a carbon pricing mechanism – Raising awareness of food production, and promoting access to and affordability of sustainable and healthy diets while reducing food loss and waste – Investing in access to energy-efficient and climate-smart technologies for small producers in agri-food value chains – Promoting and investing in recycling and reuse across food systems – Include green jobs and encourage youth to work in the environmental field – Providing environmentally-friendly options for countries affected by conflict

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
REGENERATION [REFLECTION]: (Actions for) A healthy planet for the prosperity of all				
<p><i>On new or prioritized metrics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Track progress towards a healthier planet using a happiness index, since this incorporates aspects like health and wellbeing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reinforcing the role of environmental justice – Better distribution of benefits among and acknowledgment of marginalized groups such as Indigenous women – Landscape restoration, which can positively affect tenure and land rights for many IPLCs, and landowners – Promoting social organization in order to monitor progress, demand improvements, and denounce abuses <p><i>On safeguarding the rights of people and nature:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Recognizing Maroon Communities as Indigenous Peoples – Eliminating corruption, creating networks, accessibility, and social banks, and giving a voice to local communities – Listening to those most affected in the territories, noting that public policies sometimes work against local communities – Acknowledging the importance of traditional knowledge – Ensuring active and meaningful participation of “culturally relevant” groups, such as women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples, in decision-making processes – Creating and implementing projects with youth and other groups that educate about democratic values, human rights, diversity, and citizenship. 	<p><i>On ensuring benefits for marginalized and vulnerable groups:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Respectfully engaging with IPLCs to better understand the risks they face – Preparing actions at the local level that provide co-benefits such as community empowerment and sustainability programs – Providing vulnerable groups with financial incentives when they engage in sustainable management practices – Establishing good governance and addressing the underlying causes of environmental degradation – Putting marginalized and vulnerable groups at the forefront of developing policies and designing initiatives to restore nature – Educating those at the grassroots about their role and possible contribution – Utilizing the Congo Basin Blue Fund – Adopting sustainable agricultural practices – Involving and supporting Indigenous Peoples’ engagement in the preservation of ecosystems by documenting their relationship with nature – Ensuring good soil health through regenerative agriculture 	<p><i>Ways to support sustainability through finance, technology, education, and capacity building:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Better holistic scientific assessments, integrating both social and natural sciences, for planetary boundaries to better inform global governance – A globally fair and sustainable product liability insurance regime to accelerate the dissemination of relevant technologies – Shifting subsidies from large-scale agriculture to smallholder agriculture – Addressing the impacts of corruption and illicit financial flows – Deploying green digital solutions – Aligning financial flows and providing financing for a low-carbon, climate-resilient pathway – Teaching children gender equality – “Greening” education and training to support the switch to green and circular economies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Implementing the objectives of the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict <p><i>On ensuring benefits for marginalized and vulnerable groups:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Advocacy support for marginalized groups – Tailored capacity-building and awareness-raising programs on the SDGs – A safe environment for members of vulnerable groups to share their thoughts and concerns – Provision of information and data to vulnerable groups to enable them to make informed decisions – Using social media to help marginalized groups – Regional, national, and local platforms for the exchange of best practices among vulnerable groups – Proper grievance mechanisms – Provision of housing to vulnerable groups and protection of their property and livelihoods, enshrined in law – Green job opportunities

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
<i>REGENERATION [REFLECTION]: (Actions for) A healthy planet for the prosperity of all</i>				
		<p><i>On safeguarding the rights of people and nature:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strong policies and monitoring and implementation measures <p><i>On new or prioritized metrics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Areas under conservation agriculture and areas left for natural regeneration – Required levels of socioeconomic support through for-profit and non-profit organizations – The number of policies formulated to support regenerative production systems – The number of bankable projects with youth involvement – Adoption levels of climate-resilient agriculture and regenerative agriculture strategies – The percentage of forest cover and success levels of restored ecosystems – The reduction in climate change-related health problems – SDG indicators and post-2020 global biodiversity framework indicators. 	<p><i>Structural issues and policy coherence:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A global framework for strengthening international legislation and law with targets, indicators, and a follow-up process – Addressing underlying structural problems, by using the war in Ukraine as an opportunity to transition away from unsustainable practices such as overreliance on fossil fuels – Making international high seas a “legal, political, and administrative entity,” regulating usage, passage, and activities, with a direct ability to sanction – Emphasizing the importance of subnational action. 	<p><i>On safeguarding the rights of nature and people:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – More opportunities, financial support, and information and data – National legislation to guarantee human rights as well as the rights of nature – Transparency, participatory planning, and multi-stakeholder engagement, such as by including local communities in the protection and management of protected areas – Education and awareness raising on women's and children's rights among women, and mothers and their children – Stabilizing and enhancing the economy and enhancing poverty eradication efforts <p><i>On new or prioritized metrics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The environmental or carbon footprint – The amount of money spent on climate mitigation and adaptation or on environmental policies generally – The level of efforts to achieve climate security – Legislation-related indicators – The SDGs.

Analysis → Multi-stakeholder discussions:
LD1 – Regeneration: A healthy planet and prosperity for all

During the first session of the Leadership Dialogues, most regions addressed all of the following subthemes based on a set of questions prepared by the organizers: *Restoring and regenerating a positive relationship with nature; actions that can help scale up the change towards a healthy planet; how marginalized and vulnerable groups can benefit from policies and initiatives designed to restore a more sustainable and resilient relationship with nature; safeguarding the rights of nature and people, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities, environmental defenders, women, youth, and future generations; new or prioritized metrics and indicators for monitoring progress towards a healthier and more prosperous planet; structural issues and policy coherence; ways to support sustainability through finance, technology, and education and capacity building; producing and consuming sustainably and fighting pollution; Justice, inclusion, and intergenerational equity.*

Key issues shared by two or more regions:

1. Focus on Education & Awareness Raising:

- Introducing environmental education early in public/curricula covering sustainable development, climate science, circular economy, etc. while raising awareness of the benefits that natural resources provide vs. people's impact on them, including from activities related to food production and consumption, deforestation, and waste management, among others.
- Provide opportunities to access education to all, including local communities, women, children and youth, and other vulnerable and marginalized groups focusing on a rights-based approach such as issues of gender equality, and promoting peoples' participation in environmental projects.

2. Strive for Sustainable Living:

- Improving, promoting, and adopting sustainable livelihoods and lifestyles, including supporting sustainable productive systems, such as agri-food system policies and practices; raising awareness of the true cost of food production and consumption, the need for healthy diets and the urgent need to transform the way food is produced which should benefit both consumers, small-producers, and the environment; reusing wastewater in agriculture to relieve pressure on fresh water resources.
- Increase in policies formulated to support regenerative production systems such as in climate-resilient agriculture and regenerative agriculture strategies; shifting subsidies from large-scale agriculture to smallholder agriculture and organic farming, areas for conservation agriculture and areas left for natural regeneration, establishing food chain certifications and creating marketplaces for traditional production and seeds exchanges, etc.
- Respecting indigenous agriculture and food systems.
- Addressing underlying structural problems for environmental degradation, and providing guidelines, knowledge outputs, and best practices for the sustainable use of natural resources.
- Improved water management: "Rationalizing" water use for all sectors.
- Green jobs.

3. Rethink Consumption:

- Reducing consumption patterns and being more mindful in the use of natural resources including impacts from plastic pollution, increased meat, and non-local or non-seasonal foods; decoupling growth from resources to promote circular economy models and "ecopreneurship", among others.

4. Nature-based Solutions and Stewards of Nature:

- Promoting nature-based solutions including in national action plans and financing schemes.
- Recognizing Indigenous Peoples and local communities' efforts to protect the environment and providing them with proper incentives for their knowledge and work as custodians of nature.
- Integrating local and traditional knowledge, and all different types of knowledge, into national value systems including in decision-making processes across governance levels.

5. Financing:

- Increasing financing for developing countries including climate finance and green funds.
- Encouraging sustainable financing models including by aligning financial flows and providing financing for a low-carbon, climate-resilient pathway.

6. Human Rights:

- Adopting a human rights-based approach for a healthy planet.
- Endorse international human rights instruments in domestic legislation in order to guarantee human rights as well as the rights of nature.
- Providing different kinds of support for vulnerable and marginalized groups, such as women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, in order to ensure social inclusion and meaningful participation, making sure that people are aware of their rights and demand fulfillment through policies aimed at restoring nature, that are co-designed with justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Ensuring that environmental restoration policies and programs generate socio-economic benefits for local populations.
- Holding corporations accountable for their actions which often breach human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

- Protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples; recognizing and rewarding them for their role as guardians of nature; supporting and engaging with IPLCs to better understand their relationship with nature and the risks they face, with due attention to Indigenous Peoples' land rights.
- Protecting environmental defenders and supporting the implementation of the Escazú Agreement.
- Criminalize the destruction of nature or "ecocide" which would underpin all efforts to preserve and restore the health of the planet.

6. Civil Society:

- Transparent Major Groups & stakeholders' engagement in decision-making processes to jointly take-action and help ensure planetary health and wellbeing; meaningful participation of all stakeholders, including vulnerable and marginalized communities and peoples, such as migrants, rural communities, Indigenous peoples, people of color, NGOs, and youth.
- Governments to ensure equal rights to everyone to express their opinions and give a voice to local communities and listen to those most affected so that policymakers can prepare policy responses.
- Training and support (including financial) to civil society thus enabling conditions for them to push for the enforcement and improvement of environmental, climate, and human rights legislation and regulations.

7. Enforcement & Regulation:

- Improving enforcement, regulation, and monitoring measures for effective implementation of policies and commitments while tracking progress towards a healthier planet, including chemical pollution to reduce toxic and other waste.
- Advance the SDGs
- Share best practices, denounce abuses, eliminate corruption, create networks, accessibility, and other alternatives.

Main regional priorities for Regeneration:
Actions for a Healthy Planet and Prosperity for All:

- Africa – Entrench the rights of people and nature in law, supported by strong policies and implementation measures; sustainable agricultural practices; mobilizing financial support for a healthy planet and prosperity for all.
- Asia and the Pacific - Focus themes LD1: Transforming the relationship with nature; Sustainable consumption and production and fighting pollution; and social justice and intergenerational equity.
- EU/NA - Urgent integrated and coordinated approaches to take action as climate change and biodiversity loss continue to worsen; the need for all actors to ensure the necessary finance; addressing underlying structural problems, by using the war in Ukraine as an opportunity to transition away from unsustainable practices such as overreliance on fossil fuels.
- LAC – Defend the defenders, ensuring a safe environment for exercising rights; eliminating fossil fuel subsidies; improving levels of participation and representation of traditional communities in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of public policies that affect their territories.
- West Asia - Stepping up climate and environmental protection ambition by accelerating action such as by promoting

the “green buildings” concept in Saudi Arabia and the Arab world; providing environmentally-friendly options for countries affected by conflict, such as Yemen, which is “suffocating” from plastic, and individual efforts to limit or reduce its use, and prevent land degradation and the destruction of the environment and natural resources through depletion or pollution by applying objectives from the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict.

Latin America & The Caribbean - Policies and actions needed to make progress towards securing a healthier and more prosperous planet, including:

- Government accountability
- Gender equity
- Defending the defenders
- Ensuring a safe environment for exercising rights
- Capacity building
- Eliminating fossil fuel subsidies
- Improving levels of participation and representation of traditional communities in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of public policies that affect their territories
- Education reform
- A carbon tax



The 4th United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 4) at Nairobi, Kenya. 2019 © UNEP / Natalia Mroz

Table 4. Leadership Dialogue 2 - Recovery and Rebalance: Sustainable and Inclusive Recovery

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
RECOVERY & REBALANCE				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Expand opportunities for citizen science, including recognizing the importance of participatory approaches – Widen development finance for disadvantaged and marginalized groups – Support crowd funding, especially for young entrepreneurs with social impact initiatives – Recognize the role of faith-based organizations and cultural leaders in mobilizing community actions – Promote community forestry and other Nature-based Solutions as a means of improving livelihoods – Increase digital access, especially in remote and isolated communities – Integrate the SDGs into school curricula to better engage with young people on sustainability issues – Leverage new data technologies, such as machine learning and digital mapping systems – Make use of green financing incentives and impose penalties to high-emitting industries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Post-pandemic job creation, especially considering a shift into low-emission economies – Sustainable agriculture, manufacturing, and ecotourism in new business models – Job reduction in areas such as non-sustainable agriculture and fossil fuel extraction and related activities – Enabling the necessary skills for workers to transition into a “renewed economy” – Support for affected populations – Value chain restructuring – Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) using more formal business practices such as digitalization and banking – Lifestyle-affecting practices such as interruptions in consumption, and increased packaging <p><i>On changing recovery and pre-existing practices:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strengthening participatory mechanisms in decision-making and social protection to support populations going through the effects of the pandemic – Rethinking investments in fossil fuels <p><i>On ensuring that everyone can benefit from a just transition:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strengthen South-South and triangular cooperation on knowledge and technology transfer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Recovery that would simultaneously address biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate change, and promote the wellbeing of all people, underscoring the critical role of partnership and resource mobilization – Concrete actions and partnerships that are ready for implementation to forward to Stockholm+50 around: revitalizing a biodiversity economy; supporting energy efficiency and the role of renewable energy and carrying out a just transition <p><i>On recovery practices:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Supporting youth engagement to drive information sharing and awareness raising at all levels – Aligning effective programming to develop associations within the greater community and neighboring states – Focusing on planting trees and non-timber forest products to promote the regeneration of native plants and natural forests – Supporting youth’s participation in regeneration and restoration programs – Promoting local knowledge of disaster management and adaptation practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fostering just and sustainable cities – Supporting energy communities and energy cooperatives in municipalities – Grants and soft loans to housing cooperatives and blocks of flats for thermo-modernization – Ensuring energy investment is directed towards solutions that impact positively on the environment – Providing various forms of financing to municipalities that have developed sustainable energy and climate action plans – Ensuring gender-responsive budgeting and response plans – Consultations with women’s rights groups on the intersection of environmental justice to build forward sustainably – Ensuring access to information and public participation for all members of society, including by producing toolkits and guides to create awareness – Aligning public spending with climate, biodiversity, and environmental policies and objectives – Implementing disaster risk reduction strategies according to the Sendai Framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Access to different sources of finance, improved environmental legislative frameworks and policies and promoting a circular economy and environmental education and awareness raising – Renewable, clean energy and energy efficiency, agriculture and fisheries, and public health as the most important sectors – Increase public awareness of the impacts of environmental degradation, improve enforcement of environmental laws and regulations, and address the escalation of conflicts to accelerate peace processes – Address loss of jobs, and food insecurity due to rising poverty and dependence on food imports – Raise resources to achieve the global Goals – Crisis in Ukraine led to currency devaluations and increased food security risks – Escalating debt in the region, calling for grants (not loans) and direct assistance to finance recovery – Impacts of climate change (average temperatures predicted to increase by 5°C by the end of the century) – More scientific evidence to inform regional policy – A gap between available financing and the needs of the region

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
RECOVERY & REBALANCE				
<p><i>On an inclusive and sustainable recovery:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Shift away from linear systems of production and consumption, progressively phasing out single-use items – Engage directly with parliamentarians and legislators on matters of critical environmental concern – Supplement scientific information with community-sourced data <p><i>On a sustainable and just transition:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Widen digital technologies including data centers and digital monitoring solutions to raise awareness – Expand job training in green sectors, such as renewable energy and energy efficiency, and prioritize these in government programs – Strengthen capacity development, innovation, and access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – Promote decentralized governance systems that prioritize multi-stakeholder dialogue and “people-centered” development <p><i>On creating better-performing industries and supply chains:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Adopt nexus approaches that address environmental issues in multiple sectors, such as energy, transport, and water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Scaling up promising initiatives in the region, taking into account risk and trust, and identifying potential problems and unexpected liabilities – Solve lack of inclusivity and equality, corruption, and lack of inclusive education which puts progress achieved at risk <p><i>On creating better-performing industries and supply chains for a just transition:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Better management of water resources in agriculture, energy, and transportation services – Creating new processes that can substitute the use of plastic – Making SMEs more knowledgeable to improve their access to loans and innovation and help them integrate into a circular economy <p><i>On commitments by key industry sectors and by finance and investment institutions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Funding to implement relevant measures; the need for financial services, such as insurance and investment, and leaving behind practices that are not beneficial for the environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Involving local populations and the most vulnerable in decision-making and policy implementation, and building trust – Engaging private sector support and stimulating youth innovation <p><i>On the type of recovery and pre-existing practices:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improve environmental curricula in schools and universities to increase awareness of challenges and solutions – Review countries’ forestry laws and recommend community participation in monitoring and protecting national resources and forests – Create and communicate clear plans of action to avoid duplication of efforts at the local and national levels – Engage and empower everyone to make changes in daily lifestyles – Invest in, and support the initiatives of NGOs and civil society organizations – Connect communities to national and regional plans – Increase the flexibility of criteria for the identification of initiatives to support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conducting environmental impact assessments and strategic impact assessments for action when implementing sustainable recovery practices – Universal recognition of and an implementation framework for the right to a healthy environment <p><i>On pre-existing practices to be changed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Integrated approaches to addressing human rights and environmental protection – Recovery grounded in the right to a healthy environment – Government stock take of COVID-19 responses - mapping sectors that received funding, and what should have been done better – A gender analysis of COVID-19 responses as responses to the pandemic may have “regressed” on gender equality and environmental justice – Comprehensive spatial development plans as the basis for sustainable local development – Building back better in Ukraine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strong and robust collaboration and new sources of financing – Digital transformation can contribute to delivering on the SDGs – Articulation of commercial and development sectors to develop “jobs of the future” – Growing problem of e-waste & human health impacts – Policies and actions to counter impacts from extraction of metals needed for technology <p><i>Five broad policy responses:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Using local communities as partners in small-scale mining enterprises – Promoting sustainable manufacturing practices, such as re-using non-toxic materials that can increase the product’s lifecycle – Changing consumer behavior through advocacy and awareness raising to encourage recycling and the circular economy – “Categorization and standardization” of recycling to help avoid hazardous practices – E-recycling, which “makes business sense,” and can lead to the formation of new enterprises

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
RECOVERY & REBALANCE				
<p>– Divest from fossil fuels and support the expansion of renewable energy</p> <p>– Enforce the “polluter pays principle,” including by mandating companies to address environmental damages</p> <p>– Make use of carbon pricing tools, including through the use of smart contract platforms for mitigating emissions</p> <p>– Introduce green business training into secondary and tertiary educational curricula</p> <p><i>On commitments and “responsible” principles:</i></p> <p>– Integrate eco-design principles across all manufacturing, supply, and retail operations</p> <p>– Use “internet of things” and digital dashboards to simultaneously manage energy- and water-related challenges</p> <p>– Steer investments towards green job sectors to advance a just transition</p> <p><i>On decent green jobs of the future:</i></p> <p>– Focus on the education sector to promote green skills and competencies</p> <p>– Fund research and development on environmentally friendly products and technologies</p> <p>– Support start-ups in the information technology sector to carry out a more systematic analysis of environmental challenges and solutions.</p>	<p><i>On decent green jobs of the future:</i></p> <p>– Sustainable forest management; disaster risk and land-use management; sustainable agriculture; renewable energy; and new technologies that include women and youth</p>	<p><i>On ensuring that countries and communities benefit from a just transition:</i></p> <p>– Using simple language to attract and engage communities at the grassroots level</p> <p>– Establishing monitoring programs and platforms that work with independent consultants to follow up with stakeholders</p> <p>– Shift mindsets within communities to choose clean energy</p> <p><i>On creating better-performing industries and supply chains for a just transition:</i></p> <p>– Bringing industries together to determine how waste from one industry can be useful for another</p> <p>– Recognize that business and profit cannot come at the expense of human development, health, and rights</p> <p>– Prioritizing agriculture and food, as well as any aspect of industry relevant to maternal and child health</p> <p>– Attracting young people to agriculture by providing access and credit</p> <p>– Applying modern technologies to update manufacturing and processing and create a large community</p>	<p><i>On ensuring that countries and communities benefit from a just transition and creating enabling conditions to reduce carbon emissions:</i></p> <p>– Supporting MSMEs in both recovery from COVID-19 and embracing circular business models</p> <p>– Implementing women's economic empowerment models and supporting entrepreneurship</p> <p>– States and businesses to fulfill their procedural obligations towards the environment and human rights</p> <p>– Empowering civil society, encouraging learning between communities, and fostering solidarity</p> <p>– Re-skilling and creating green jobs for all, especially youth, women, and Indigenous communities</p> <p>– Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, and investing in disaster risk reduction</p> <p>– Promoting the role of nature-based solutions while simultaneously providing benefits for human wellbeing, ecosystem services, and biodiversity</p> <p>– Meaningful consultations, respecting the principle of prior and informed consent, and ensuring no one is left behind</p>	<p><i>On actions for recovery in key COVID-19-affected sectors and value chains:</i></p> <p>– Harnessing innovations and technologies, including digital technologies for transparency and disclosure</p> <p>– Levering global, South-South, and triangular cooperation</p> <p>– More to be done on climate change adaptation</p> <p>– LDCs in the region to be provided with expert support</p> <p>– Enhance blended models of education, both virtual and in-person</p> <p>– Absence of a common fund for the environment for Arab states</p>

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
RECOVERY & REBALANCE				
		<p><i>On commitments and principles by industry sectors and by finance and investment institutions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Understanding and articulating the key role of the finance sector in sustainable development – Improving access to finance among women and youth – Demanding financial institutions to become advocates for the SDGs – Industries to take on more environmental, social, and governance (ESG) commitments – Finance and investment institutions to commit to sustainable finance <p><i>On decent green jobs of the future:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Climate-smart agriculture; waste management, including upcycling and circular economy, and solar energy – Training the existing workforce to participate in green jobs and equipping young people with the tools and skills 	<p><i>On a just transition for high-impact sectors:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A multi-stakeholder dialogue on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and the circular economy – Precautionary principle applied to the entry of all chemicals into the supply chain, with responsibility for the product from its creation to disposal – Businesses strengthening their duty towards environmental protection beyond national boundaries – Holding industries accountable for internal and external environmental damages caused – Funding and awards to promote and enhance innovation and innovative solutions – Gender mainstreaming in the energy sector – Using technology for the protection of the environment <p><i>On commitments and principles:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “Refreshing memories” on existing rules and responsibilities – Ensuring the precautionary principle is applied and holding informed consultations with communities, especially in relation to implementing energy solutions 	

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
RECOVERY & REBALANCE				
			<p><i>On Multilateral development banks and other financial institutions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Align their portfolios with environmental, biodiversity, and climate goals – Embed climate risk into credit risk assessments – Disclose the climate and nature impacts of their investments – Ensuring that Indigenous Peoples do not live “as the world sees fit” – Businesses to follow the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment – Having a clear understanding of what a healthy environment is – Ensuring transparency of decisions, actions, financial flows, and accountability. <p><i>On decent green jobs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Businesses offer products and services that are “benign by design” – Educators to use holistic teaching perspectives <p><i>On follow-up activities to Stockholm+50:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Establishing an inclusive, multi-lateral, and multi-stakeholder dialogue on SCP, resource efficiency, and the circular economy, which the Leadership Dialogues could initiate 	

**Analysis → Multi-stakeholder discussions:
LD2 - A sustainable and inclusive recovery
from the COVID-19 pandemic**

Key issues shared by two or more regions:

1. Business:

- Businesses, as well as States, to strengthen their duty/commitments towards environmental protection and fulfill obligations towards the environment and human rights, including respecting the rights of environmental defenders (i.e. follow the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment).
- Strengthen capacity development, innovation and opportunities with a gender perspective, including financial and COVID-19 recovery, for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
- New business models that factor in the environment and human rights, for instance, sustainable agriculture, manufacturing, and ecotourism
- Create a large economic community where industries come together, i.e. to determine how waste of one industry can be useful for another
- Industries accountable for internal and external environmental damages caused

2. Digitalization and Technology:

- Increase digital access, especially in remote communities
- Support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and enabling access of information technology for digitalization and banking, updating production processes, and advancing the SDGs.
- Leverage new data technologies for transparency and disclosure, such as machine learning and digital mapping systems

3. Jobs:

- Articulation and expansion in the 'green job' sector, such as renewable energy and energy efficiency, and capacity building for all, especially youth, women, and Indigenous communities
- Government support to create green jobs especially post-pandemic
- Steer investments towards green job sectors to advance a just transition while reducing in areas such as non-sustainable agriculture and fossil fuel extraction and related activities

4. Finance:

- Resource mobilization for recovery that would simultaneously address biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate change
- Alignment of financial institutions, public and private, with climate, biodiversity, and environmental policies and objectives
- Understanding the key role of the finance sector in achieving the sustainable development goals
- Widen opportunities for access to different sources of finance for disadvantaged and marginalized groups, especially women and youth economic empowerment models and supporting entrepreneurship (grants preferred above loans)
- Fund research and development on environmentally friendly products and technologies
- Invest in, and support the initiatives of NGOs and civil society organizations

5. Just Transition:

- Just transition that is equitable for all
- General and financial support for a just transition especially in the energy sector (i.e. renewable, clean energy and energy efficiency)

- Support to MSMEs in recovery from COVID-19 and embracing circular business models
- Incentivize, promote and enhance innovation and innovative solutions shifting away from linear systems of production and consumption, progressively phasing out single-use items
- Engage and empower everyone to shift mindsets towards more sustainable lifestyles
- Strengthen South-South and triangular cooperation on knowledge and technology transfer

6. Circular economy:

- Support and capacity building of SMEs to help them integrate into a circular economy
- Improved environmental legislative frameworks and policies for promoting a circular economy
- Climate-smart agriculture; waste management, including upcycling and circular economy, and solar energy / · A multi-stakeholder dialogue on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and the circular economy
- Integrated approaches to addressing human rights and environmental protection

7. Participation:

- Recognizing and strengthening participatory approaches in decision-making, social protection, and policy implementation to support the most vulnerable populations
- Empowering civil society, encouraging learning between communities, and fostering solidarity
- Ensuring access to information and public participation for all members of society, including grassroots and local populations participation in monitoring and protection of national resources, and connecting communities to national and regional plans, for example, by producing

toolkits and guidelines, and others, using simple language

- Meaningful consultations, respecting the principle of prior and informed consent, and ensuring no one is left behind
- Supporting youth engagement in different areas (i.e. clean energy, restoration, agriculture, etc.)
- Improving access to finance and support to women and young entrepreneurs with environmental and social impact initiatives and those stimulating innovation

8. Climate Change:

- Urgently addressing impacts of climate change taking into account disaster risk reduction and land-use management, renewable energy, and new technologies that include women and youth

9. Education

- Focus on environmental education to increase awareness of challenges and solutions, promote green skills and competencies, etc.



UNEP in the Global Goals World Cup in Nairobi. The all-women team played for SDG Goal # 14: Life Below Water. 2017 © UNEP

Main regional priorities for Sustainable and Inclusive Recovery and Rebalance:

- Africa - Scale-up regional cooperation; accountability of businesses and call to respect human rights; financial support to initiatives especially for women and youth; engagement of communities at the grassroots level including by providing due access to information; supporting energy efficiency and the role of renewable energy; acknowledgment of key documents on Africa's recovery: 1) ["Building Forward Together: Financing a sustainable recovery for the future of all"](#); 2) [The African Green Stimulus Programme](#); 3) [The African Union Green Recovery Action Plan 2021-2027](#).
- Asia and the Pacific – Recovery actions in key COVID-19-affected sectors; widening educational opportunities as well as scaling innovation and digital technologies; Global and South-South cooperation.
- Europe/NA - Measures to promote overall policy coherence for responsible consumption and production, especially in high-impact sectors such as food production and manufacturing; use of innovation and technology, including to increase transparency, traceability, and accountability along supply chains and support the better engagement of stakeholders; cooperation at the global, South-South, and triangular levels and for sustainable investment flows. Leadership Dialogue could initiate an inclusive, multilateral, and multi-stakeholder dialogue on SCP, resource efficiency, and the circular economy, as a key follow-up activity to Stockholm+50.
- LAC - Government accountability, participatory mechanisms that integrate inclusivity and equality for improved natural resources management; support to local initiatives; SMEs and job creation to transition towards a circular economy; South-South cooperation.
- West Asia – The Arab region needs additional sources of finance including climate finance, in the form of grants, not loans, establishing a common fund for the environment for Arab states; improved environmental legislative frameworks and policies that promote circular economy models, for example e-recycling; sustainable mining is key, and can be supported by using local communities as partners in small-scale mining enterprises; environmental education and awareness raising as the key actions that can accelerate the West Asia region's progress towards a healthy planet and prosperity for all; renewable, clean energy and energy efficiency, agriculture and fisheries, and public health as the most important sectors to enable an inclusive, green recovery from COVID-19 in the West Asia region; the lack of enforcement of environmental laws and regulations, and escalation of conflicts and slow peace processes among the main barriers for the West Asia region to take bolder action for a sustainable future, for example, the crisis in Ukraine has led to currency devaluations and increased food security risks.

[Gikomba Market for the European Commission on circular economy](#) © UNEP / Ahmed Nayim Yussuf



Analysis → Multi-stakeholder discussions: LD3 – RENEWAL: Accelerating the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development

RENEWAL: Accelerating the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development				
Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
<p><i>On addressing challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Use better measures, such as supply chain tracking, to ensure that agriculture is sustainable – Empower Indigenous Peoples, including through free, prior, and informed consent – Recognize fossil fuels as the biggest driver of climate change that undermines all 17 SDGs – Mobilize resources, which are currently inadequate, to respond to the needs of local populations. Currently, military spending is higher than that on the 2030 Agenda. – Understand the need for political commitment of governments to enforce environmental commitments – Focus on SDG integration, with all the SDGs being linked, and collaborate with all stakeholders – Shift away from the traditional approach of economic development which still dominates public finance allocation for climate action <p><i>On good practices:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Prioritize the involvement of young people, empower them, and value their opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Greater involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs) – Reconsideration of what constitutes the right to development – Greater UN outreach with local grassroots organizations – Development that includes inputs from multiple stakeholders and greater support for rural and Indigenous Peoples at the local level – Fostering of partnerships and support for people at the local level in advocating on environmental issues – Using a “feminist” approach, protecting human rights, and promoting mechanisms to ensure accountability and a greater role for women – Providing paid UN internships for youth – Opportunities for young scientists in decision-making processes in order to facilitate more environmentally friendly development practices – Opportunities for youth to provide innovative ideas for addressing environmental issues – Access to education on environmental issues – Better practices and capacity building for the implementation of environmental commitments 	<p><i>On the biggest challenges in implementing the the 2030 Agenda and other environmental agreements:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Collective efforts, and “doing things in silos” – Bottom-up policy creation, resulting in actions that do not resonate with the “common man” – Political will and commitment – Climate education and information – Accountability in National reports that show how the environmental needs of vulnerable groups and communities have been addressed or not – Skills, technology, and access to data – Capacity, enabling institutions to access finance and other resources <p><i>On scale-up to accelerate the implementation of the Environmental dimension in the context of the Decade of Action:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Foreign funding can create unsustainable projects lacking in community engagement – Engaging affected communities in the process of fundraising – National sustainability roadmaps that define national priorities and financing gaps – Prioritizing SMEs doing fair and green business 	<p><i>On the biggest challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda and other environmental commitments and how to create an enabling environment for delivery on the ground:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Politicians and/or staff from international organizations must bear responsibility for their decisions – Need for sanctions for non-compliance with multilateral environmental agreements, and for measures that ensure environmental costs are factored into people’s lifestyles <p><i>On good practices and pathways to accelerate the implementation of the environmental dimension in the context of the Decade of Action:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Phase out fossil fuel production – Governments to sign a fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty – Importance of faith-based actors to be incorporated into political discussions <p><i>On how to transform governance and legal systems:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Decreasing corporate influence in politics – Establishing new economic narratives 	<p><i>On the biggest challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda and other environmental commitments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Prevalence of North-based technology holders and limited opportunities for franchising and developing in the region – A lack of cooperation between actors, including regionally, as well as self-interest and conflict of interest – A lack of citizen awareness – A lack of data, legislation, and good governance practices – Excessive bureaucracy, which slows down implementation, which can be overcome by establishing a regional office that hosts representatives from each country in the region – Continuing wars and conflicts in the region – Misuse of water resources – The difficulty and complexity of the global SDG indicators, resulting in countries’ inability to follow up and monitor progress using these indicators – A lack of financial resources, and technology transfer and sharing

RENEWAL: Accelerating the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development				
Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Promote and scale agricultural practices already in place in Asia, including by focusing on locally-based food sovereignty and strengthening local communities' ties to nature – Work towards more inclusive climate actions that can cater to the needs of the most vulnerable groups – Establish legislation and metrics, such as on the circular economy and waste management. In addition, citizens can then use laws to hold the government accountable – Conduct systematic data collection and monitoring since many targets and indicators do not have reliable data. Digitalization can also be helpful. <p><i>On transforming governance and legal systems:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Consider how we measure progress to go beyond the legacy metrics of economic stability and wellbeing, such as GDP, and take into account social and ecological aspects – Pursue values of harmony between humans and nature – Consider elements and institutions that are outside the usual discussion on sustainable development but have an impact, for example, the World Trade Organization and corporations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cooperation between academics and civil society to facilitate technology transfer for environmentally responsible solutions – Technology that provides sustainable benefits for communities – Investments in research and the spread of information – Political decisions to be based on science – Addressing the influence of the private sector on the UN and the danger that partnerships with the private sector may weaken the UN – Recognition that colonial solutions are no longer useful and must be replaced to face current challenges – Recognition of technology and knowledge that can help people live harmoniously with nature, and active listening to Indigenous Peoples – Technology that bridges gaps between people and sectors and helps communities – Analysis and regulation of risks that digital technology can pose by facilitating environmentally harmful development and financing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ESG screening for privately funded projects – Networks that address the needs of the “voiceless” – Gender-responsive budgeting and climate actions – Installation of solar systems <p><i>On how to transform governance and legal systems:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Challenges arising from democratic transitions, which affects the stability of governance and legal systems as trust in the judicial system is low – Strengthening the independence of institutions to fight corruption – Encouraging every country to have a climate change act as a guiding pillar at the national level, together with national environmental platforms – Ensuring representation of affected communities in climate initiative management teams – Having a strong civil society to hold governments and business accountable and ensure compliance with human rights and environmental laws – Investing in the development of collaborative leadership skills among political appointees to ensure they can fulfill their roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Expanding the International Criminal Court's jurisdiction to include environmental crimes <p><i>On measures needed to align public, private, and development finance with existing commitments and priorities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Granting debt amnesty to relevant states – Internalizing environmental costs – “Flipping” the interest scheme, so richer countries pay more interest on their bonds – Earmarking finance for environmental work – Scaling down military spending <p><i>On types of partnerships required to accelerate a green transformation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Partnerships to address corruption both within and outside institutions – Capacity building to measure environmental crimes – Recognizing the role of environmental defenders and whistleblowers, and enhancing their protection <p><i>On the capacities and technologies needed for harmony with nature:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Capacity and technology must be aligned with local needs and priorities, not donor countries' priorities – Regenerative agriculture and scaling up plant-based food 	<p><i>On good practices and pathways to accelerate the implementation of the environmental dimension in the context of the Decade of Action:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Closer cooperation between development financiers and private sector actors – Intensifying environmental awareness campaigns as part of national efforts to achieve sustainability in comprehensive development projects – Promoting environmental education, environmental justice, and commitment to stopping environmental degradation – Reliance on a constantly updated spatial information database, including statistics and surveys, for decision making – Supporting community participation and inclusion – Strengthening supervision, inspection, and enforcement of laws, and integrating ecosystem services into development plans – Digitalization – Stimulating the private sector to invest in implementing environmental interventions <p><i>On how to transform governance and legal systems:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Adequate information and relevant data for decision making – Integrating content related to the environment into educational curricula, and conducting research and field studies

RENEWAL: Accelerating the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development				
Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
<p>– Think about instruments, such as a UN legally binding treaty on human rights, or those that hold transnational organizations legally accountable</p> <p>– Develop foresight in terms of how risk, uncertainty, and crises are dealt with in governance systems</p> <p>– Promote flexibility in implementing globally agreed environmental goals through development and use of actions that are compatible with available resources and capacity of different countries and economies</p> <p><i>On aligning public, private, and development finance:</i></p> <p>– Recognize differences in public and private finance, look at how wealth is taxed, and challenge the assumption that the private sector is the solution</p> <p>– Understand that climate financing is skewed towards mitigation and there is not enough for adaptation, and more public finance still goes to fossil fuels than to address climate change</p> <p>– Support countries that are very dependent on fossil fuel revenue and need to transition away</p> <p>– Understand that the most powerful ministry in many developing countries is the finance and not the environment ministry</p>	<p><i>From Working Group 6 On Financing sustainability:</i></p> <p><i>On measures to align public, private, and development finance with existing commitments and priorities:</i></p> <p>– Integrating progressive taxonomies</p> <p>– Discussing the cancellation of debt in LAC to enable a fair shift to sustainable financing</p> <p>– Incentives for the private sector to scale up green financing</p> <p>– Mainstreaming climate change considerations in national planning/budgeting</p> <p>– Stronger public sector leadership</p> <p>– Implementing the polluter-pays principle</p> <p>– Capacity building for all decision-makers in each country</p> <p>– Creating an active role for civil society in financing sustainability forums and spaces, providing opportunities equal to those of the private sector</p> <p><i>On the role of fiscal and monetary authorities in enabling and accelerating economic and fiscal policies that promote equity and sustainability:</i></p> <p>– Mobilizing government and private sector actors</p> <p>– Participating in international forums that debate the issue</p> <p>– Implementing best practices in accordance with local characteristics</p> <p>– Engaging in dialogue with civil society to build trust</p>	<p><i>On measures needed to align public, private, and development finance with existing commitments and priorities:</i></p> <p>– Need for community involvement in business, as well as a better understanding of the role of small business in protecting the environment</p> <p>– Need for capacity in accessing finance and in managing projects</p> <p>– Setting up targeted green/environmental funds and facilities</p> <p>– Building technical expertise among financiers for issuance of climate-resilient infrastructure such as roads</p> <p>– Putting in place a transparent information sharing system</p> <p>– Having clear goals, targets and monitoring schemes to measure progress</p> <p>– Helping banks to get Green Climate Fund accreditation</p> <p><i>On the types of partnerships needed to accelerate a green and sustainable economic transformation:</i></p> <p>– Improving the way organizations communicate how projects relate and connect to people, especially how they affect their livelihoods</p> <p>– Supporting youth-led and women-led organizations</p> <p>– Improving follow-up, including monitoring and evaluation</p> <p>– Making linkages with local projects</p>	<p><i>On follow-up activities following Stockholm+50:</i></p> <p>– Better coherence between multilateral efforts on environmental issues, especially on the cross-cutting issue of climate change</p> <p>– A fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty</p> <p>– A law on ecocide</p> <p>– More emphasis on issues concerning youth</p> <p>– Increased recognition of environmental defenders</p> <p>– More accountability for politicians</p> <p>– Greater cooperation between faith groups and politicians</p>	<p>– Coordination and alignment of practices between government and civil society, and more exchanges of good practices among relevant actors</p> <p>– Decentralization of environmental decision-making</p> <p>– Financial support</p> <p>– Preparing the “legislative climate” to accommodate the requirements of sustainability</p> <p>– Ensuring transparency, building a regional database, and providing data for evidence-based capacity building</p> <p>– Adapting governance systems to ensure flexibility to respond to emerging changes</p> <p>– Raising awareness of local and international realities</p> <p><i>On measures needed to align public, private, and development finance with existing commitments and priorities:</i></p> <p>– Identifying and developing win-win business models</p> <p>– Evaluating and supervising the implementation of existing environmental commitments</p> <p>– Green and smart financing, and support for countries unable to access global funds</p> <p>– Mechanisms to streamline Project development and implementation to avoid repetition and duplication of efforts</p>

RENEWAL: Accelerating the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development				
Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – There is a need for a “whole-of-government approach” that is also linked to the education system – Consider prioritization of three sectors: health, environment, and education – Note that in climate finance, countries experiencing similar issues can have more targeted and pragmatic investments, and there can be a more targeted investment in regions <p><i>On partnerships to accelerate transformation that leaves no one behind:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Have a different kind of cooperation and partnerships, which are led and centered on people, are more collaborative, and account for those currently left behind – Move beyond GDP as a measure, with the UN helping build countries' capacity to do so – Consider the power dynamics of and participation in multi-stakeholder partnerships and platforms, and challenge the way corporations can capture them <p><i>On capacities and technologies:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Remain aware that technology is not magic, and consider who has control of and access to it, in addition to who benefits and who is marginalized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Promoting process transparency – Giving minor players the opportunity to play major roles so all stakeholders can jointly develop transformation schemes – Providing incentives for investments in the energy transition that are more equitable, incorporating a gender perspective – Implementing urgent measures to reduce illicit financial flows and “tax dodging” 	<p><i>On capacities and technologies needed for harmony with nature:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Integrating traditional knowledge with modern technology and taking action to reduce and prevent a digital transformation gap – Helping people understand the basics of climate change science – Influencing behavioral change such as by banning single-use plastics and putting in place technologies that enable going paperless and plastic-free. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enabling local communities to compete for project funding, including by raising awareness about available opportunities – Maximizing the use of international funds and setting up a unified portal to receive support and funding – Transparency about spending budgets, and monitoring and follow-up of financial support – Stimulating private sector involvement and investment – Developing environmental and climate taxes and collection systems <p><i>On the types of partnerships needed to accelerate a green and sustainable economic transformation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increased engagement with CSOs, youth, universities, and scientific research institutions – Appropriate technology transfer partnerships – Technical support partnerships, capacity building, and transfer of expertise – Partnerships between local charitable and voluntary organizations and their international counterparts – Financing partnerships <p><i>On the capacities and technologies needed to improve human well-being in harmony with nature:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Develop multi-actor value chains – Promote a clean environment – Provide technologies based on ecosystem services and develop the capacity to use these technologies.

Key issues shared by two or more regions on Renewal - Accelerating the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development:

1. Development:

- Intensifying and expanding environmental education and awareness campaigns at the local, national, and international levels to achieve sustainability
- Rethink development considering a participatory human rights framework that recognizes the harms of colonialism, such as shifting away from the traditional approach of economic development which still dominates public finance allocation
- Development that includes inputs from multiple stakeholders and greater support for rural and Indigenous Peoples at the local level

2. Participation:

- Support participation and inclusion of multiple stakeholders at all levels, including civil society organizations (CSOs), women, youth, rural communities, and Indigenous Peoples
- Ensuring representation of local grassroots organizations and affected communities, and work towards more inclusive actions that address the needs of the most vulnerable, such as leveling out the playing field in access to information including funding opportunities, project management; opportunities for youth's initiatives, their participation in decision-making, and capacity building and other education opportunities
- Increase recognition of environmental defenders
- Supporting youth-led and women-led organizations

3. Cooperation & Partnerships:

- Fostering cooperation and partnerships between actors at all levels, that call for collective efforts, led by and centered on people that account for the needs of those currently left behind.
- Avoid doing things in silos and enhance closer cooperation, for instance, increase

engagement and build trust with CSOs, youth, universities, and scientific research institutions; coordination and alignment of practices between government and civil society, between development financiers and private sector actors, more community involvement in business, more exchanges of good practices among relevant actors, greater cooperation between faith groups and politicians, and greater outreach with local grassroots organizations

- Partnerships to fight corruption in institutions
- Cooperation between academics and civil society to facilitate appropriate technology transfer for environmentally responsible solutions
- Stimulating private sector involvement and investment in implementing environmental interventions

4. Technology:

- Recognition that technology and (traditional) knowledge can help bridge gaps if, is aligned with local needs and priorities, is accessible and provides sustainable benefits for communities, including Indigenous Peoples
- Influencing behavioral change with the support of technologies, such as going paperless and plastic-free, for example
- Analysis and regulation of digital technology and associated risks (i.e. environmentally harmful development and financing)
- Enable financial resources for technology transfer and sharing, that is fair and accessible also to the Global South

5. Accountability:

- Promoting mechanisms to ensure compliance with human rights and environmental laws including by having a strong civil society to hold governments and businesses accountable; instruments, such as a UN legally binding treaty on human rights, or those that hold transnational organizations legally accountable
- Address corporate influence in politics, including the UN system, and address con-

licts of interests

- Accountability in National reports, and others, that show how projects connect to people and if they meet (or not) the environmental needs of vulnerable groups and communities
- Politicians and staff from international organizations must bear responsibility for their decisions
- Foreign funding can create unsustainable projects lacking in community engagement thus need for screening for privately funded projects
- Putting in place a transparent information-sharing system including spending budgets, monitoring, and follow-up of financial support

6. Governance:

- Strengthening the independence of institutions to fight corruption and respond to other challenges including those arising from democratic transitions, which affect the stability of governance and legal systems
- Preparing the “legislative climate” to accommodate the requirements of sustainability including making data available as well as investing in capacity building among decision-makers in each country to ensure they can fulfill their roles to ensure good governance practices
- Political will and commitment of governments to strengthen supervision, inspection, and enforcement of existing environmental agreements and laws (monitoring) while imposing sanctions for non-compliance
- Promote flexibility in implementing globally agreed environmental goals through development and use of actions that are compatible with available resources and capacity
- Proposal to governments to 1) sign a fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty; 2) expand the International Criminal Court’s jurisdiction to include environmental crimes or ‘ecocide’; 3) think about other useful instruments, such as a UN legally binding treaty on human rights
- Focus on SDG integration and the im-

portance of collaboration with all stakeholders while recognizing the difficulties and complexities of global SDG indicators

7. Resource Mobilization:

- Ensuring financial resources are channeled properly to tap where priorities are, i.e. climate finance goes to mitigation and there is not enough for adaptation, more public finance still goes to fossil fuels than to address climate change, scaling down military spending as it is higher than that on the 2030 Agenda
- Mobilize resources to respond to the needs of local populations, for instance, gender-responsive budgeting and climate actions
- Set up targeted green/environmental funds and facilities enabling easy access and support
- Implement measures to reduce illicit financial flows and “tax dodging”

Main regional priorities for Renewal – Accelerating action of the environmental dimension of sustainable development:

- Africa - Engage affected communities in the process of fundraising, so that they provide information on what benefits them; integrate traditional knowledge with modern technology and take action to reduce or prevent a digital transformation gap; set up targeted green/environmental funds and facilities; build technical expertise among financiers on climate-resilient infrastructure such as roads; build the capacity of small businesses to access finance and manage projects; challenges arising from democratic transitions, which affect the stability of governance and legal systems as trust in the judicial system in Africa is low.
- Asia & the Pacific - Promoting and scaling agricultural practices already in place in Asia, including by focusing on locally-based food sovereignty and strengthening local communities’ ties to nature; scaling-up finance for development that is based on true global consensus and

aimed at responding to the needs of local populations and in support for people and the planet [currently more is spent on defense and the military than to address the basic needs of the 2030 Agenda, and not climate finance is spent on adaptation]; “democratization” of global economic governance and “decolonization” of the global economy, particularly as it relates to climate finance, debt generation, and the tax system; establish legislation and metrics, such as on the circular economy and waste management, which allows measuring progress for the government to take regular action on the issues, where citizens can then use laws to hold governments accountable; compliance with international agreements.

- LAC – Resolve the lack of accessibility to technologies and public environmental funds in the region, insecurity and mortality rates of environmental defenders, the ever-increasing inequalities and a recession in learning and opportunities; reconsider what constitutes the right to development; greater UN outreach with local grassroots organizations; promote strong and transparent public policy to strengthen civil society and foster partnerships and support for people at the local level in advocating on environmental issues; provide paid UN internships for youth; provide opportunities for young scientists in decision-making processes in order to facilitate more environmentally friendly development practices; create mechanisms to ensure accountability and a greater role for women; ensure environmental education that is inclusive of all types of people, and support a life-long learning approach, promoting an environmentally responsible culture; discussing the cancellation of debt in LAC to enable a fair shift to sustainable financing.
- Europe/NA – Three broad areas emerging from the discussions under Leadership Dialogue 3: 1) actions for scaling up finance, such as through blended finance for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and combatting illicit and

harmful financial flows; 2) governance and institutional reform, including the development of integrated governance structures for coherent implementation of policies; and 3) partnership, collective action, and strengthened cooperation and multilateralism. In addition, the key to coming to a global phaseout of fossil fuel subsidies; mechanisms for policy-makers and states to be held accountable for environmental harm and crimes; debt amnesty to relevant countries; earmarking finance for environmental work; and scaling down military spending.

- West Asia – Intensify environmental awareness campaigns as part of national efforts to achieve sustainability in comprehensive development projects; promote environmental education, environmental justice, and commitment to stop environmental degradation; maximize the use of international funds and set up a unified portal to receive support and funding; decentralize environmental decision-making; prepare the “legislative climate” to accommodate the requirements of sustainability; stimulate the private sector to invest in implementing environmental interventions; continuing wars and conflicts in the region, which affect the environment; green and smart financing, and support for countries unable to access global funds, as is the case with Palestine and the Global Environment Facility.



UN Drought Appeal, Garissa, Kenya
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SECTION 3- PARALLEL WORKING GROUPS ON HIGH-IMPACT SECTORS

Table 6. Working Group 1: Circularity + Ending plastic pollution for a healthy planet and wellbeing

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
<i>End plastic pollution for a healthy planet and wellbeing</i>	<i>Circularity</i>	<i>Circular economy: Scaling up action in high-impact sectors</i>	<i>N.A.</i>	<i>Zero plastic pollution: A time to change our behavior toward single-use plastic production, consumption, and disposal</i>
<p><i>On regional leadership:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Continue the strong political commitment and good momentum in the region on reducing plastic waste and position it as a leader in helping to mainstream the issue <p><i>On incentives:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Put a price on plastic bags rather than distributing them for free, to incentivize a reduction in consumption – Engage brand owners to play a role in reducing plastic consumption by spreading the message and influencing consumer behavior towards creating a circular economy and reinforcing positive beliefs among customers – Label plastic products like cigarettes are labeled as “harmful to health” to further incentivize reduced consumption and remind consumers of the negative impacts – Further mainstream an Extended Producer Responsibility approach, which adds all lifecycle costs of a product to its market price 	<p><i>On how better-performing industries and supply chains for circular business can be created at scale and which sectors are the most critical:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Harmonize standards and regulations – Generate dialogue between industry and academia focusing on the circular economy – Work with multi-stakeholder groups to discuss the circular economy from scientific and research standpoints – Incorporate recycling into product supply chains and apply a life cycle perspective for products – Ensure that circular economy principles are implemented and human behavior is modified to focus on common well-being and environmental protection – Involve SMEs in reforming supply chains – Encourage reforms in the mining sector, in particular towards a circular economy 	<p><i>On creating better performing industries and supply chains for circular business models at scale in critical sectors (textiles and fashion, plastics and packaging, electronic waste, built environment, and food systems):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ensuring a “fair-trade market” across the globe, ensuring any restrictions are fair – Ecological industrial parks for all sectors – Free trade among countries, with new approaches with respect to the environment for sustainable development – Prioritization of circular economy goals in the vision and mission statements of business establishments, to guide their operations, combined with government support for compliance and implementation – Incentives and enabling environments for companies that would like to participate in the circular economy – Producers are to be responsible for waste segregation at the source 		<p><i>On the policy instruments available for achieving zero plastic pollution and lessons learned from their implementation in West Asia:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A regional approach to banning single-use plastics – Government incentives for the private sector to invest in recycling technologies – Policies enforcing segregation of waste at the source – Laws to reduce plastic use and monitor plastic pollution – Applying extended producer responsibility and the polluter-pays principle in waste management – An “if it can’t be recycled then it should not be sold or produced” approach to consumer goods – Banning single-use plastic bags and using biodegradable, multi-use bags – Identifying pathways for innovative plastic alternatives and investing in transitioning away from plastic – Facilitating private sector action – Developing a sustainable waste management system, including a possible rewards system

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
End plastic pollution for a healthy planet and wellbeing	Circularity	Circular economy: Scaling up action in high-impact sectors	N.A.	Zero plastic pollution: A time to change our behavior toward single-use plastic production, consumption, and disposal
<p>– Stop focusing solely on plastic pollution as a single issue and instead demonstrate the links between plastic pollution and other forms of pollution, making it easier for industry and SMEs to tackle the problem</p> <p><i>On monitoring:</i></p> <p>– Monitor how countries reduce plastic so that we can determine the degree of progress</p> <p><i>On cooperation and communication:</i></p> <p>– Harmonize efforts within government to take advantage of the expected significant funding and support for plastic pollution prevention. National action plans as a hub for coordinating different initiatives</p> <p>– Communicate any proposed regulations to the public well in advance as ambition continues to rise towards a Legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution</p> <p><i>On plastic waste trading:</i></p> <p>– A “localized” circular economy, so that waste is not just shipped to other countries</p> <p>– Note that not all plastic waste can be recycled, and plastic waste exports often include low-quality plastics that end up in landfills</p> <p>– Exporting countries need to be responsible for managing their own waste</p>	<p><i>On how to leverage the potential to create regenerative business models in the LAC region to maintain and restore natural ecosystems and how these processes can leverage traditional sciences and include traditional and Indigenous communities:</i></p> <p>– Application of circular economic models to a wide variety of situations</p> <p>– Private sector must transform linear practices into more circular ones</p> <p>– Private sector must connect with local communities</p> <p>– Denouncing “eco-cide” and ensuring that there are enforcement mechanisms to prevent environmental harm</p> <p>– Need to use new regenerative models</p> <p>– The value of engaging multi-stakeholder groups, including youth, the scientific community, CSOs, and Indigenous communities</p> <p>– Importance of restoring ecosystems</p> <p>– Need to engage indigenous groups, incorporate their views, and use traditional knowledge</p>	<p><i>On how these processes can leverage traditional sciences and be inclusive of traditional and Indigenous Peoples:</i></p> <p>– Valorizing traditional sciences to support modern technology, such as decriminalizing hemp which is a “booster for the economy in Africa”</p> <p>– Align indigenous knowledge to science to further utilize local solutions</p> <p>– Provide traditional and indigenous technology stakeholders with adequate social, economic, and environmental safeguards when they collaborate with businesses</p> <p>– Enact supportive laws and policies, build relevant infrastructure, and provide financial incentives</p> <p><i>On other key measures, besides financial support, that are needed to boost the circular economy across Africa:</i></p> <p>– Legislation is key, and markets must be encouraged to raise consumer interest and business standards</p> <p>– Better knowledge about the science behind the circular economy, to capture the interests of businesses and people</p> <p>– Enabling policy frameworks and uniform standards</p> <p>– Educational reforms with well-embedded circular economy concepts and themes</p>		<p><i>On best practices to inspire behavioral change and social responsibility among citizens and consumers to end plastic pollution:</i></p> <p>– Educating people, especially children, and youth, about the impacts of plastic use</p> <p>– Leading by example and being visible role models</p> <p>– Engaging the tourism sector in activities to minimize plastic use</p> <p>– Providing alternatives to plastics</p> <p>– Citizen engagement through calls to action to modify behavior and boost behavioral change</p> <p>– Focusing on what one can do, for instance, “I cannot litter, I can recycle, I can be an activist, I can be a change agent, I can be a Green entrepreneur”</p> <p>– Addressing production-side dynamics, such as through limiting annual plastic production</p> <p>– Targeting consumers who will make spending decisions based on their sustainability beliefs, for instance, by developing a “sustainable plastic or plastic-free” label</p> <p>– Awareness campaigns that put out clear, evidence-based messages in an easy-to-understand format about the scale of and solutions to the plastic problem</p>

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
End plastic pollution for a healthy planet and wellbeing	Circularity	Circular economy: Scaling up action in high-impact sectors	N.A.	Zero plastic pollution: A time to change our behavior toward single-use plastic production, consumption, and disposal
<p>On different types of plastics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increase prices for unnecessary disposable plastic products, such as cutlery, to discourage the use – Distinguish essential plastic items versus non-essential plastic items that end up harming the environment 	<p>On how to ensure that all countries and communities can benefit from opportunities stemming from the transition to a circular economy and the roles of citizens and digital technologies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Local capacities and understanding must be strengthened – Traditional knowledge must be used, local skills must be identified, and jobs must be created – Electronic waste must be addressed using circular economy principles – Training on circular economy principles for people outside the formal economy – Information must be disseminated and citizens must be informed so they can make better decisions, engage in circular economy practices, and be part of the policymaking process – All types of technology must be used, including local and traditional science and technology <p>On policies that are required in the next five years to make circular economy models the norm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provide for appropriate taxes, tariffs, and financial incentives – Encourage entrepreneurial projects 	<p>On policies required in the next five years to make circular economy models the norm rather than the exception, to reduce the material footprint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Challenges with scaling up business because many activities related to the circular economy are not profitable – Policies that promote regional PET recycling standards as an infrastructure – Ensure Africa benefits from the circular economy, rather than becoming a “dumping ground for second-hand goods” – Educate citizens on the consumption of recycled goods after standardization – Censure businesses that do not comply with adopted circular economy models <p>On partnerships, public-private coalitions, and civil society mechanisms that are needed to scale finance, strengthen governance, and reverse unsustainable production and consumption patterns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strengthening awareness through education – Permanent and frank partnerships to share ideas and work hand-in-hand for sustainable development 		<p>On how to strengthen waste management systems in West Asia to control and prevent plastic pollution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Accessibility of disposal points so people can “do the right thing” – Countries to have recycling programs that are accessible to the public – Strategy for environmentally sound waste management – A law that brings together all countries in the Mediterranean basin to reduce and eliminate single-use plastics and move towards integrated management of the production, use, and consumption of plastics – Plastic recycling factories – Implementing circular economy models – Policies targeting each stage of the plastic lifecycle to resolve the issue in an environmentally sound manner – Incentivizing and empowering the private sector to valorize recyclable plastic waste – Implementing best practices from countries that lead on waste management, such as Singapore and Sweden – Preventing the production and import of plastic extrusions that can be dispensed with, such as dishes and mugs – Implementation of the Basel Convention to eliminate transboundary transportation of plastic waste

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
<i>End plastic pollution for a healthy planet and wellbeing</i>	<i>Circularity</i>	<i>Circular economy: Scaling up action in high-impact sectors</i>	<i>N.A.</i>	<i>Zero plastic pollution: A time to change our behavior toward single-use plastic production, consumption, and disposal</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Foster a change in the economic models being applied so that circular economic practices become widespread – Encourage the private sector to adopt these models and give the private sector confidence that these models are safe to follow – Facilitate education on the circular economy <p><i>Regarding partnerships, public-private coalitions, and civil society mechanisms needed to scale finance, strengthen governance, and reverse unsustainable production and consumption patterns:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Alliances and initiatives fostering regional collaboration – Need to work together to achieve the SDGs – The value of having dialogue to identify lessons learned from the past 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – South-South and North-South cooperation for sharing best practices – Partnerships between traditional banks and the public and private sectors to provide financial support to green businesses – Zero tolerance for corruption – Sector-based partnerships for best practices and scaling up – Support for local media, such as radio and television stations and social media, to promote public awareness of proper waste management and other interventions in the regenerative economy – Support for civil society in the form of grants that promote the circular economy 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rural waste management systems, as rural areas often lack viable waste segregation, collection, and safe disposal options – Taxing products that pollute the environment – Promoting recycling, for instance, by collecting a deposit for drinks in single-use plastic bottles and returning that money back to the customer if the bottle is recycled <p><i>On how West Asia can promote regional and multi-stakeholder cooperation to address plastic pollution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – High-level coordination to encourage dialogue – More regional engagement to form a “common front” and develop a common policy to guide the process – Supporting multi-stakeholder cooperation, for instance, by establishing a multi-stakeholder forum, supported by a regional office, which includes representatives from each country in the region – Exchanging information and sharing experiences and modern technologies on the disposal of plastic, including at the regional level – Regulations and instructions on preventing the use of plastic products in tourist and natural areas – Marine protected areas for iconic species in the Gulf, such as whale sharks, dugongs, and turtles

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
<i>End plastic pollution for a healthy planet and wellbeing</i>	<i>Circularity</i>	<i>Circular economy: Scaling up action in high-impact sectors</i>	<i>N.A.</i>	<i>Zero plastic pollution: A time to change our behavior toward single-use plastic production, consumption, and disposal</i>
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Awareness raising on protecting human health and the environment from toxic chemicals – Taxation of plastic products – Multilateral commitments, such as a Gulf Cooperation Council-wide ban on single-use plastics <p><i>On key barriers to implementing readily available solutions and how these can be overcome:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Behavioral change, as plastic has become a daily essential for many people – Overcoming political, financial, technical, and management challenges to ending plastic pollution – Prioritizing environmentally sound end-of-waste policies and excluding disposal methods that create toxic emissions from plastics, such as incineration and waste-to-fuel practices – Speeding up government implementation of reforms or bans on single-use plastics – Global compacts on plastics, such as guided principles for companies and industries – The circular economy to form part of the solution – Transformative regulations to treat plastic waste in an environmentally sound manner – Government incentives for the private sector to invest in recycling technology.

Key issues shared by two or more regions on Circularity + Ending plastic pollution for a healthy planet and wellbeing:

1. Policies & Regulations:

- Legal recognition of “ecocide” and ensuring that there are enforcement mechanisms to prevent environmental harm
- Efforts within and outside governments to harmonize policy frameworks, standards, and regulations, including funding and support for plastic pollution prevention
- Facilitate access to information to citizens so that they are well-informed, in order to make better decisions, engage in circular economy practices, and be part of the policymaking process especially as ambition continues to rise towards a legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution
- Policies and regulations to reduce plastic use and monitor plastic pollution, for instance by preventing the use of plastic products in tourist and natural areas, banning single-use plastic bags, targeting each stage of the plastic lifecycle, and applying a lifecycle perspective for products (Extended Producer Responsibility approach), and incorporating and promoting recycling programs and standards that are accessible to the public
- Strong political commitment to encourage reforms toward a circular economy

2. Behavioral Change, Engagement & Cooperation:

- Ensure that people are engaged towards creating a circular economy and will help implement its principles in order to reach behavioral change, this includes engaging brand owners to play a role in reducing plastic consumption
- Important to support civil society, engaging and encouraging multi-stakeholder dialogues, including youth, the scientific community, CSOs, and Indigenous communities
- Supporting multi-stakeholder cooperation, alliances, and initiatives fostering regional collaboration, for instance, by establishing a multi-stakeholder forum,

leading to regional policies or through sector-based partnerships to share ideas and work hand-in-hand for sustainable development (i.e. between traditional banks and the public and private sectors to provide financial support to green businesses), South-South and North-South cooperation, etc.

- Key to sharing best practices and scaling up
- Strengthen the traditional sciences and modern technology interphase, using traditional and indigenous knowledge while providing knowledge holders with adequate social, economic, and environmental safeguards when they collaborate with businesses
- Identifying pathways for innovative plastic alternatives and transitioning away, for example, Global compact on plastics such as guiding principles for companies and industries

3. Private sector & SMEs:

- Private sector must transform linear practices into more circular ones, including involving SMEs in reforming product supply chains, and stop focusing solely on plastic pollution as a single issue and instead demonstrate the links between plastic pollution and other forms of pollution, making it easier for industry and SMEs to tackle the problem
- Encourage the private sector and other entrepreneurial projects for the prioritization of circular economy goals to guide their operations, combined with government support including incentives, for compliance and implementation
- Private sector must connect with local communities

4. Education & Awareness:

- Facilitate education and awareness raising, especially to children, youth, and businesses, on the impacts of and solutions to plastic use while bringing better knowledge about the circular economy concept including the consumption of recycled goods, financial support to green businesses, etc.

- Exchanging information, sharing experiences, and implementing best practices and modern technologies on waste management, including at the regional level

5. Waste:

- Prioritizing transformative environmentally sound end-of-waste policies such as applying extended producer responsibility and the polluter-pays principle to phase out plastic waste exports and prevent environmental harm
- Strong political commitment and public awareness on reducing plastic waste, such as the Implementation of the Basel Convention to eliminate transboundary transportation of plastic waste
- Developing proper sustainable waste management systems, including rural waste management systems, such as for plastics and electronics, and other interventions using circular economy principles for a regenerative economy
- Incentivizing circular economy models and empowering the private sector to valorize recyclable plastic waste although not all plastic waste can be recycled

6. Incentives:

- Incentivize a reduction in consumption through appropriate taxes on products that pollute the environment, tariffs, and financial incentives, for example, to the private sector to invest in recycling technologies or money-back opportunities to customers when recycling
- Either labeling plastic products and/or a “sustainable plastic or plastic-free” label reminding consumers of the negative impacts
- Enact supportive laws and policies including enabling environments for companies that would like to participate in the circular economy while providing financial support to green businesses, but censure those that do not comply with adopted circular economy models

Main regional priorities for Circularity + Ending plastic pollution for a healthy planet and wellbeing

- Asia & the Pacific - Given that UNEA-5.2 agreed to negotiate by 2024 a legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution, the Working Group identified key barriers, or “gaps,” that need to be addressed in the Asia-Pacific region: 1) The information and knowledge gap; 2) The policy and governance gap; 3) The technical capacity gap; and 4) The markets and finance gap. The region is willing to continue the strong political commitment and good momentum on reducing plastic waste and position it as a leader in helping to mainstream the issue.
- Africa - The region faces strong challenges for the implementation of a circular economy such as institutional, governance, and capacity development, including corruption; the high value of traditional and indigenous knowledge and bringing traditional sciences to support modern technology as it could result in benefits for the region's economy, such as decriminalizing hemp; provide traditional knowledge holders with adequate social, economic, and environmental safeguards when they collaborate with businesses; ensure Africa benefits from the circular economy, rather than becoming a “dumping ground for second-hand goods”
- LAC - The need for alliances and initiatives fostering regional collaboration; support for transitioning towards a circular economy and regenerative models, including financial incentives, education, and policy measures, that allow for the participation of youth, indigenous peoples, and local communities, CSOs; appropriate use of traditional knowledge and access to information; private sector accountability
- West Asia - A regional approach to banning single-use plastics including multilateral commitments, such as a Gulf Cooperation Council-wide ban on single-use plastics; a law that brings together all countries in the Mediterranean basin to reduce and eliminate single-use plastics and move towards integrated management of production, use, and consump-



Delegates of UNEA 3 at #BeatPollution sign. Nairobi, Kenya. 2017 © UNEP / Natalia Mroz



Mumbai, India. One of the largest beach clean-up in history © UNEP

tion of plastics; eliminate transboundary transportation of plastic waste including by implementing the Basel Convention; supporting multi-stakeholder cooperation, for instance, by establishing a multi-stakeholder forum, supported by a

regional office, which includes representatives from each country in the region; marine protected areas for iconic species in the Gulf, such as whale sharks, dugongs, and turtles.

Table 7. Working Group 2: Sustainable Food Systems: Safeguarding productivity and ensuring access for all

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
<i>Sustainable food systems for an inclusive recovery</i>	<i>N.A.</i>	<i>Sustainable Agri-food Systems: Safeguarding productivity and ensuring access for all</i>	<i>N.A.</i>	<i>Addressing food waste: Impacts and opportunities</i>
<p>On agri-food systems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Promote agroecology-based farming systems building on and supporting local and indigenous knowledge systems in agriculture – Focus on quality instead of quantity when it comes to food systems – Develop key standards and use tracking software to ensure supply chains are sustainable, and markets and producers are connected – Digital gap is persistent in the region and digitalization needs to be carried out with clear rules on ownership and use of the data and knowledge – Implement better tracking techniques along the value chain to ensure agricultural commodities meet the demand for deforestation-free agricultural products in the EU and the US – Ensure that small-scale farmers are part of the solution and that their productivity is also raised – Promote diversified food production as a key approach for sustainable nutrition and food security – Recognize, at the policy level, that many small-scale farmers are already climate resilient 		<p>On how to increase the productivity of smallholder farmers while using fewer resources, and to feed the region by 2050:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Addressing post-harvest losses, waste, and water harvest – Promoting sustainable agricultural management through agroforestry – Implementing mixed farming, which could include the use of biofertilizers, soil and water conservation, pastoralism, irrigation, and application of manure and fertilizers – Planting fruit trees and cash crops – Training smallholder farmers on utilizing manure for soil fertility – Securing the land rights of smallholders and allowing for the use of the “commons,” for instance, in pastoralism, where livestock can be moved across the landscape – Promoting systems of social security and the rights to seed sharing and preservation – Rejecting short-term solutions that make smallholders reliant on patented seeds and dangerous pesticides and herbicides 		<p>On what should Stockholm+50 consider as priorities in addressing food waste challenges in the region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – National governments to embrace “nudge policies” as they are not too expensive and have proven to be effective in food waste reduction – Raising awareness among consumers through campaigns and training in schools – Involving retailers and caterers in launching initiatives to reduce food waste – Developing policies to tax restaurant clientele on leftover food – Establishing a baseline for food waste generated in each country – Improving consumer understanding of date labels (most common date labels distinguish between quality, for instance, “best before,” and safety, for instance, “use by” or “expiration date”) and food items storage – Including food waste reduction and prevention strategies in national strategic planning – Taxing buffet-type restaurants to encourage distribution of leftovers through food Banks and other networks

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
<i>Sustainable food systems for an inclusive recovery</i>	<i>N.A.</i>	<i>Sustainable Agri-food Systems: Safeguarding productivity and ensuring access for all</i>	<i>N.A.</i>	<i>Addressing food waste: Impacts and opportunities</i>
<p>– Acknowledge that communities, Indigenous Peoples, and others are coming together to engage governments, and the UN needs to help facilitate that engagement</p> <p>– Further clarify the concept of Nature-based Solutions to have a common understanding of the principles and elements involved and to avoid its “capture” for non-sustainable means and ends</p> <p>– Restructure government support to farmers by rewarding farmers for outcomes, such as enhanced ecosystem services, instead of rewarding them for outputs such as yields</p> <p><i>On increasing food production:</i></p> <p>– Improve infrastructure to reduce food loss and harness digital technologies for smarter food production and transport</p> <p>– Discuss Nature-based Solutions from the perspective of Indigenous Peoples’ human rights</p> <p>– Provide real alternatives to pesticide use</p> <p>– Harness good practices that have come out of the pandemic such as urban gardening and farming, and promote food production in communities and households</p> <p>– Provide financial and technical support to local community projects to make communities more resilient</p>		<p><i>On measures needed to further accelerate the inclusion of the most vulnerable to ensure fair and transparent food system transformation, including lessons learned from the pandemic, its impacts, and the UN Food Systems Summit proceedings:</i></p> <p>– Recognizing the value of soil and providing financial support for soil conservation measures</p> <p>– Securing land rights, land access, and land redistribution for vulnerable groups</p> <p>– Leveraging information technology to improve access to extension services and meteorological information</p> <p>– Providing access to financial capital and support for the marketing of produce</p> <p>– Explicitly addressing the root causes of inequalities that limit the participation of vulnerable groups</p> <p>– Adopting “gender perspective” approaches, for instance by reforming laws and practices that discriminate against women, by empowering women socially, economically, and politically, and by encouraging women and youth to access decision-making positions</p> <p>– Developing the full agriculture value chain to accommodate young people</p>		<p>– Promoting policies and incentives to prevent and reduce food waste</p> <p>– Implementing SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production</p> <p>– Recycling and digital transformation initiatives</p> <p>– Promoting holistic partnerships with all segments of society</p> <p>– Promoting data collection on food waste</p> <p>– Transfer of technology for food recycling</p> <p>– Helping young people to actively engage with agri-food production</p> <p>– Establishing community partnerships with all sectors of society, government, the private sector, CSOs, and other stakeholders</p> <p>– Composting leftover food</p> <p>– Implementing farm-to-table concepts</p> <p>– Promoting food sharing and food recovery, particularly in urban areas</p> <p>– Establishing food banks</p> <p>– Ensuring a proper transportation and storage network is in place for the food cold chain</p> <p>– Promoting public-private initiatives that support food waste reduction</p> <p>– Using role models and influencers to encourage lifestyles that reduce food waste</p> <p>– Helping farmers plan food production to meet consumer demands and supporting sustainable agricultural practices</p>

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
<i>Sustainable food systems for an inclusive recovery</i>	<i>N.A.</i>	<i>Sustainable Agri-food Systems: Safeguarding productivity and ensuring access for all</i>	<i>N.A.</i>	<i>Addressing food waste: Impacts and opportunities</i>
<p><i>On inclusion of the most vulnerable to ensure a fair and transparent food system transformation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enable and support direct links between consumers and producers and between rural and urban communities to allow for shorter and more resilient value chains – Promote and support urban farming as key to ensuring food security and strengthen local markets – Address forest resources and inclusion in the context of a long-standing struggle of Indigenous Peoples in the region – Proposals on the promotion of digitalization in agriculture should take into account those who are left behind – “the bottom billion” without access to digital infrastructure or basic services, such as electricity and education – Develop best practices for using emerging technologies like blockchain for data logs – Recognize that dependence on digital technologies comes with environmental and social costs, including those associated with the extraction of minerals and rare earths to produce digital gadgets and infrastructure, and the massive use of energy by blockchains 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rejecting food system monopolies at all levels, from production to distribution and retail – Ensuring Africa becomes self-sufficient by “consuming what we produce” and encouraging local production through the consumption of local products – Strengthening trade in local produce among African countries – Enhancing food distribution in Africa by, inter alia, investing in cold chains and good distribution systems – Creating platforms that promote and stimulate the sharing of knowledge, experiences, and lessons learned – Enabling the engagement of vulnerable groups in formal mechanisms so as to increase fairness of processes and contribute to better and more sustainable policies – Promoting the use of solar cooling technology for perishable crops <p><i>On how to promote access to affordable, safe, and nutritious food and reduce consumption of unhealthy foods:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Educating the public on the need to avoid sugary and fatty foods, and limiting the marketing of unhealthy foods, especially to children – Providing good-quality foods in schools and hotels 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Using technology to encourage climate-smart agriculture – Accelerating the supply chain in local communities – Ensuring access to the market for local food producers <p><i>On technologies that can be implemented to reduce food waste across the food value chain:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Measuring food waste at the household level – Creating recipes from leftovers – Using food waste for compost for food production – Community fridges to donate food <p><i>On the types of partnerships that can help achieve SDG 12.3 (by 2030, halve per capita global food waste):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Food Banks to have a good relationship with the local communities so that anybody can approach them for help or donate to them – Partnerships with schools and universities to create awareness from an early age and carry out research projects on behavioral change – Partnerships that encourage sustainable food practices – Partnerships that promote local food production – Partnerships incorporating climate-smart agriculture

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
<i>Sustainable food systems for an inclusive recovery</i>	N.A.	<i>Sustainable Agri-food Systems: Safeguarding productivity and ensuring access for all</i>	N.A.	<i>Addressing food waste: Impacts and opportunities</i>
<p>– Strengthen the voice and “real” participation of farmers in development plans and actions at the national level to enable their recognition as stakeholders</p> <p>– Ensure that disaster risk reduction frameworks are aimed at keeping food production systems resilient so they can recover from disasters</p> <p><i>On access to healthy diets:</i></p> <p>– Reduce food waste and work towards normalizing less processed and healthier foods Use examples of how governance has been used as a driver in other countries to make unhealthy consumption choices unattractive and thereby improve people's diets</p> <p>– Label fast food, indicating the high levels of sugar, salt, and fat. Consider also choice editing to encourage healthier diets</p> <p>– Work with restaurants, hotels, schools, and others to promote healthy and seasonal diets</p> <p>– Enforce laws on farming control to encourage farming that is beneficial for biodiversity and the natural environment</p> <p>– Promote and up-scale local food production and diversified farming, including urban farming</p>		<p>– Promoting consumption of traditional and local foods, such as insects, which are nutrient-rich but seasonal</p> <p>– Growing indigenous vegetables and fruits</p> <p>– Creating awareness of healthy food preparation and storage, and promoting and investing in innovative technology and practices for healthy food processing</p> <p>– Strengthening laws and regulations that govern food safety and quality</p> <p>– Limiting massive monocrops of sugar cane and palm, among others, by designating land to smallholders, zoning agricultural land, incentivizing agroecology, and introducing bans, among other measures</p> <p>– Instituting compulsory education on sustainable farming and living practices such as permaculture</p> <p>– Regulating the monopoly of supermarkets across Africa, which often carry mostly unhealthy foods</p> <p>– Adopting a holistic approach, which upholds food security and empowers communities to adopt healthy diets</p> <p>– Reducing the cost of organic food to make it affordable for ordinary people</p>		<p><i>On measures to further accelerate the inclusion of the most vulnerable, including women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples, to ensure fair and transparent food system transformation, using lessons learned from the pandemic and its effects:</i></p> <p>– Ensuring gender is mainstreamed in policies related to food loss and waste</p> <p>– Empathy and understanding, including highlighting that using food banks is not shameful</p> <p>– Food sustainability programs</p> <p><i>On how to promote sustainable lifestyles effectively and finding effective ways to engage people:</i></p> <p>– Involving influencers to share messages around food waste</p> <p>– Not going hungry to supermarkets</p> <p>– Practicing “clean cooking” in order to save time and materials</p> <p>– Implementing extended producer responsibility and “anti-waste” laws, such as taxation on restaurant leftovers and buffets</p> <p>– Educating youth to trigger behavioral change</p> <p>– Shortening food supply chains</p>

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
<i>Sustainable food systems for an inclusive recovery</i>	<i>N.A.</i>	<i>Sustainable Agri-food Systems: Safeguarding productivity and ensuring access for all</i>	<i>N.A.</i>	<i>Addressing food waste: Impacts and opportunities</i>
<p>– Adopt policies for local procurement of sustainably produced and healthy foods in schools and government institutions</p> <p>– Ensure that the poor, the marginalized, and those already left behind do not further suffer from trade-offs made in government policies and decisions</p> <p>– Promote urban agriculture and backyard gardening and support the production of diversified foods at local levels</p> <p>– Address barriers like business industry lobbying, which halts the switch to more healthy and sustainable consumption choices</p> <p>– Support healthy food production through regulation</p> <p>– Create a mechanism to work with both “indigenous science” and modern science</p> <p><i>On green jobs and nature-friendly inputs:</i></p> <p>– Incentivize the greening of SMEs by defining what would constitute a green job including a set of criteria</p> <p>– Validate and promote local seeds, knowledge, and practices</p> <p>– Promote the circular economy in the food system</p>		<p><i>On how to generate green jobs and promote the use of nature-friendly inputs, practices, and materials from production</i> Implementing agroforestry, community forestry, land planning, and waste management to consumption:</p> <p>– Implementing agroforestry, community forestry, land planning, and waste management</p> <p>– Creating and implementing standards for imported foods</p> <p>– Investing in developing the agricultural value chain and a pan-African trading bloc</p> <p>– Promoting and increasing the number of “farmer schools”</p> <p>– Creating opportunities in ecosystem restoration, which is important for biodiversity, climate change, and food systems because it supports soil rejuvenation, water quality, and pollination</p> <p>– Implementing targeted activities, which provide income to communities, especially women, such as establishing tree nurseries and agroforestry with high-value trees like avocados, mangoes, and macadamia</p> <p>– Include courses on agroecology, improved water management, climate adaptation, and sustainable farming practices in agricultural training colleges</p>		

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
<i>Sustainable food systems for an inclusive recovery</i>	<i>N.A.</i>	<i>Sustainable Agri-food Systems: Safeguarding productivity and ensuring access for all</i>	<i>N.A.</i>	<i>Addressing food waste: Impacts and opportunities</i>
<p>– Focus on the better or more regulated use of information and communication technology and digital platforms “at the nexus of sectors,” including water systems, agriculture, and supply chains</p> <p>– Align future employment changes with the principles of just transition</p> <p>– Encourage policy-makers to shift their focus to agroecology, which has multiplier effects for employment at every stage of agricultural production, and helps reduce cost and the carbon footprint.</p>		<p><i>On how African countries can work together to boost regional cooperation to strengthen food systems and develop sustainable agriculture:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Participatory monitoring and evaluation – Easy border crossing between neighboring countries – Knowledge sharing, including indigenous knowledge, such as through African food systems networks – Seed sharing – Transdisciplinary, transboundary, and regional mapping exercises – Regulations that promote food trade within the region – Encouraging citizens to undertake and contribute scientific research – Special free trade agreements for agricultural products – Youth engagement and training, including for rural populations – Increasing social protection to ensure everyone has enough money to buy food – Improved local infrastructure, such as farm and market roads – Stakeholder platforms where action coalitions are formed around specific themes that boost regional cooperation – Updated regional policy frameworks 		

Asia & The Pacific	Latin America & The Caribbean	Africa	Europe & North America	West Asia
<i>Sustainable food systems for an inclusive recovery</i>	<i>N.A.</i>	<i>Sustainable Agri-food Systems: Safeguarding productivity and ensuring access for all</i>	<i>N.A.</i>	<i>Addressing food waste: Impacts and opportunities</i>
		<p>On follow-up activities from Stockholm+50:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – More regional consultations and participation – Discussion and promotion of the rights-of-nature approach – Inclusion of indigenous knowledge in sustainable agricultural food systems – New workable decisions for all, with accountability and transparency. 		

Key issues shared by two or more regions on Sustainable Food Systems: Safeguarding productivity and ensuring access for all:

1. Food Waste:

- Reduce food waste, including addressing post-harvest losses, establishing food banks, involving retailers in launching initiatives to reduce food waste, and national governments policies and incentives to prevent and reduce food waste, such as food waste reduction and prevention strategies in national strategic planning, data collection on food waste including establishing a baseline for food waste in each country, using food waste for compost for food production, implementing extended producer responsibility and “anti-waste” laws, such as taxation, etc.
- Implementing extended producer responsibility and “anti-waste” laws, such as taxation

2. Gender:

- Ensuring gender is mainstreamed including by adopting “gender perspective” approaches, for instance by reforming laws and practices that discriminate against women, by implementing targeted activities and empowering women socially, economically, and politically, and by encouraging women and youth to access decision-making positions.

3. Value Chains & Trade:

- Ensuring access to market for local food producers and implementing farm-to-table concepts to allow for shorter and more resilient food supply chains
- Develop key standards and use tracking software to ensure supply chains are sustainable, and markets and producers are connected
- Regulations to promote regional trade of agricultural products
- Creating and implementing standards for imported foods

4. Farming:

- Promote, upscale, and implement diversified farming, which could include the use of biofertilizers (and other alternatives to pesticide use)
- Enforce laws to encourage farming that is beneficial for biodiversity and the natural environment including partnerships for local food production and helping farmers meet consumer demands and supporting sustainable agricultural practices, such as training smallholder farmers on utilizing manure for soil fertility.
- Recognizing the value of soil and providing financial support for soil conservation measures
- Implementing agroforestry, community forestry, land planning, and waste management
- Rejecting food system monopolies at all levels, including massive mono-crops of sugar cane and palm, among others, from production to distribution and retail, and taking measures to limit it such as ensuring land tenure rights to smallholders, zoning agricultural land, incentivizing agroecology, and introducing bans, among other measures.

5. Seeds:

- Validate and promote systems of social security and the rights for local seeds’ knowledge, sharing, and preservation rejecting short-term solutions that make smallholders reliant on patented seeds and dangerous pesticides and herbicides

6. Technology:

- Further regulate and leverage information and communication technology in order to improve access to extension services and ensure markets and producers are connected, develop key standards and

improve tracking techniques/software to ensure supply chains are sustainable.

- Solve the digital gap by providing access to digital infrastructure or basic services, such as electricity and education, while recognizing that digitalization needs to be carried out with clear rules on ownership and use of the data and knowledge, and that dependence on digital technologies comes with environmental and social costs
- Develop best practices for using emerging technologies like blockchain for data logs

7. Financial Support:

- Provide financial and technical support for the marketing of produce and to local community projects to make communities more resilient

8. Healthy Diets & Education:

- Adopting a holistic approach, which upholds food security and empowers communities to adopt healthy diets
- Support healthy food production through regulation, such as adopting policies for local procurement of sustainably produced and healthy foods in schools and government institutions, and use examples of how governance has been used as a driver to make unhealthy consumption choices unattractive
- Work with restaurants, hotels, schools, and others to raise awareness of the need to avoid sugary and fatty foods and promote good-quality, healthy and seasonal diets and limit the marketing of unhealthy foods
- Partnerships with schools and universities to educate from an early age and carry out projects on behavioral change, such as courses and opportunities on agroecology, permaculture and improved water management, climate adaptation, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable farming and living practices
- Label fast food and improve consumer understanding of labels

9. Engagement & Collaboration

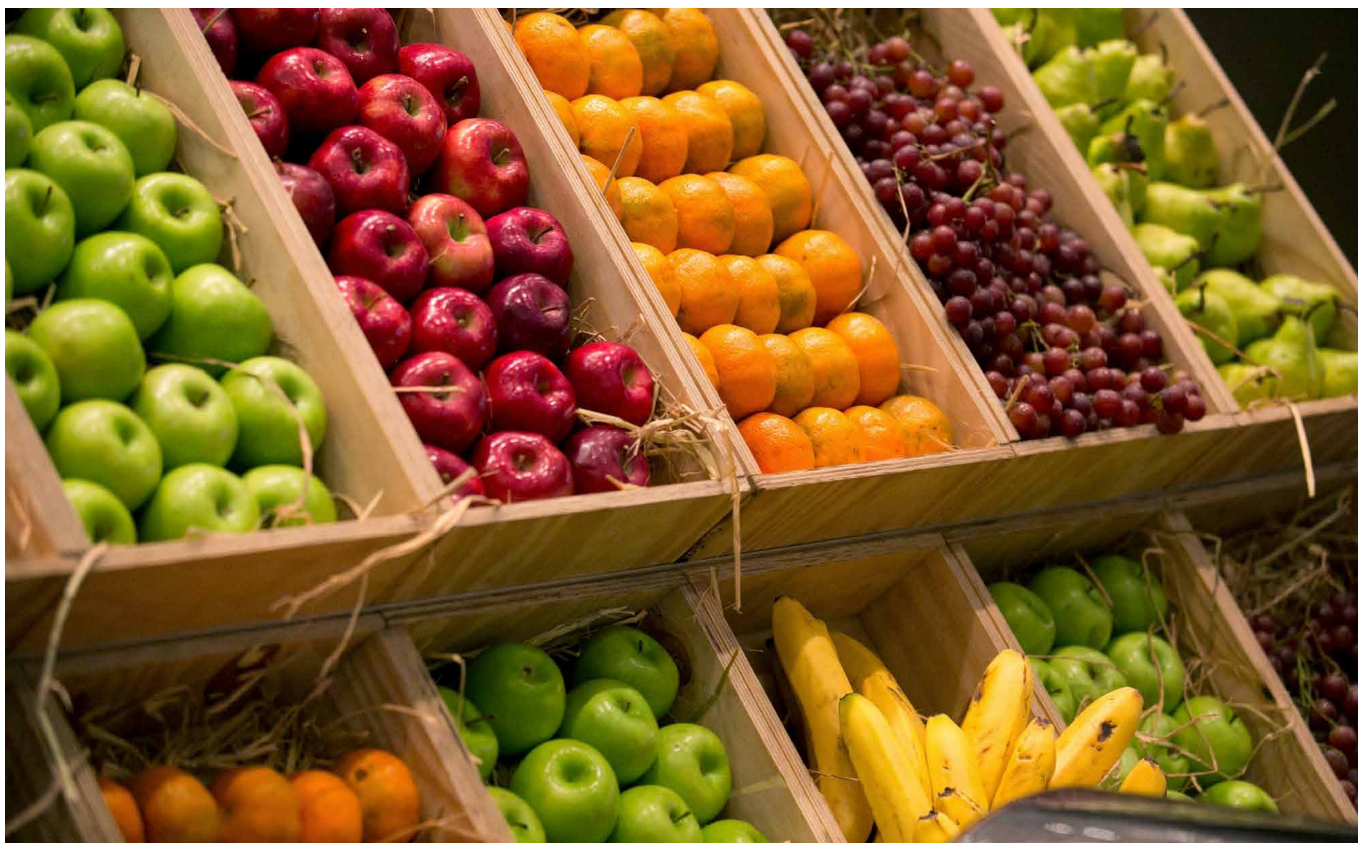
- Strengthen the voice and “real” participation of farmers in development plans and actions at the national level to enable their recognition as stakeholders, and ensure that small-scale farmers are part of the solution.
- Addressing the root causes of inequalities that limit the participation of vulnerable groups to enable their engagement in formal mechanisms so as to increase the fairness of processes and contribute to better and more sustainable policies, such as addressing forest resources and inclusion in the context of a long-standing struggle of Indigenous Peoples in some regions
- Promoting holistic partnerships with all segments of society to encourage sustainable food practices, including facilitation of the UN for Indigenous Peoples’ engagement with governments, and stakeholder platforms where action coalitions are formed around specific themes that boost regional policy frameworks as well as cooperation, leading to more regional consultations and participation
- Youth engagement and training, including for rural populations, in agri-food production

10. Agroecology & Indigenous Knowledge

- Promote agroecology building on and supporting local and indigenous knowledge in agricultural food systems including the consumption of traditional and local foods, such as insects, and indigenous vegetables and fruits
- Encourage policymakers to shift their focus to agroecology and incentivize it
- Strengthening laws and regulations that focus on quality and safety when it comes to food systems

11. Infrastructure

- Improve infrastructure, including local, to reduce food loss, and harness innovative as well as digital technologies for smarter



Sustainable Innovation Forum at COP 20, Lima, Peru. 2014© UNEP

and healthier food preparation, storage, and transport.

Main regional priorities for Sustainable Food Systems: Safeguarding productivity and ensuring access for all

- Asia & the Pacific – Continue to address the problem of food waste with the use of technology, for instance for tracking and tracing; take into account the persistent digital gap and note that digitalization needs to be carried out with clear rules on ownership and use of the data and knowledge. Address forest resources and inclusion in the context of a long-standing struggle of Indigenous Peoples in the region; ensure food security including by promoting urban agriculture and agroecology for local food production building on indigenous and traditional knowledge.
- Africa – Ensuring Africa becomes self-sufficient by encouraging local production and consuming what is produced locally while encouraging knowledge sharing,

including indigenous knowledge, such as through African food systems networks; build and strengthen bridges of collaboration among African countries including investing in developing the agricultural value chain and a pan-African trading bloc, for example; implement transdisciplinary, transboundary, and regional mapping exercises, and promote and invest in innovative technology and practices for healthy food processing. Sustainable food systems that are inclusive of small-holder farmers, especially women, who can access training opportunities and have their land rights secured while allowing for the use of the “commons,” for instance, in pastoralism, where livestock can be moved across the landscape; educate the public on sustainable farming and living practices such as permaculture and healthy diets and the need to regulate the monopoly of supermarkets across Africa. Create opportunities in ecosystem restoration, which is important for biodiversity, climate change, and food sys-

tems because it supports soil rejuvenation, water quality, and pollination.

- West Asia – Addressing food waste by 1) promoting sustainable lifestyles; 2) promoting data collection on food waste and establishing a baseline to formulate impactful policies; 3) empowering youth to boost behavioral change, 4) encouraging food ‘sharing’ and donations, and establishing food banks while bringing a positive connotation to it; 5) promoting the use of the farm-to-table concept, and en-

courage food purchases from local suppliers only; 6) implementing SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production; 7) use technology to promote smart agriculture techniques; 8) use policies and programs to address food waste, including “nudge policies” that are low-cost and effective and that are mainstream gender; 9) raising awareness about food waste impacts on the environment and food security, and the financial benefits of reducing food waste.

Table 8. Latin America & the Caribbean - Working Group 4: “Small Island Developing States (SIDS) for Stockholm+50”

Key Issues Affecting the Sustainable Development of Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

- Limited space and human capacity to face challenges and the gap between proposed solutions for issues such as climate change, and the availability of technology needed to tackle these
- Ocean resources are paramount to the development and well-being of the region, and while there is recognition of the push to transition away from fossil fuel-dependent industries,
- The need for a just transition for those reliant on their use should not be ignored

On good practices and pathways to successfully restore and regenerate a positive relationship between the economy and nature:

- Importance of traditional knowledge and the application of the “Stockholm principles,” such as the polluter-pays principle
- Under solutions to the main challenges that act as barriers to a sustainable and inclusive recovery in Caribbean SIDS:
- Investing in nature-based solutions and green infrastructure in marine environments; and recognition of traditional fishing and farming practices

On specific and realistic actions to accelerate the change towards a healthy planet:

- Need for educational policies and legislation that would address the region's challenges

On new economic models that could bring Caribbean SIDS to the next era of development that is also in tune with nature and society:

- Blue economy and circular economy
- Many agreed on the importance of respecting natural ecosystems
- Some supported strengthening intersectoral cooperation within states

On fostering a circular economy in the Caribbean SIDS:

- The impact of effective waste management and the need to shift to more sustainable production patterns

Box 3 - Specific actions participants would be prepared to bring to Stockholm+50 and beyond, highlighting projects that are already promoting sustainable development in the region, such as:

- Initiatives to recognize the rights of nature
- Creating a SIDS science-policy-business platform
- Supporting artisanal fishermen and women
- Presenting research outcomes relevant to the region



Alliance of Small Island States logo © AOSIS



Tree of Hope, placed in the middle of the stadium where athletes and participants pinned leaves with environmental wishes. Bengaluru, 2011 © UNEP

SECTION 4 – REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS GENERAL INFORMATION

Table 9. Representation of participants to consultations

Region	No. of participants	Gender	Age group (years)	Sector (Top 5)
Asia and the Pacific	Day 1 - 303 Day 2 - 323	Female 51% Male 46% Non-Binary 1%	18-24 = 9% 25-34 = 27% 35-44 = 25% 45-54 = 23% 54+ = 16%	Environment 55% Education 11% Other 11% Agriculture & Food 6% Government 3%
Latin America & the Caribbean	Day 1 - 876 Day 2 - 843	Female 55% Male 42% Non-Binary 1%	18-24 = 11% 25-34 = 25% 35-44 = 26% 45-54 = 20% 54+ = 18%	Environment 42% Education 17% Other 13% Agriculture & Food 9% Government 4%
Africa	Day 1 - 701 Day 2 - 719	Female 39% Male 60% Non-Binary 0%	18-24 = 6% 25-34 = 33% 35-44 = 28% 45-54 = 18% 54+ = 15%	Environment 49% Agriculture & Food 15% Education 9% Other 8% Government 4%
North America & Europe	Day 1 - 469	Female 60% Male 36% Non-Binary 1%	18-24 = 8% 25-34 = 23% 35-44 = 23% 45-54 = 21% 54+ = 25%	Environment 53% Other 14% Education 11% Agriculture & Food 6% Cities/Industry/Health/Green Energy/ Government/Finance & Investment 2%
West Asia	Day 1 - 140 Day 2 - 118	Female 52% Male 46% Non-Binary 2%	18-24 = 9% 25-34 = 16% 35-44 = 34% 45-54 = 28% 55+ = 13%	Environment 53% Agriculture & Food 11% Education 9% Other 9% Government 6%



Stockholm+50 Open Plenary © UNEP / Duncan Moore

Outcomes of Stockholm+50 National Consultations ¹

Excerpts from the **United Nations Development Program**

Organizations across the globe commemorated the Stockholm+50 international meeting in June 2022. In lead-up to the event, the Government of Sweden supported Stockholm+50 National Consultations across 58 countries. Here, UNDP provides a read-out of the consultations.

Stockholm+50 called for an inclusive approach that reflects the richness and diversity of voices and perspectives of various stakeholder groups - local governments, cities, civil society, women, indigenous peoples and local communities, faith-based groups, academia, youth, industry, finance, and others. To enable stakeholder groups from developing countries to contribute to the preparation of the international meeting, between February and May 2022, the Government of Sweden held national consultations, facilitated by UNDP through UNDP Country Offices.

The national consultations aimed to stimulate an inclusive, whole-of-society and whole-of-government dialogue on the themes of Stockholm+50 and the Leadership Dialogues. Consultation outcomes informed the Stockholm+50 international meeting through national reports and a global synthesis report that captured key findings, recommendations, data, media coverage, and links to national policy frameworks such as NDCs, NAPs, NBSAPS, green recovery, and sector strategies.

Over 160 Stockholm+50 national events took place across more than 50 countries. In-person and hybrid consultations were supported with on-line dialogues on UNDP's [SparkBlue Platform](#). We have heard a great diversity of voices from all countries - all calling for a healthier planet and a more inclusive and sustainable development choices.

¹ Re-posted from <https://www.stockholm50.global/news-and-stories/outcomes-stockholm50-national-consultations>

The messages and highlights from the national consultations are summarized below.

- Countries call for stronger partnerships on **improved means of implementation** of the Decade of Action, including improved capacities, technology transfer, North-South and South-South cooperation.
- There is a need for **strengthened environmental governance** at all levels, building upon enhanced public participation and access to environmental information, improved evidence-base and risk knowledge, rebuilt trust between governments and society, and an effective response to the needs of stakeholder groups, including women, youth, indigenous peoples, local communities, people with disabilities, and others.
- There is a call to radically **improve financing** for the delivery of environmental targets of SDGs by unlocking and consolidating environmental finance across all sources – domestic and international, public and private, and hybrid – and by smarter and more effective management of environmental and climate finance.
- There is an understanding of the need for **integrated resilient solutions** beyond nature, climate and energy that address complex and growing risks of food and energy insecurity, fragility and conflict, growing debt, poverty and inequality.
- Countries are looking for strong drivers for **economic transformation** towards greener and healthier development. This includes support to adjust national targets and metrics, to reform economic systems and investment flows towards sustainable consumption and production and circularity, and to reduce the environmental footprint from high-impact sectors such as food, energy, extractives, tourism, transport and infrastructure.
- National stakeholders have highlighted the need for a **just and inclusive transition** towards greener and resilient development, which should include targeted support to workers across formal and informal sectors and their families who might be negatively affected by the eco-

nomic transformation, with a particular focus on groups living in vulnerable and marginalized contexts

- **Youth leaders and activists** have been very vocal across all supported countries sharing their views on the Stockholm+50 Leadership Dialogue themes. Youth participants have highlighted: the need for environmental and climate education, training, capacity building and access to information; the importance for their governments to unlock and promote green jobs, green businesses and youth innovations; and the need for increased and consolidated international and national funding flows for the accelerated implementation of environmental and climate action.
- Finally, the countries are looking forward to Stockholm+50 for result oriented recommendations and commitments, which could be translated into **bold** transformative **follow-up action** through fair and effective multilateralism.

In the **Latin America and Caribbean** the Stockholm+50 national consultations were hosted by Argentina, Barbados, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru, Mexico, Trinidad & Tobago, and Uruguay. A few highlights from the consultations:

- **Argentina** had a successful [kick-off event for the Stockholm+50 National Consultation](#) on 21 March followed with a series of consultation events in April-May including dialogues with senate, private sector, trade unions, faith-based organizations and CSOs, indigenous people, youth and media. Please follow the Argentina's consultation on [Stockholm+50 SparkBlue](#). You can also explore [articles on gender, climate, biodiversity and more](#).
- **Colombia** was the first country to [launch its Stockholm+50 national consultation](#) on 24 February, and since then conducted over a dozen of sectoral and provincial dialogues on the Stockholm+50 agenda. Please explore the consultation materials and follow the blogs and stories from Colombia on SparkBlue.



2014 World Environment Day on the topic "Raise Our Voices, Not Sea Levels" focused on the leadership of small island developing states and sought to shine a spotlight on the challenges such islands face on a daily basis. Barbados, 2014 © UNEP / Alejandro Laguna

- On 28 March **Costa Rica** launched the inclusive [consultation process](#) which included a strong focus on vulnerable groups including women, LGBTIQ+, indigenous and ethnic communities while also covering academia and private sector. [Presentation](#) of the national consultation results was planned for 31 May. Follow the [Costa Rica SparkBlue Page](#) for videos and blogs.
- A series of consultation events in **Cuba** were concluded with the final [national event on 12 May](#). Cuban consultations were accompanied with an active [on-line SparkBlue discussions](#).
- Following the official launch of the national consultation on 18 March, **Ecuador** offered its national stakeholders [multiple ways to engage](#) in the consultation ranging from targeted interviews to an [Online survey](#), three virtual workshops, three provincial meetings, and discussions on the UNDP Sparkblue platform.
- Following the successful [launch on 11 April](#), **Mexico** planned a series of five national consultation events. The [first national consultation](#) focused on youth voices, the [second event on 26 April](#) looked at the roles of national and subnational governments. Mexico's consultations also covered private sector, labor unions, civil society and academia, had a strong representation of women voices, and will be aligned with the national consultations towards the World Urban Forum.

In **Africa and Arab States** the national consultations were supported in Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, CAR, Cote D'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Iraq, Guinea, Jordan, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, State of Palestine, Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

- Between 21 and 28 April, **Angola** conducted [five Stockholm+50 national consultation events](#) with local communities, students and youth. Following these preparatory events, the [high level consultation session](#) on 4 May brought together multiple stakeholders, members of the government and civil society, academia, private sector, the minority groups and many more.
- The [first national consultation event](#) in **Cameroon** was held on 9 May and explored the themes of the Stockholm+50 Leadership Dialogue 1.
- The [first Stockholm+50 discussion](#) with Youth in **Central African Republic** took place on 5 April, followed on 14 April with a local consultation in the North West region with nearly a hundred development actors - administrators, businesses, women, young people and the Muslim community – getting together to formulate recommendations related to the Stockholm+50 agenda.
- In **Cote d'Ivoire** the Stockholm+50 consultation was [launched on 17 March](#) and has been closely aligned and coordinated with the preparatory consultations in the lead to UNCCD COP15 hosted by the country in May and with the consultations on the NY Declaration on Forests.
- **Ethiopia** organized [two national face-to-face consultation events](#) in the capital on 11-12 April and on 12-13 May to discuss the Leadership Dialogue themes and the national priorities. The events were also accessible by zoom and through livestreaming.
- **Guinea** completed an impressive [series of nine consultations](#) launched on 13 April. Through a mixture of in-person, hybrid and on-line events the Stockholm+50 consultation outreached women groups and women entrepreneurs; students and youth; NGO community; and the national ministries of environment, agriculture and livestock, women, youth and vulnerable people empowerment, and the ministry of energy, hydraulics and hydrocarbons.
- **Jordan** launched its [first national consultation in Amman](#) on 28 March devoted to Stockholm+50 themes and hosting 85 participants from private sector, academia, members of government and press. The second Stockholm+50 consultation in Northern Jordan (19 April) hosted local communities, and civil society actors. The third event on 11 May targeted stakeholders in the Southern Jordan. The last event on 12 May provided venue for the voices of women, youth and people with disabilities. Please follow the events in Jordan on SparkBlue.
- Following the successful launch on 7 March, **Liberia** conducted a series of regional (provincial) consultations. The first [provincial consultation for the Grand Bassa County](#) led by the Liberia's Environment Protection Agency and a series of student consultations at [Harbel College](#) and [Bassa High School](#) took place on 23-25 March. The second provincial consultation in the Nimba County was held from March 30 to April 1. The regional dialogues covered a broad spectrum of stakeholder groups who have highlighted the urgency of concrete actions to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity of all. The final national consultation event was conducted on 4 May. All Liberian national events could be followed on the [Liberia Stockholm+50 SparkBlue page](#).
- **Mali** consultations were conducted on 26-27 April in-person following a series of preparatory events. Live streaming is available on [Mali SparkBlue page](#).
- **Mauritius** completed its in-person Stockholm+50 National Consultation on 28 April following a series of preparatory consultations with various stakeholder groups including university students, youth and people with disabilities, women and elderlies, and service clubs.



Climate Strike Youth. Youth gather in Karura forest in solidarity with the global climate youth marches. Nairobi, 2019 © UNEP

All consultation materials can be accessed on the [Mauritius SparkBlue page](#).

- **Morocco** launched its [national consultation process](#) on 11 May. Consultations included three virtual events focusing on the Stockholm+50 Leadership Dialogue themes over 11-13 May.
- **Mozambique** Stockholm+50 consultation process was initiated on 22 April and was supported with the national opinion survey. A series of local community consultations with women and youth have been supported. The final event in Maputo was scheduled for 18 May. Please follow [Mozambique consultation on SparkBlue](#).
- **Namibia** has [launched its Stockholm+50 National Consultation on 25 April](#). The launch was followed with the consultation with the private sector, CSOs and academia on 5 May, local consultations with coastal towns on 9 May, consultations in the South of the country on 10 May, and in the Northern regions on 13 May. All consultations were live streamed on Facebook.
- **Nigeria** launched its [consultation process](#) on 12 May in the capital city. Following the official launch, a series of consultation events were planned between 13th and 25th May, including dialogues with youth, women, people with disabilities, indigenous people, NGOs, environmental activists, private sector including SMEs, and the UN team.
- **Rwanda** carried out a series of [three in-person consultation events](#), including local consultations in Gicumbi District on 26 April where residents including young people, women and local communities shared their recommendations and expectations for Stockholm+50; and a consultation with people living with disabilities (5 May). On May 6 Rwanda held its National Stockholm+50 Consultation in Kigali attended by representatives

of the government agencies, development partners, young people and other stakeholders.

- **Somalia** conducted a [2-day national consultation](#) on 27-28 March covering a broad range of sectors and topics including energy and infrastructure, water and disaster management, nature-based solutions, urban resilience and food security.
- The Environment Quality Authority of the **State of Palestine** [announced the launch](#) of the Palestinian national consultations on 17 March. [Several provincial consultation workshops](#) were organized in March throughout the West Bank and Gaza, bringing together the governmental sector, private sector, civil society, NGOs, technical experts, youth, women, and persons with disabilities. The final national consultation event was held on 10 May. The [public opinion survey](#) on Stockholm+50 agenda has been supported. Consultations were organized in partnership with the General Consulate of Sweden in east Jerusalem and other international partners.
- On 26 April **Sudan** launched its first [Stockholm+50 national consultation](#) with a thematic focus on mercury pollution. The [second national workshop](#) on 15 May focuses on climate resilient and low emission development.
- Following a high-level preparatory meeting between the Government, Ambassador of Sweden, the UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP on 31 March, **Uganda** launched its Stockholm+50 national consultation on 22 April. During 25-29 April, a series of dialogues were conducted including 4 regional consultations and events targeting women organizations, civil society and private sector. Please explore the results of the consultations on [Uganda SparkBlue](#).
- Following a successful [launch on 14 March](#), **Zimbabwe** had its first national consultation event for Women, Youth and People with Disabilities on 4 April, followed with an event targeting NGOs, CSOs and grass-root organizations on 13 April, and a consultation with businesses and academia on 28 April. All events can be followed

on [Zimbabwe Stockholm+50 SparkBlue page](#). UNDP [Zimbabwe SparkBlue digital discussion rooms](#) hosted active online consultations on Stockholm+50 Leadership Dialogue themes.

In **Asia and the Pacific** region Stockholm+50 consultations were organized in Bhutan, China, Fiji, Indonesia, Maldives, FSM, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, Viet Nam, and Vanuatu.

- Following the launch of the National Consultation on 29 March, **Bhutan** conducted a series of four national consultation events covering different stakeholder groups and sectors and an Earth Day Special Event led by youth. You may want to follow a [“Walk the Talk” vlog](#) with Bhutan’s environmentalist and explore the national discussions on [Bhutan SparkBlue space](#).
- **China** conducted a series of three Stockholm+50 national consultation events on 26-28 April, including a business roundtable, youth consultation, and a two-day high-level policy dialogue. The events had a strong focus on promoting climate action under the Paris Agreement while also raising the understanding and capitalizing on the nexus between climate, biodiversity, and prosperity in support of China’s climate goals and SDGs.
- **Indonesia** launched its Stockholm+50 National Consultation process on 17 March (follow the launch [here](#)) and ran two introductory Stockholm+50 webinars targeting [academia](#) and [civil society organizations](#). The 1st Public Dialogue [“Rediscovering the balance of human-nature relationships”](#) was conducted on 22 April. Please refer to the [joint Op-Ed on Stockholm+50](#) by the Ambassador of Sweden and UNDP Resident Representative.
- **Philippines** conducted a pre-assessment workshop for the Stockholm+50 national consultations on 5 April and [launched the consultation](#) on 6 May. [Five thematic national consultations](#) were planned for 12-15 May looking at: adaptation and resilience to climate change, climate change miti-



UNEP launches the Clean Seas campaign in Bali, Indonesia. 2017 © UNEP / Shawn Heinrichs

- gation, finance, sustainable consumption and production, and youth dialogue.
- Following the launch in Colombo on 20 April, **Sri Lanka** held a series of [10 thematic Stockholm+50 consultations](#) targeting various stakeholder groups, including the national and provincial governments, youth, finance sector, civil society, academia, private sector and professional associations.
- **Thailand** launched its national consultation on 5 April. On 29 April a [dialogue focusing on green and resilient transition](#) took place in the Norther region of Chiang Mai. On 12 May the Stockholm+50 provincial consultation is hosted by a Southern region (Phang-nga). The final consultation event was held in Bangkok. Please follow [Thailand SparkBlue space](#) for details on those events.
- **Vietnam** conducted their [Stockholm+50 kick-off event](#) on 13 April and carried out a targeted [youth survey](#).
- Following the initial delays due to the COVID-19 lockdowns, the **Pacific SIDS** started to pick up on the consultations planning and implementation with their governments. **Samoa** organized a [series of consultation events](#) launched on 3 May and followed on 5-11 May with on-line consultation sessions with the private sector, CBOs, women groups, youth, and government stakeholders. A concluding in-person event “Samoa-Talanoa for a Healthy Planet” was held on 13 May, please follow the live streaming on SparkBlue. National consultation events have been carried out in [Timor-L’Este](#) and the [Federal States of Micronesia](#) , and were scheduled in **Fiji** (17 May).

Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Serbia, Turkey and Uzbekistan were selected in the **Eastern Europe and Central Asia** region to host the Stockholm+50 consultations.

- **Georgia** conducted [three in-person consultations during the month of April in the cities of Telavi, Batumi and Tbilisi](#). The national dialogues were set around the Stockholm+50 Leadership Dialogue themes. The first discussion was conducted in the context of the human rights for healthy environment and looked at best practices for ecosystems restoration. The discussions which followed focused on post pandemic recovery and on partnerships and inclusivity for the accelerated achievement of Agenda 2030.
- **Kazakhstan** conducted the [official launch and the first Stockholm+50 consultation in Kyzylorda](#) (South Kazakhstan) on 29 March with 60 participants. The Stockholm+50 consultation process in Kazakhstan included a series of in-person and hybrid regional events covering all main provincial centres leading to the final national event in Nur-Sultan on 17-18 May.
- In **Kyrgyz Republic** the national consultation was preceded with a national Stockholm+50 survey which helped to identify priority themes and sectors under each of the Stockholm+50 Leadership Dialogues. The consultation was then [launched on 14 April](#) followed by 9 focus group discussions with different stakeholder groups, regional events in all 7 provinces, multiple [youth events](#), and the final national validation workshop. Kyrgyz consultations had a strong emphasis on green and sustainable event practices.
- **Serbia** launched its Stockholm+50 national consultation with a [high-level event at the Palace of Serbia](#) on 13 April. On May 9th another event focused on the [environment-health nexus](#); youth consultation was conducted on May 10th; the forth consultation meeting on 12 May engaged civil society organizations. The concluding national event "Green Society - Sustainable Lifestyle" was scheduled

for 20 May, please follow the event on Serbian SparkBlue.

- **Turkey** initiated their consultation on 10th May and ran a series of technical events and a [national survey](#) in partnership with the Climate Presidency within the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change. The first in-person event was hosted by the Swedish Consulate in Istanbul on 17 May. The national consultation was supported by the national Climate Council.
- The Government of **Uzbekistan** aligned the Stockholm+50 national consultation themes with their national priorities by conducting [4 thematic events](#) addressing: (i) a discussion on the Strategic Framework for Green Transition and the launch of the national Green Hub (April 29, Tashkent); (ii) a dialogue on enhancing sustainable and resilient development of the Aral Sea Region (May 6, Nukus/Karakalpakstan); (iii) consultations on the NDC implementation roadmap and climate change adaptation (May 11, Tashkent); and (iv) a consultation exploring solutions for biodiversity conservation and public participation in natural resource management (May 12, Tashkent).

Youth consultations:

Youth and young environmental leaders across 57 countries have been among the key stakeholders of the Stockholm+50 national consultations. A great variety of events and engagements have been offered to children and youth, including schools- and university-based dialogues, national youth forums, art competitions and blogs opportunities, youth "caravans" and green actions.

- In the **Kyrgyz Republic** [Stockholm+50 engaged young people](#) from across the country through "youth caravans" which run through 13 cities in all 7 provinces, "live" broadcasts with young leaders, tree planting events and nature hikes.
- An excellent example of youth engagement in **Zimbabwe** resulted in a comprehensive Zimbabwean [Youth Statement](#),



Climate Strike Youth. Youth gather in Karura forest in solidarity with the global climate youth marches. Nairobi, 2019 © UNEP

while children's voices were collected through a [call for essays and art pieces](#).

- **Trinidad and Tobago** on-line [Stockholm+50 Youth Forum](#) came up with a number of recommendations echoing Zimbabwe's youth on the need for enhanced environment and climate education and awareness, support to youth green projects and innovations, and partnerships.
- Following a series of three on-line consultations on the Stockholm+50 Leadership Dialogue themes (25-27 April), **Barbados** focused its final national event conducted on 3rd May on youth.
- You can listen to youth voices from **Bhutan** [HERE](#) and the [youth focused na-](#)

- [tional consultation](#) in Uruguay on 17 May.
- **Nigeria** conducted a [Youth pre-conference information session](#) on 25 May engaging the Swedish Embassy, UNDP, Federal Ministry of Environment, youths and women groups, and CSOs in the pre-conference consultation and awareness raising.

**More information on the national consultations is available here: <https://www.stockholm50.global/processes/national-consultations-0>*



Summary points of the three Leadership Dialogues¹

*Excerpts from the outcome documents at **Stockholm+50***

The [Leadership Dialogues](#) contributed to the outcome of Stockholm+50 by yielding clear and concrete recommendations and messages for action at all levels. They aimed to mobilize the global community behind strengthened cooperation and accelerated innovative action. Each of the three Leadership Dialogues was presided over by two Co-Chairs—one from a developing country and one from a developed country—that were appointed by the two Presidents of the international meeting.

All relevant stakeholders, including women, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and local communities were invited to contribute to the discussions to build momentum for a healthy planet for the prosperity of all.

¹ Reposted from: <https://www.stockholm50.global/processes/leadership-dialogues>. You can also watch the three Leadership Dialogues on-demand and explore their summaries, which include “key messages for action” and panelist’s contributions.



Stockholm+50 Leadership Dialogues © UNEP

Leadership Dialogue 1: **Reflecting on the urgent need for actions to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity of all**

1. Resetting our relationship with nature is essential to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity of all. Member States and participants expressed a real sense of urgency to act, at the required scale, and transform our socioeconomic systems. It was recognized that these transformations require new measures of progress, and a fundamental change in attitudes and behaviour.
2. Greater accountability is required to deliver on national and international responsibilities and address the triple planetary crises in integrated ways. Leadership

was essential to drive the sustainability agenda – both in fulfilling existing commitments and to further global cooperation on the climate, biodiversity and pollution agendas.

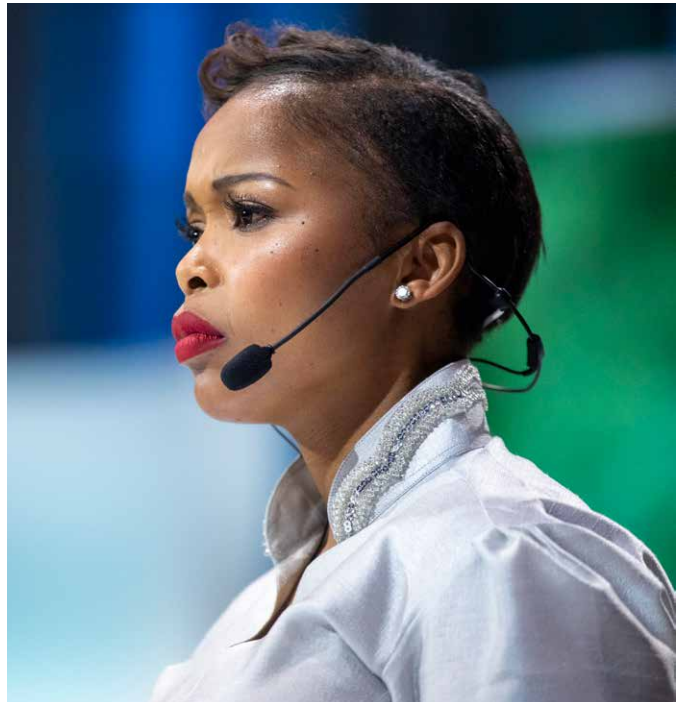
3. It was recognized that human rights, intergenerational equity and inclusion are fundamental elements of sustainable development. Action to transform socioeconomic systems can be informed by the human right to a healthy, clean and sustainable environment, as well as by remedying the human rights impacts of current development impacts and upholding justice.
4. Restoring trust through effective multilateralism and partnerships can strengthen international cooperation and solidarity. A fair platform was important to accelerate action, bringing together different actors and means to respond to shared



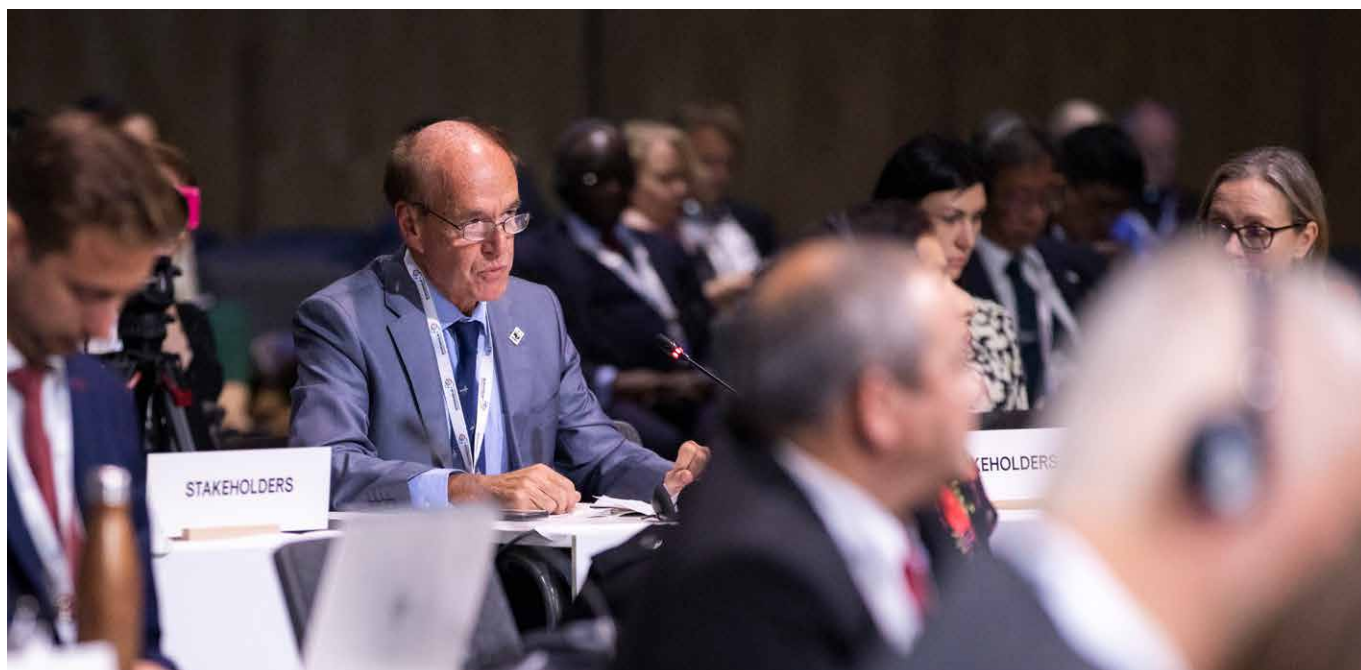
Stockholm+50 Leadership Dialogues © UNEP

challenges, and allowing every country the right to be heard.

5. Systemic changes in consumption and production systems needs to be accelerated, providing for fair transitions in high impact sectors, including food systems. Action to scale progress on SDG12 include transforming value chains, addressing resource efficiency and promoting circular economy approaches. The role of business and the importance of multi-stakeholder approaches were emphasized.
6. Achieving a healthy planet and prosperity of all requires the alignment of financial flows – public and private, domestic and international – to these ends. Political will to drive just transitions, scaling-up sustainable finance and repurposing harmful subsidies, as well as technology and knowledge sharing are all critical steps.



Stockholm+50 Leadership Dialogues © UNEP



Stockholm+50 Leadership Dialogues / Stakeholders © UNEP

Leadership Dialogue 2: **Achieving a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic**

1. Strengthen the global value chain to ensure a resilient global economy; this includes creating access to and enhancing capacities of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in developing countries, SIDS, and LDCs.
2. Use sustainable consumption and production and circular economy in accelerating the transformation of global value chains. Recommendation to establish a global dialogue on Sustainable Consumption and Production, that could lead to a global Roadmap on Circular economy for all stakeholders.
3. Support businesses at the forefront in driving the shift to circularity. This could be supported by a global circularity protocol to set clear targets and track progress through a transparency mechanism.
4. Recognize the influence of consumers in transforming global value chains; they should have access to relevant information in order to make sustainable consumer choices.
5. Importance of the food sector for sustainability and also as part of the solutions for overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic; this will require shifting harmful subsidies, increasing investment in sustainable practices and empowering small holder farmers.
6. Building back better must include green and energy transitions. We need real climate actions, that 'walk the talk', not only mere commitments.
7. Vital role of women and girls as well as the involvement of youth and the vulnerable in advancing sustainable development; this will require access to education, capacity building, and regulatory framework; the knowledge of indigenous people and local communities should be better taken into account.
8. As the digital economy and solutions for sustainable development including e-commerce platforms have grown in importance, we need an inclusive platform to address the digital divide and illiteracy everywhere, whilst managing the potential negative impacts of digitalization amongst others on energy consumption.



Stockholm+50 Leadership Dialogues © UNEP

Leadership Dialogue 3: **Accelerating the implementation of the environmental dimension of Sustainable Development in the context of the Decade of Action**

1. Improve the access, quality and quantity of finance for sustainable development to developing countries, especially least developed countries.
2. Mitigation and adaptation action to ensure a balanced, equitable transition, the rights of states and people for development, and gender parity.
3. Bridging the finance gap to allow environmental action to catch up with our aspirations and hopes.
4. Well-designed government action to start realigning and redirecting environmentally harmful subsidies, including green and sustainable budgeting.
5. Coordination of sovereign debt relief, debt guarantees, debt risk pooling in the context of climate financing.
6. Scaled-up access to quality affordable education and to promote environmentally conscious syllabi and curricula.
7. Cooperation by all actors to accelerate the transfer of knowledge, technology and know-how, and to scale up the availability, access and affordability of digital goods and services, and critical infrastructure to developing countries.
8. All actors to combat inequality within and between nations as an essential step towards addressing environmental and development crises.
9. Reinvigorate existing processes and mechanisms of financing adaptation and sustainable transition in developing countries, directing efforts to reviving them rather than establishing new processes and mechanisms.
10. Collective international actions to make sure environmental purposes do not become or be used as trade barriers, or to hamper developmental processes.



Stockholm+50 Opening Plenary © UNEP / Duncan Moore

Presidents' Final Remarks to the Plenary¹

Key recommendations for accelerating action towards a healthy planet for the prosperity of all

Excerpts from the outcome documents at **Stockholm+50**

In our capacity as Presidents, the following key recommendations emerged from Member States and Stakeholders, through the Plenary and Leadership Dialogues at the Stockholm+50 International Meeting.

The recommendations reflect the resolve of the participants to urgently accelerate the implementation of commitments for a healthy planet for the prosperity of all, in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development - including a sustainable recovery from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic – and taking into account the outcomes from the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and from the special session of the United Nations Environment Assembly to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), held 3 - 4 March 2022 in Nairobi, Kenya.

Since the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, the global community has adopted a wealth of Multilateral Environmental Agreements as well as other relevant commitments, including the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. Fulfilment of the objectives and commitments of all these agreements would take us a long way towards securing a healthy planet for all.

Stockholm+50 has emphasized the global interconnectedness of the environment and the need to collectively address the triple crisis of our common environment – climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution – for present and future generations. Stockholm+50 has also underlined the urgent need for bold and deliberate actions as well as clear political will to accelerate action on these commitments, strengthen the multilateral system, increase ambition and solidarity, and set us on a credible path towards a healthy planet for all – leaving no one behind.

The discussions during Stockholm+50, reaffirmed the importance of local realities and national implementation, and the need for a combination of incentives and policies, finance and capacity support to achieve sustainable development. We have heard the following recommendations for actions to accelerate implementation.

¹ Reposted from: <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/40110/Key%20Messages%20and%20Recommendations%20-%20Formatted.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

1. Place human well-being at the centre of a healthy planet and prosperity for all, through recognizing that a healthy planet is a prerequisite for peaceful, cohesive and prosperous societies; restoring our relationship with nature by integrating ethical values; and adopting a fundamental change in attitudes, habits, and behaviours, to support our common prosperity.

2. Recognize and implement the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, through fulfilling the vision articulated in principle 1 of the 1972 Stockholm Declaration.

3. Adopt system wide change in the way our current economic system works to contribute to a healthy planet, through defining and adopting new measures of progress and human well-being, supported by economic and fiscal policies that account for the value of the environment; investing in infrastructure, developing effective policy and encouraging a global dialogue to promote sustainable consumption and production; and promoting phase out of fossil fuels while providing targeted support to the poorest and most vulnerable in line with national circumstances and recognizing the need for financial and technical support towards a just transition.

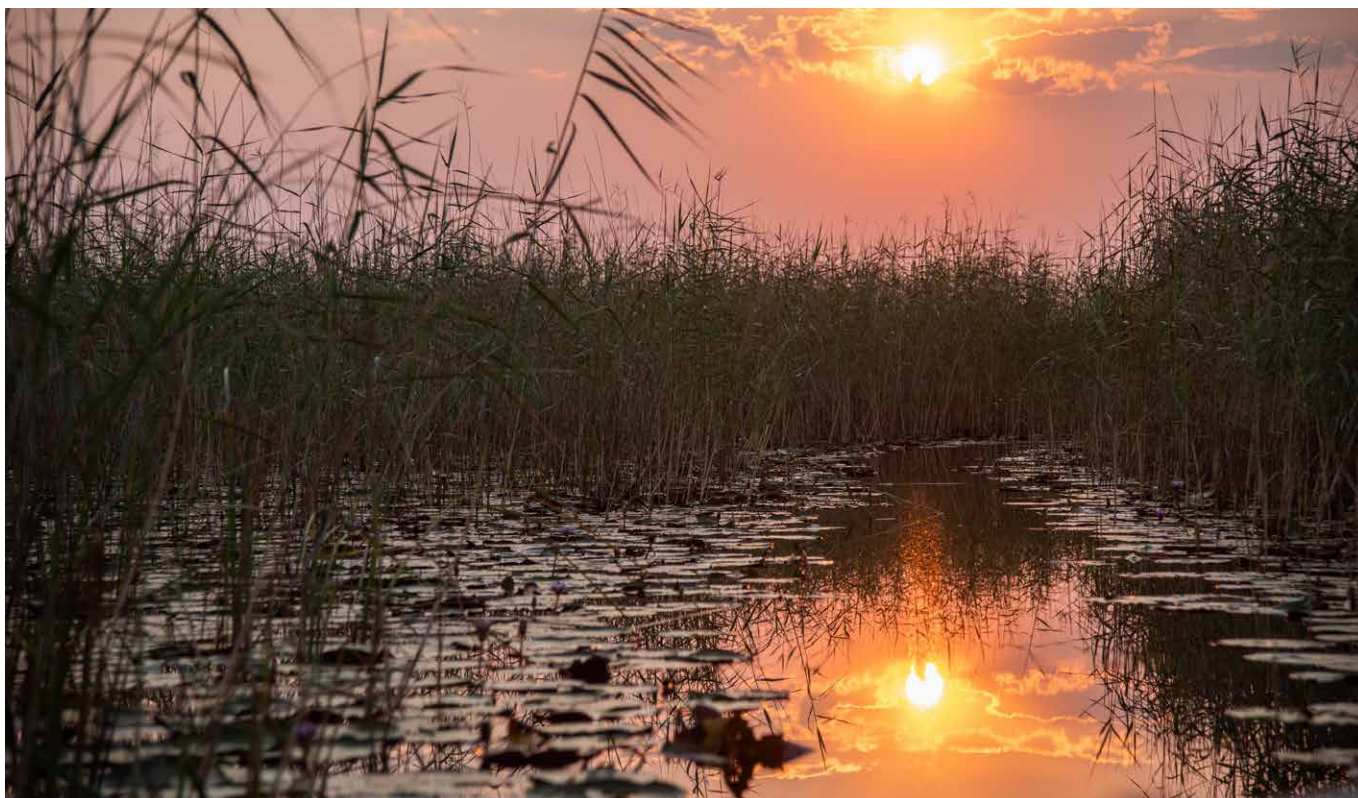
4. Strengthen national implementation of existing commitments for a healthy planet, through enhancing environmental national legislation, budget, planning processes and institutional frameworks; promoting evidence-based policymaking, including by enhanced collaboration between academic disciplines and thematic scientific panels, drawing on insights and expertise from indigenous and traditional knowledge; and scaling-up capacity support and development, access to and financing for environmentally sound technologies.

5. Align public and private financial flows with environmental, climate and sustain-

able development commitments, through developing and implementing well-designed policies to repurpose environmentally harmful subsidies; redirecting, mobilizing and scaling up the availability of public and private financial flows to support economic diversification; and adopting recovery and stimulus measures, blended sources of capital, and de-risking instruments that augment financial flows.

6. Accelerate system-wide transformations of high impact sectors, such as food, energy, water, buildings and construction, manufacturing, and mobility, through adopting and implementing policies to promote circularity, resource efficiency, regenerative production approaches and nature-based solutions in value chains, and adopting frameworks that enhance and reinforce transparency and accountability by business; promoting just transitions through support for impacted youth, labour, and local communities by strengthening capacities and skills for the creation of green jobs and for micro, small and medium enterprises; and transforming food systems by promoting regenerative farming and fisheries approaches that provide healthy diets and minimize food waste, including investments in the ocean economy.

7. Rebuild relationships of trust for strengthened cooperation and solidarity, through recognizing the importance of developed country leadership in promoting sustainability transitions; supporting capacity building and technology transfer for national efforts by developing countries to implement internationally agreed environmental agreements, taking into account national circumstances, including honouring the commitment to mobilize \$100 billion every year for climate finance for developing countries; and enabling all relevant stakeholders including youth, women, rural communities, indigenous peoples, interfaith groups and local communities to participate meaningfully in policy formulation



The Lukanga swamp, together with the Bangweulu wetlands in Zambia are both listed as wetlands of 'international importance' under the Ramsar Convention © UNEP

and implementation at both national and international level.

8. Reinforce and reinvigorate the multilateral system, through ensuring an effective rules-based multilateral system that supports countries in delivering on their national and global commitments, to ensure a fair and effective multilateralism; strengthening environmental rule of law, including by promoting convergence and synergies within the UN system and between Multilateral Environmental Agreements; strengthening the United Nations Environment Programme, in line with the UNEP@50 Political Declaration.

9. Recognize intergenerational responsibility as a cornerstone of sound policy-making, through engaging with the Stockholm+50 Global Youth Task Force Policy Paper; highlighting the important need of building the capacity of young people to engage with financial institutions; recognizing the critical

role of young people in environmental action, and highlight that progress has been made on fostering meaningful youth engagement, and calling upon the multilateral environmental funds to include youth-inclusive parameters in funding schemes, and further take steps to ensure ease of access of funds for environmental action for youth-led organizations.

10. Take forward the Stockholm+50 outcomes, through reinforcing and reenergizing the ongoing international processes, including a global framework for biodiversity, an implementing agreement for the protection of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction, and the development of a new plastics convention; and engaging with the relevant conferences, such as the 2022 UN Ocean Conference, High Level Political Forum, the 27th Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Summit of the Future.

Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations **Amina Mohammed** poses in front of the plastic art exhibit at UNEA 5.2 © UNEP / Cyril Villemain



Sustainable Consumption and Production:

THE ONE PLANET NETWORK FORUM

by **Andrew Schmidt**, 10YFP Secretariat, UN Environment

The One Planet Network Forum, held on May 31 – June 1 on the margins of the Stockholm+50 Conference, brought together around 4000 in-person and virtual participants. The goal? Provide a unique space for discussions on the role Sustainable Consumption and Production can and must play in driving transformational change at a scale that will allow us to deliver on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. While such ambition is large and global in nature, the One Planet Network Forum provided room for dialogue not only from the top, but from local activists, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders who work on these issues every day. The Forum also provided an excellent opportunity to introduce elements of the [Global Strategy on Sustainable Consumption and Production](#), which has been the product of extensive consultations across the network and hopes to provide a guiding framework for action in the years to come.

Let's look at some of the concrete announcements, commitments and plans for action which we heard over those two days, to get to the heart of the question that we all have after such an event, which is: **And now what?**

Kicking things off with a presidential message of hope

The [first plenary session](#) of the OPN Forum featured an inspiring cast of panellists, providing messages advocating for a profound and equitable transformation of our economies grounded on changes in how we think, act, and share about Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP). The former President of Finland, **H.E. Ms. Tarja Halonen** spoke to the need for people to have a real change of heart in order to realise the transformational changes which are needed, noting that “...we know the targets, we know the goals, we have quite

enough food for thought. But what we need are our hearts.” A variety of perspectives rounded out the panel, including inputs from the private sector through Ikea with a plea to leave no one behind when developing sustainable policy, and a call from youth representative **Ms. Kehkashan Basu** to end procrastination if we are to make meaningful steps forward. The [full list of panellists and recording](#) are available.

The plenary sessions were interspersed with dynamic parallel sessions on a variety of topics, from [Changing how we INFORM](#), to [Changing how we DIGITALISE](#), [Changing how we MEASURE](#), and many more. These sessions

were ripe for cross-fertilisation, demonstrating the linkages which exist already across many of these domains, and sparking an interest for future collaborations. For example, during the [Changing how we TRAVEL](#) session, **Ms. Zoritsa Urosevic**, Executive Director of UNWTO, noted that digitalisation has been key in developing resilient and sustainable efforts to tourism recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. In the [Changing how we LIVE](#) session, it was noted how lifestyles cut across so many aspects of what we do every day, including what we eat, how we move and what we buy. In fact the Sustainable Food Systems programme spearheaded a full-day session [Appetites for Change: The Power of Food](#), which examined the crucial place that food systems will play in a post-2022 SCP landscape. The private sector also rallied around these discussions, and took a deep dive through the [Changing how we DO BUSINESS](#) session to pinpoint where business can have the most impact on SDG 12 and SCP. Some major players from the private sector participated not just in this session but across the forum. In the [Changing how we BUILD](#) session, **Ms. Magali Anderson**, Chief Sustainability and Innovation Officer at Holcim explained how her company is taking concrete steps to make cement and concrete low-carbon at scale. The parallel sessions were an opportunity to put the full breadth of the network on display, demonstrating the unique multi-stakeholder character of the One Planet Network, which can call on an extremely diverse pool of expertise to come up with innovative solutions.

Leaving no one behind: What does it take to scale up Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP)?

The [second plenary session](#) of the forum looked closer at specific opportunities available for countries to embed Sustainable Consumption and Production in their development strategies. In the opening, however, **Ms. Ligia Noronha**, Assistant Secretary-General, zoomed out to set the scene, noting that intergenera-

tional responsibility and intergenerational equity should not be ignored, and that we “*must invest in the scaling up of SCP*”. **Ms. Katrin Schneeberger**, State Secretary, Federal Office for the Environment of Switzerland, detailed efforts within her country and noted the importance of hearing from UN country representatives to better understand how multilateral efforts can be coordinated at a country level. What followed was precisely such a deep dive, with interventions from the UN Resident Coordinators from Thailand, Egypt, Georgia, and Ethiopia. These inputs provided a vast array of the states of play across a diversity of contexts. One message repeated frequently was the importance of harmonising efforts at the country level in order to deliver more efficiently and impactfully at scale. The One Planet Network provides the space to bring together relevant actors in just such an endeavour. Mr. Dmitry Mariyasyn, Deputy Executive Secretary for UNECE, stressed the cross-sectoral nature of SCP, noting that “*It should be an issue that finance ministers talk about, and that ministers of economy and industry talk about, and ministers of infrastructure talk about.*” In order for the [Global Strategy on SCP](#) to be an effective roadmap in the post-2022 landscape, the One Planet Network must continue to bring these players into the fold. The discussions during this session noted an eagerness among those who participated to bring that message back to their constituencies to continue building a momentum which is well on its way.

Concrete Action for Sustainable Consumption & Production Beyond 2022

During the closing panel of the forum, entitled [Investing in People and Nature](#), high-level representatives discussed the consultation on the [Global Strategy for SCP](#) which took place amongst members of the [10YFP Board](#) and Group of Friends the previous day. H.E. Ambassador Giovanna Valverde, Co-Chair of the Board, detailed the four pillars of the forthcoming strategy, which aim to guide collective



Images captured during a video shoot at Gikomba Market for the European Commission on circular economy © UNEP / Ahmed Nayim Yussuf



Permaculture in Mae Taeng District, Chiang Mai Province © Isis Alvarez

and individual actions for creating a transformational shift in how we produce and consume. H.E. Muhammad Irfan Tariq, Chair of the Board, followed with an inspirational summary of the consultation, noting *“Sustainable Consumption and Production is the centrepiece of all SDGs, and people across the globe are waiting to see action based on the strategy we are in the process of finalising”*.

The following conversations dove into just such actions, some already underway and others planned. From a Latin America context, Ms. Cecilia Nicolini, State Secretary of Climate Change, Sustainable Development and Innovation of Argentina, and Mr. Carlos Eduardo Correa, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia, detailed some of the trailblazing actions they have put in place in the region, and plans for more under the forthcoming global SCP strategy. H.E. Emma Kari, Minister of Environment and Climate Change of Finland also welcomed the development of the strategy and reaffirmed the continuing commitment of her country to take it forward.

Science-based approaches for impactful Sustainable Consumption & Production (SCP)

With so much scattered and competing information, having a strong, scientific basis behind decisions is key for policy makers and others when implementing sustainable consumption and production solutions. Ms. Adriana Zacarias, [Head of Global Opportunities for Sustainable Development Goals \(GO4SDGs\)](#) introduced the [Regional Science Partners for SCP](#), which bring in leading scientific institutions to support national governments and other stakeholders in the regions with contextual and targeted scientific evidence for decision- and policy-making. Policy makers have limited time and limited resources, Ms. Zacarias noted, underscoring the imperative of having accurate information based on science in order to make decisions which will have a truly transformative

impact. The initial group of Regional Science Partners consists of 5 organisations, with plans to expand this in order to reach more and more governments and tailor solutions to their needs by providing robust and relevant scientific information.

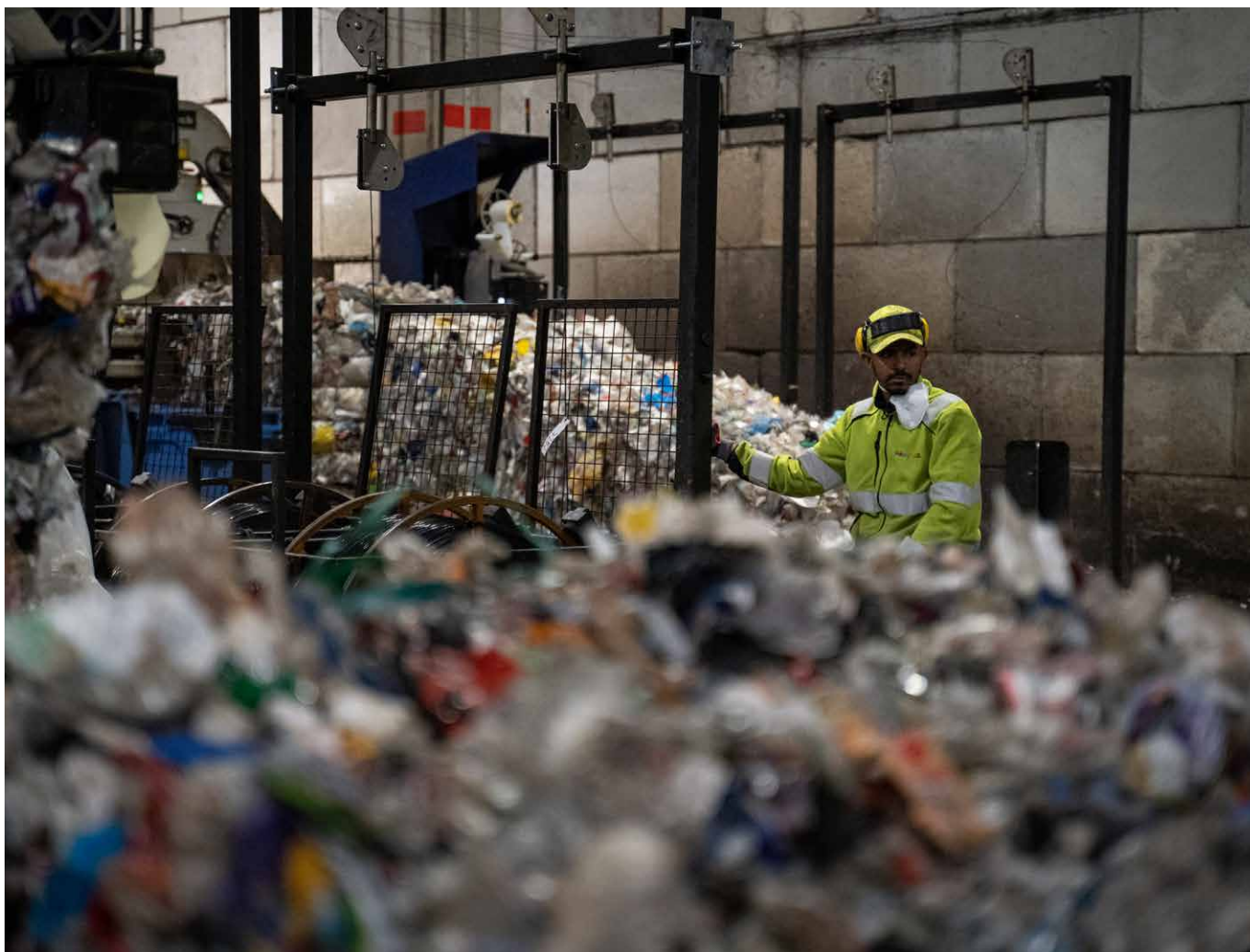
Promoting circularity in the tourism sector

Ms. Zoritsa Urosevic, Executive Director of UNWTO recognized the catalytic role of the Glasgow [Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism](#) which was launched at UNFCCC COP26 in November 2021. Less than a year after its launch, this voluntary commitment has gathered more than 500 signatories agreeing to raise their climate ambitions by committing to support the global goals to halve carbon emissions by 2030 and achieve net zero by 2050. Ms. Kristiina Hietasaari, Senior Director of Visit Finland, a signatory of the Glasgow Declaration, detailed the incredibly important links between nature and tourism in her country. Visit Finland has in addition brought more than 60 signatory organisations from Finland to the Glasgow Declaration, demonstrating the crucial multiplying effect that such initiatives across the One Planet Network can have.

Shifting business models, investing in SCP

During the final panel, Ms. Cecilia Nicolini welcomed the progress on a global strategy for SCP, but signalled a crucial issue if such a global strategy is to be implemented at the national level: the financing gap. The question of investment in SCP to allow a better future for people and planet, was a recurring theme across the panel. The discussion allowed for a few influential players to bring in perspectives of how investments in sustainability can pay huge dividends.

Mr. Nicola Villa, Executive Vice President, Strategic Growth, Global Lead, Government Engagement at Mastercard, talked about the important leverage that a huge network can have to nudge markets towards more envi-



Inside the Swedish Plastic Recycling plant, the largest sorting facility of its kind in the world © UNEP

ronmental and financially stable pathways. He mentioned several examples, from providing financial inclusion to a billion people, to measuring the environmental footprint of a grand prix car race. The Global Strategy for SCP will go deeper into the importance of the linkages between measuring economic and environmental impacts, and how the two work hand in hand to determine sustainable outcomes. Mr. Dominic Waughray, Senior Advisor to the CEO at the World Business Council on Sustainable Development (WBCSD), furthermore tied the discussions to the outcomes of Stockholm+50, including the [Stockholm Action Agenda](#) which was launched the following day. The One Planet Network, through the Global Strategy on SCP, is positioned to help identify the main barriers and opportunities for action to bring such an agenda to fruition.

The first annual One Planet Network Forum provided a further, important building block in the journey that Sustainable Consumption and Production has taken. [The 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production \(10YFP\)](#), adopted at the Rio+20 Conference in 2012, has gained momentum and international attention which would have seemed like a pipe dream a decade ago. The One Planet Network, which implements the 10YFP framework, has continued to raise the international profile of SCP through the tireless efforts of a truly dedicated network of change-makers, trailblazers and innovators. Although the journey is not over and there are huge challenges to overcome, this Forum was a chance to celebrate together what has so far been achieved, and look collectively together at how such multi-stakeholder action can continue to make a difference.

**Section Six:
Civil society
and non-state
stakeholders –
key environmental
concerns for
the future**



Stockholm +49

Make 2022 a **GAME CHANGER**

20-21 October 2021 Online Event

**PATHWAY
TO THE 2022
DECLARATION**

Stockholm+49 Summit Outcomes

Can the 2022 Declaration be a Game Changer to Protect our Planet?

*Notes taken from the virtual meeting by **Isis Alvarez**, Chief Programme Officer of the Towards Stockholm+50 Project, Stakeholder Forum*

Stockholm+49 was an NGO-led virtual preparatory meeting ahead of Stockholm+50. Experts in different fields from a broad sector of civil society and other stakeholders, such as youth groups, NGOs, government and UN agencies representatives as well as UN rapporteurs, members from academia and other recognized research and political institutions, gathered to bring key issues to the table that should form the foundations for Stockholm+50 deliberations through a Common Home Declaration, considering the key moment for global environmental governance and its future.

This important [virtual conference](#) carried out on October 20-21st, 2021, brought important themes, prominent in the environmental governance agenda up for discussion and offered very valuable tools for joint action towards a healthier planet, such as: environmental degradation, climate change and the science of urgency; the role of international law in the Anthropocene, what is missing or failing to comply and how to enforce it; ecocide and the Right to a Healthy Environment; regulation economy/building for a better economy; institutions of global environment governance; human rights and environmental justice; The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative; the common heritage of humankind; corporate accountability; Indigenous Peoples Rights; Stockholm legacy and 50 years of UNEP; contributions from a Stockholm+49 Civil Society Declaration to Stockholm+50 and beyond.

At that point in time, many actors involved had big expectations from the commemoration of the 50 years of environmental governance and its lead UN Agency also born in 1972, thus, people felt that in such a crucial moment in time and given the current realities, their input and expertise could very well serve to strengthen the current international environmental governance and law and help build a global framework that supports, coordinates, and monitors implementation. Building a Global Coalition for the promising Declaration seemed a logical pathway and a good first step for changing the current course of environmental collapse.

The notes presented here aim to provide a brief overview of key input by the different presenters during the 2-day meeting. The “Stockholm+49 Summit” started a global “game-changer” process to build consensus around one single-page document, developing a four-step civil society [Declaration “Restoring Our Common Home”](#) to catalyze a critical paradigm shift in planetary

environmental governance. The Stockholm+50 Declaration intended to be a game-changer to boost the transition from a destructive economy to a regenerative and more equitable world thus helping deliver a meaningful outcome in 2022. It was presented and discussed at Stockholm+50 and is also included below.

Notes of Stockholm+49 Summit Proceedings¹ **Opening: Johanna Lissinger Peitz - Ambassador for Stockholm +50 and Senior Advisor at the Ministry of the Environment/Swedish Government Offices**

Make 2022 a game changer – IPCC report, a code red for humanity as a clear sign that we can't continue on the same path. People, planet, prosperity – climate, nature, pollution. Action-oriented solutions towards our global common goals.

Leadership Dialogue 1 - Redefine the relationship with nature

Leadership Dialogue 2 – short-term actions to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic

Leadership Dialogue 3 – means to implement commitments and actions, i.e. the Paris Agreement, Global Biodiversity Framework

3 keywords for engagement pathways for Stockholm+50: implementation, interconnectivity (for policy areas and for sectors and actors), and intergeneration

1. Science of urgency

Will Steffen – Emeritus Professor at the Australian National University; Senior Research Fellow at the Stockholm Resilience Centre

The science behind climate change tells us that time is up and that there is urgent action needed. Today, we are reaching global tipping points and global instability is evident, and it cannot be solved by cost-benefit analysis or economics as it is an existential threat. Not just the physical system is changing but also the biosphere. Therefore, we need to reshape our relationship with nature and regenerate the biosphere; we need a turn-around in key areas related to energy, education, food, family, equity, etc. We need a system that looks at social well-being and interaction with a social economy and thinks outside of the box for new approaches. Indigenous peoples have lived in harmony with nature for centuries and all we need to do is, go all the way down to our core values; rethink the way we live, the way we work, the way we think, and what we value.

2. The role of Law in the Anthropocene

Louis Kotzé - Research Professor of Law at the North-West University, South Africa
Makane Moïse Mbengue - Professor of International Law at the University of Geneva

Urgency had already been acknowledged back in 1972, thus, there are long-overdue legal reforms that need to be considered for a law for the Anthropocene. International treaties and principles of international environmental law need an upgrade. Radical transformation of the law is the only response to the current panorama of the environment. Earth system law that embraces a systems perspective anchored in the Anthropocene context, better attuned to current realities, normative and legal demands, and ethical implications of the Anthropocene. The current set of principles have become inappropriate for earth system governance in the Anthropocene, for instance, the principle

¹ Watch the full sessions: Day 1 Part 1 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WiCVKRcMz8A&list=PL2-uxqtrCKnrTeGN5_Z306PB_49WLZ-ce&index=5 / Day 1 Part 2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqwKFci91lw&list=PL2-uxqtrCKnrTeGN5_Z306PB_49WLZ-ce&index=2 / Day 2 Part 1 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ae_kWkyqcDs&list=PL2-uxqtrCKnrTeGN5_Z306PB_49WLZ-ce&index=1 / Day 2 Part 2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqK228PB7ec&list=PL2-uxqtrCKnrTeGN5_Z306PB_49WLZ-ce&index=3



2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals
© IISD/ENB / Kiara Worth

of sustainable development is vague and unambitious as doesn't pursue planetary integrity; in its present form remains an elusive idea, is conservative and remains 'business as usual' bias towards neoliberal development violating indigenous peoples' rights even by governments. Thus, we need a new definition for sustainable development: prosperity and equity within planetary boundaries to reach transformation, as much as we need cooperation. In short, no principle in environmental law that connect earth system science with earth systems law and bridges these two.

3 imperatives for any new legal principles in the Anthropocene:

1. Behavioral principles - able to restrain geologically powerful humans, i.e. de-growth, decarbonization
2. Architectural principles - congruent with

earth system architecture, i.e. interconnectivity and complexity)

3. Ethical principles - new planetary ethic, humility, planetary integrity & justice

International environmental law is inextricably linked to principles – Chapeau in Stockholm+50 says that principles should inspire and guide peoples of the world.

4 functions of principles in international environmental law:

1. Trendsetting: set normative trends – orient how human and state activities have to be implemented in order to preserve the environment (i.e. integrate measures of environmental protection in the design and implementation of economic activities; principle 4 of the Rio Declaration)

2. Gut-feeling: legal instruments that are

not fully complete and laws allow those treaties to be living duties (i.e. Article 192 of the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea which could be relevant for other non-environmental treaties)

3. Coherence building: not effective environmental governance if there is not connected between the different layers

4. Non-evolving function: customary/traditional law (i.e. reinterpret due diligence in the context of environmental protection and how it interacts for, for example, the precautionary principle)

These functions can lead to more effectiveness, and principles need to be reinforced and dynamic, they should be acknowledged, universally recognized, and contextualized.

3. Regulation Economy/Building for a Better Economy

Sandrine Dixson-Declève - Co-President of the Club of Rome

Need to continue to emphasize the limits to growth which was already recognized in a seminal report in 1972 where one of the authors pointed out that: "This supreme effort is a challenge for our generation. It cannot be passed on to the next. The effort must be resolutely undertaken without delay, and significant redirection must be achieved during this decade". Back then, it was already acknowledged that we needed redirection as we were moving far beyond the carrying capacity of the Earth thus getting to see a series of global tipping points, and sadly, this is still the case today, 50 years later. Today, a series of global tipping points are facing us, the global instabilities in the social system, in the political system (mostly short-term perspective decisions), the economic system (planned around a capital model to push for GDP growth and not understanding that we can't continue to produce in the same manner), and in the global commons.

We must start being aware of our consumption patterns and fit them within planetary boundaries. Many more social tipping points coming before environmental collapse; political progress is not moving fast enough and political will is stopping us from adopting technologies that can help us to decarbonize, and take into consideration technological disruption. 50 years ago, it was already predicted that global tipping points would be seen around the 2020s and yes, we faced the greatest pandemic of our times and dire climate effects. We must look at zero carbon, zero loss of nature, zero poverty, and zero pandemics.

We need to enable a shift to happen; shift our pathways of development through a lens to reach the planetary boundaries such as a joint initiative of the Potsdam Institute and Johan Rockström, presents the modeling of 5 key pathways and the interrelationships between those pathways (turnarounds) that could help us ensure a new economy that services people, planet and prosperity.

A pluralistic approach to the economy, a 21st century transformational economics: there are already some proposals around that bring forward different types of indicators for better human development, such as well-being economics, degrowth, green growth, ecological economics, doughnut economics, and beyond GDP, for example. These bring new indicators for better human development. The endpoint is that we need to turn around the current pace and focus of our economies to focus on new types of development through different 'turnarounds' focus: energy, food, poverty, equality, and family.

Make sure that we have returns and savings, an economy that is productive and doesn't just look at production. A publication is available on [planetary turnaround as well as a series of reflections from across the globe](#) on how we can truly change our current economic and financial models that are destabilizing our planet.



ROLAC: XVII Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean Panamá, 2010 © UNEP

We will not decarbonize or look at environmental well-being if there's no social well-being in a way where people engage with our social and political economies, and get to address the current imbalances between North and South, for example.

Stockholm+50 has to be a signal to humanity that the environment, humanity, and social necessity, are the ways in which we will continue to be humans on this planet, understanding the ways in which we fit within all species with the ubuntu principles that, actually, we are nature and nature is part of us. It is with these new societal and environmental indicators working fully synergistically, that we will achieve the well-being that we need on this planet and that we will build the resilience to avert future pandemics and future crises.

4. Institutions of Global Environment Governance

Izabella Teixeira - Co-Chair of the United Nations Environment Programme's International Resource Panel and former Minister for the Environment of Brazil

Three different perspectives to try to understand better what are the challenges that need to be managed in a short-term perspective; understand the political context - interconnectivity is key for how to move forward, is not only between different policy areas but also between governments, civil society and business. Necessary to understand the global aspects, and also on this occasion, environmental governance. Thus, three key aspects to have in mind are presented:

1. The Global crisis has increased skepticism towards multilateralism and international co-

operation thus, demands for invigorate global development and interconnected solutions;

2. Humans and nature – interconnectivity among all nations across many issues not just environmental;
3. Common aspirations are not enough for solving the triple planetary crisis, and rights for a healthy planet through institutional legal frameworks.

Institutions in environmental governance should be creative, flexible, action and science-oriented, and deal with inequality in order to reframe the institutional arrangements that we have today, not only at the international but also at the national level. Likewise, UNEP+50 means to go into multilateral systems and need to understand how to reframe UNEA, and better coordination and better political understanding with ECOSOC, the G20, and regional blocks; the domain of the solutions is not necessarily on the countries that have the environmental assets; specialized science-policy interphase on the environment needs to be understood, and the need to reframe how policies come to a decision process, integrate science for informing decision in selected issues which is very important when interconnectivity is discussed and how to manage better the political context to reshape environmental governance.

We need to bring people together and be in that together. It is about implementation. If all agree then political inclusion and accounting diversity as a reality of the world and of nature; diversity is very important to be observed but is needed to reframe our institutional arrangements.

Inequalities must be recognized as part of our historical responsibilities because if not, is impossible to go with a new framework for the Anthropocene, sustainable development, etc.

Shared responsibility is not just based on rights but also obligations; States will manage the global environmental governance as political

woes to address national interest which is insufficient to act based on shared responsibilities, common values, and partnerships to tackle the global environmental crisis. It seems crucial to take into account the regional co-operation to rearrange the national interest to achieve global governance, for example, countries that share the Amazon basin. Need to use the political and economic assets and also social challenges to bring low-income countries together and get them to act as a block, based on nature.

Global crisis is relevant to separate pressure from change and separate to reveal the confidence between developing and developed countries; the innovative role of the South should be observed and discussed but also acknowledge and include the Eastern and Western worlds coming together.

The real political challenge for environmental governance that we face is to overcome 'short-termism' and adopt a planetary perspective, not a global one. Human civilization is in the process of trying to become like Earth, in the sense of learning to become a persistent system. At the same time, we need to be realistic and ready to learn lessons the hard way but persist, and have a dose of humanism and solidarity in the world; we need to be fact-based and not belief-based. The construction of change is democratic, and we need democracy. Today in the world, political movements that weaken democracy around the world. Be more proactive, less reactive - decisions must happen now to have a better future; intergenerational and solidarity; supporting global preparedness and resilience building for the future crisis, all are very important for new environmental governance. Learn from lessons from the pandemic and work hard to have global preparedness for more resilience. In Brazil, for example, it is key for environmental governance to be reframed and highlighted as a key aspect of the global debate; a short-term perspective stopped the political trajectory on en-

environmental policy, institutions, etc. what we face today so we don't need to rebuild the past but build a new basis, new concerns, new political alignments, build on complementarity, also observe reactions of Brazilian society, playing on different perspective guided towards building the future; many civil society coalitions joined together to discussed and get to be transformative.

Institutions of Global Environment Governance in short:

- Continued short-term political cycles
- Strong leadership needed
- Long-term systems thinking (shift)
- Innovation by local governments / communities
- Scale-up and inform policy frameworks – a mutually reinforcing process (best practices/ resilience) – social ownership of decisions we make inviting civil society and stakeholders
- Exercise the precautionary principle

5. Common thread: What is missing or failing to comply with and enforce international environmental law?

5.1 Najat Saliba - Professor in Chemistry at the American University of Beirut; co-executive director of Khaddit Beirut and the Director and founder of the Environment Academy

Lebanon depends on foreign financial aid; around 2014 the country received the highest amount ever divided between the government, UN system, NGOs, private sector, and other agencies, which was allocated for quality education, reducing inequalities, zero hunger, clean water & sanitation, and good health among others. In 2018, the country requested more money for transport, electricity, water & irrigation, and waste but problems only exacerbated: in schools, few students, as well as teachers, had laptops for education; for clean water, the Litani river is one of the most polluted in the

world; health threat on daily basis because of shortage of electricity compensated by humming diesel generators spread all over the city; garbage crisis came to the surface on 2015 and still no plan to solve this; and to top it all off, the Beirut explosion in 2020 caused by negligence and carelessness with a fire a month later which caused distrust from the population, there were no procedures in place to lead with the aftermath. No corrective actions were taken, the local government continues corrupt business as usual, and other governments are trying to look for their gains amidst the crisis. The rule of law failed. In many parts of the world, people's lives and dignity remain at risk.

Stuck in a cycle, civil resistance is largely linear, people vs politicians, and targeting the same group using the same tools (protests) around the world, which usually end in two ways: either people win and dictatorship dissolves, or the political system wins and people go to jail, die or lose their rights, which is actually what prevails. People lose hope, demotivated and helpless the country plunges into poverty, and humanitarian aid rushes to the country to serve the most vulnerable but is always a passive attitude instead of an active approach. The Rule of Law failed.

A new model for transformational change is needed.

Constructive resistance to build alternative communities has started separating from dominant structures and towards independence and hopes in the present, promises for the future are no longer appealing. With people's engagement and mobilization, we would like to break the cycles of dependency, clientelism and economic gain at the expense of climate justice and the common good.

The Environment Academy and Khaddit Beirut look at community issues and work together to create knowledge and co-create solutions with a multi-disciplinary group of people while

also building trust over time. The first 10 environmental projects on clean water, solid waste management and forest fire prevention were so successful that it meant 12 additional projects across the country. When the community is engaged, when the community is empowered, the community is driving change. The rule of the common good wins.

The rule of law works when a trusted government has put the environment as one of the country's priorities. It is, however, limited by the country's own boundaries.

The rule of survival works in disaster zones. The narrative, however, focuses on humanitarian aid which is counterproductive.

The rule of the common good works when breaking the cycles of dependencies and clientelism by empowering the community with evidence so that the community becomes the agent of the needed change.

5.2 Jan van de Venis – Human Rights and Rights of Nature Lawyer at JustLaw; Chairman of the board of Stand Up for Your Rights, The Crowd Versus and National Park Dunes of Texel and acting Ombudsperson for Future Generations

Four key messages on Environmental Justice and the Right to a Healthy and Clean Environment:

1. Use the Right to a Healthy Environment
2. Focus on lawsuits and if is needed, go to court to force governments to act
3. Connect agendas (with Rights of Nature, etc.)
4. Governments must act on human rights agendas

Use the Right to a Healthy Environment and include future generations not only in the sub-article but act for them today. For example, air pollution in the Netherlands already damages the brains of unborn children, so the impact on

future generations is there and it needs to be improved soon.

The climate agreement talks about intergenerational equity but not about the rights of future generations; neither do the Sustainable Development Goals - the UN just acknowledges the right to a healthy and clean environment but doesn't make reference to future generations. However, in Germany, it has been added to the constitution.

We need institutions for future generations, including a new envoy on future generations. Our national institutions should also work on this, not just pay lip service at the UN in Geneva, such as with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) laws, and implement the human rights and business agenda - not just signing resolutions; act today based on the fairness principle towards future generations but we shouldn't leave this to the judges.

Human rights have been recognized a long time ago and are still under development: it should be stressed that people in power need to realize the rights of those who didn't vote. For instance, speaking to the Child Rights Committee in the Netherlands, there's a huge governance gap in communications with public servants who don't recognize impacts on human rights or future generations. Impact assessments on these issues by states, provinces, and local or city governments would be easily done and very beneficial.

We need to link the agendas: human rights on the environment, business, the rights of nature, ecocide, justice for future generations, and the UN harmony with nature, which need to be linked. The UN Committee on Human Rights declared environmental degradation, unsustainable development, and climate change are among the most pressing issues when it comes to the right to life of present and future generations but it goes beyond to over 10 human rights that are impacted; the Committee



Climate justice activist **Vanessa Nakateat** Stockholm+50 © UNEP

continues to say that countries need to take their international environmental obligations under environmental law, and inform it towards their obligations under human rights law, and it must take these and inform it on the international environmental law, which was actually used in a case in a Heritage site.

The time has come to start to link all these topics. It is in the interest of our future generations to act today so we must ensure that these values stop being moral imperatives but become legally binding rules, and take them into societies – rights must be realized. The European Court on Human Rights was clear in its cases that countries need to include human rights when it comes to environmental danger, in the whole process: when a permit is given, when they monitor the permit and when it is enforced. Stand up for your rights, use them and future generations would thank it. The

President of the International Court of Justice said: “Humans have become a force of nature and we negatively impact the planet that we live on. We don’t have a right to create the future of the future generations but we have the obligation to prevent that we negatively impacting their generation, so we have the duty to ensure that future generations are still allowed freely choose theirs today”.

5.3 Tzaporah Berman - Chair of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative and the international program director of Stand-Earth

Many years of research have been looking at fossil fuel production and trying to understand that despite many progressive governments willing to address climate change and put good climate policy, Canada’s emissions continued to rise. So, our governments have been regulating emissions while the fossil fuel indus-

try has been growing production significantly. Research showed that there's a missing framework internationally to constrain the production and supply of fossil fuels which stands in the way of us meeting climate goals, but also that we can create a framework for international cooperation as there are many human rights, equity, and justice issues embedded in this continued growth of fossil fuel production.

The Treaty focuses on the question of fossil fuel supply and how incompatible the continued growth of production is for a safe future; failing to manage the phase-out of fossil fuel production not only means that climate goals won't be met but workers in vulnerable communities around the world who are dependent on production for their livelihoods, may lose their income and livelihoods when their projects become unviable due to failing demand and the drop in the price of renewables, now cheaper than fossil fuels in many parts of the world. If we don't coordinate who gets to produce and how much, if we don't negotiate that, we will have an unmanaged decline and more people will suffer. The Treaty's mission is to create a globally coordinated plan for a global just transition away from fossil fuels, one that is feasible, fair, and in line with meeting the Paris Agreement goals.

The World Economic Forum report shows that exceeding 1.5C is a risk equivalent to or greater than weapons of mass destruction; in 2020, climate action failure is the most likely and greatest risk for global security today. From there on, the Treaty movement started to make the analogy with nuclear non-proliferation.

Climate policy and agreements are complicated but 86% of the emissions trapped in the atmosphere today come from oil, gas, and coal. For decades, governments have negotiated emissions and targets, but the production of these three products has been dramatically increasing. Just recently, UNEP, The Stockholm Environment Institute, and others produced

the 'production gap report' that shows that we are on track to produce 110% more fossil fuels in the next decade than we can ever burn if we want to stay below 1.5C. Shockingly, G20 countries have directed about USD 300 billion in new funds toward growing fossil fuel activities since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even if coal was phased out overnight, existing oil and gas projects alone would push us above 1.5 C. For decades, climate policy and agreements have been designed in a theory: that we reduce demand, increase the price of carbon, and the market would constrain supply, but it is not working fast enough to keep us safe, in large part because the markets are distorted by fossil fuel subsidies and because of the power and influence of the fossil fuel industry, who expects that technologies would solve this and thus, continue expansion. This is why we need to hold governments accountable and not just leave it to the market.

Currently, all the science has aligned that there's no need for new investments in fossil fuels although there's no mention in the Paris Agreement of oil, coal, and gas, or there's any international cooperation around it. Given the urgency, the scale of the challenge, and capacity and development constraints, unprecedented international cooperation is needed to ensure a rapid and equitable phase-out of fossil fuels and a just transition for workers and communities.

Critical work is being done to create principles around the Treaty based on equity principles that must underlie production decline; although not all fossil fuel-producing countries face challenges, some are more dependent on government revenue and continue to drill for more fossil fuels, even in indigenous territories and high biodiversity areas, just to feed their debt. For some countries, there's no way to stop fossil fuel expansion without new negotiations that also include debt forgiveness and international cooperation.

A new international agreement on fossil fuels can create obligations and set global norms around the need to end expansion and phase out fossil fuels. It will ensure greater transparency about fossil fuel reserves and production plans. Currently, there's no way for us to see and hold accountable countries' plans for what they produce, so we work on a global registry of production and reserves which will provide support for a global just transition, clear transparency, and accountability.

The three pillars that the treaty is designed for are based on the analogy of nuclear non-proliferation:

- Non-proliferation
- Global disarmament
- Peaceful transition

Momentum is growing for a Fossil-Fuel Treaty; the movement built from the ground up issued a call which is endorsed by 101 Nobel Laureates, including the Dalai Lama; cities from around the world are passing motions to city councils (similar to the nuclear non-proliferation); over 2,000 scientists have the call and its principles; over 100 members of parliament from more than 20 countries endorsed the call, as have youth groups and over 800 groups from civil society who also call their governments to support an international treaty.

5.4 Paulo Magalhães – Founder and Director of Common Home of Humanity; Jurist and researcher at CIJE-Centre for Legal and Economic Research - University of Porto

A big problem that was never solved in international law is climate. It is such a big problem that it needs to link both theory and practice. When climate first enters the UN agenda, the first question asked was 'What is climate from a legal standpoint?', as climate can't be abstractly divided, such as seas or air, the concept to consider the planet from a legal standpoint, only as a territory divided between States

where the global commons are only the leftovers of this division, is not trying to explain the complexity and the functionality of the Earth system.

The legitimacy of law comes from its ability to explain reality if we do not make one evolution of law that stick to the planet as it was looking 500 years ago, we won't have the structural conditions for collective action.

Climate is truly a global common in the natural world but we don't accept that it is a global common, so Borg, in 2009, is the first to talk about climate as an intangible natural resource that spans across national territories of States.

At the planetary scale, the ways matter and energy move around the planet, creating various patterns of atmospheric and oceanic circulation, follow the laws of thermodynamics and result in a stable climate, which is something that can only be legally classified as an intangible natural good. These circulation patterns and the global climate system are nature's 'software'.

The support of life on Earth is an intangible good that belongs to everyone and to all generations - a truly intangible Global Common across borders. Thus, climate change is the deterioration of an intangible common good, but the successful management of a common good must have rules for provision and appropriation and the Paris Agreement doesn't have this (a tragedy of the commons at a global scale).

When climate change entered the debate at the UN in Rio, the first proposal by Malta linked to climate was to treat it as a common heritage for humankind, but it was rejected as an answer to avoid and reject a common good. Climate change today is considered a common 'concern' for humankind, not heritage, and because is a 'concern' we don't understand the common rights and duties. In 1991, Tolba

said that this 'concern' should be made clear for the recognition of rights and obligations of the State, but it still isn't clear. In fact, in the Paris Agreement preamble, it still appears as a 'common concern for humankind', so countries will try to make fewer emissions restricting the conversation to emissions while keeping the same economic model.

In the 'common concern of humankind,' there still is a territorial approach to the planet: one territory divided in States system where the commons are only the leftovers; but recognition is needed that it is a common good and that implies a common governance, a common system of legitimacy, common rules to manage its use and that the user of the common good is getting benefits and should pay for it, in order to have less damage (i.e. negative sum damage, zero-sum game). It is like cleaning in a legal void: there needs to be an emitter who pays for someone to absorb the emissions but with this model, it is impossible to restore the ecosystem, clean the climate or leave a heritage for the next generation.

"Emissions must exist in order to recognize the value of removing said emissions".

Biodiversity produces the ecosystem processes that produce environmental services that produce benefits, like the Amazon producing a stable climate for all the planet, but the system itself does not exist for the law, climate is not a common good, and the benefits spread all across the planet but the benefits disappear from a legal standpoint. With a heritage approach, they can be captured and visible in a common area, so we need legal support to restore and maintain a stable climate. Value is not a given thing, it has always been shaped and created.

In sum, we need to recognize value in the process that supports life on Earth and on what really matters; climate policy has been negotiated and omitting fundamental assumptions;

we can't continue to do the same and expect different results; if we recognize a global commons approach we will have a legal basis to build an economy capable of restoring a stable climate, and create more equity between developed and developing countries, as well as intergenerational relationships.

Discussion Panels: How the Stockholm+49 Civil Society Declaration can contribute to a fruitful Declaration and future process after Stockholm+50?

1. David Boyd - UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment; Associate Professor of Law, Policy, and Sustainability at the University of British Columbia

We are living in a multifaceted environmental emergency, which is also a human rights crisis (i.e. to life, health, food water, adequate standards of living, culture, and right to a healthy environment). We are in no way to meet the Paris Agreement and the targets agreed to by the CBD were not met due to the Aquiles heel of international environmental law where there is an absence of compliance and enforcement mechanisms. States can fail to meet commitments and will not be held accountable. But human rights have been a catalyst for human transformation (abolition of slavery, women's rights, end of apartheid), and these can help overcome the failures of international environmental law. There are examples worldwide about decisions that prove that environmental law + human rights law = accountability. In the face of a climate crisis, many processes are being developed in different countries. The right to live in a clean, safe, healthy, and sustainable environment was first mentioned in Stockholm declaration in 1972, and adopted by some countries in their constitution; today it is recognized by more than 80% of the UN member States in constitutions, legislation, court decisions, and regional treaties. This right is a bundle of procedural (i.e. access to infor-



ROLAC: TUNZA Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean. Panamá, 2013 © PNUMA/ UNEP

mation, public participation in decision-making, and access to justice with effective remedies) and substantive rights (i.e. clean air, safe and sufficient water, healthy and sustainably produced food, a safe climate, healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, and non-toxic environments where people can live, work, study and play). And this has to be guided by key principles: Non-discrimination, non-regression, prevention, and precaution.

Research demonstrates that recognition of the right to a healthy environment is a catalyst for stronger laws and policies, improved implementation and enforcement, higher levels of public participation in decision-making, and improved environmental outcomes on the ground (i.e. air quality, GhG emissions, safe drinking water). Good news - on October 2021, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a [resolution](#) recognizing for the first time at the glob-

al level that everyone, everywhere has the right to live in a healthy environment. This is the ultimate fusion of international environmental law and human rights law. Although not legally binding, it will be a catalyst.

The right to a healthy environment should be one of the central elements of the Stockholm+50 declaration, human rights should be at the heart all climate conservation and anti-pollution action to maximize both progress and equity, and this should be increasingly recognized as an obligation not an option.

2. Jan-Gustav Strandenaes - Senior Adviser at Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future

Maurice Strong, secretary general of the Stockholm Conference in 1972 already referred to forces that we have created and that if we can control them, they will provide all we

need but if they dominate us, there are dire consequences for humans and the planet.

In 1972 there were many people (250 NGOs Accredited, more than 10,000, 113 countries sent representatives) attending but there were 2 States that prioritized the environment by sending their Prime Ministers (PM): the PM of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, and PM of Sweden Olaf Palmer, who concluded that in the field of human environment there is no individual future, not for humans nor for nations – our future is common, we must share it and shape it together.

The '72 conference agreed on a declaration that provided 26 principles, 109 paragraphs on a strong action plan, and 5 resolutions all containing novel policies. The main elements of what we see today are found in these documents. The Stockholm legacy with its lasting relevance, still allows us to build a better future if there's enough courage and political will. The legacy covers 6 areas; the conference gave us a global institution for environmental law, the beginning of environmental governance, an institution to connect science with the environment, and the conference allowed for the first time, greater participation of civil society and other non-state stakeholders, which remains today in intergovernmental meetings. Environmental diplomacy began at the time and environmental assessment and management began.

The conference was prepared 4 years in advance and gathered many experts from around the world and many documents on the human environment were prepared; 80 countries prepared an environmental assessment. The process and the conference evidenced the influence of science in international environmental policy-making; the conference was also the result of struggles for the environment that had been going on for decades, mostly led by scientists or indigenous persons, very few by politicians (i.e. whaling, creation of IUCN and World

Meteorological Organization, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, creation of science program on the environment in UNESCO and other UN specialized agencies, etc.). The Stockholm conference and the creation of UNEP were the first efforts to coordinate environmental issues and combine them with social, economic, governance and legal issues, and the first to look at interlinkages and look at the implementation of cross-sector issues. This legacy is today in danger to be sidelined so the Stockholm+50 conferences provide the opportunity for a renewed stand for the environment, good governance, and democracy for justice, rights, equality, and fairness including working for the future.

Peoples see and experience problems and demand change (i.e. deforestation, water shortage, pollution, etc.) they defend the environment and are murdered for their stance; often times politicians respond that change is not possible, is too costly, etc. but eventually, people win the arguments and politicians begin to use their language in decision-making processes. But the exploitation of nature for short-term gains taught humanity yet another lesson when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Resetting the world in an environmentally sound way is proving difficult. The environment is constantly relegated by governments and this must change, and we should use this occasion to change that. But optimism is required, as Maurice Strong had back in 1972. Do we need another conference to tell us what to do? Yes, we need it. We need to ensure that civil society and non-state stakeholders will always have a say in environmental matters and that participation is protected and they will not be persecuted. We need a strong Stockholm+50 declaration that can guide us forward, we will fight for the environment, fight for justice, equality, rights-based approaches, fairness, and the rights of future generations.



ROLAC: Project "Support to Protected Areas in Mesoamerica". 2011 © PNUMA / UNEP

3. Maria Ivanova - Associate Professor of Global Governance, Director of the Global Governance and Human Security Ph.D. Program, and Director of the Center for Governance and Sustainability at the University of Massachusetts Boston

Reflect on the past and imagine the future of the anchor institution for the global environment – UNEP, the world's leading environmental institution.

Purpose: UNEP was created to be the authority on the global environment. In 1972, governments came together to create an institution that brings together the tapestry of the UN system, the non-governmental system, and the multilateral State system together.

It was supposed to be the scientific voice on the environment, to monitor the state of the global environment continuously, and to alert us about new and upcoming threats, to tell us

what we need to address. Also, to create the policies, to guide actions to resolve these problems identified by the science. Also supposed to be the catalyst in the UN system and coordinate actions among the various UN agencies, and programs, to solve environmental problems, and catalyze action among Member States and support the institutional development in the Member States on national environmental policies that will implement the global environmental agenda; these functions are actually still needed today, even more so. Thus, UNEP is in authority to keep the global environment under review, to suggest policies and develop laws to mobilize the UNEP system for global collective action.

It has seen challenges, both within the UN system and by Member States, it has been a competitor within the UN system and by Member States who have not delivered on their commitment to solving environmental issues and regarding funding. An institution is effective

when it is both in (having the legal mandate to deliver) and on authority (to deliver results).

For the future, we need to reimagine environmental multilateralism (face the colonial past of the institutions, new leadership taken up and turn it into action, SIDS and inter-connect-edness, Member States to take leadership and bring inspiration). In order for this, we need institutions that can connect, collaborate, with a leading voice. UNEP is such an institution and UNEA is such a space.

To create the space, to bring the capabilities together across a wide coalition of states and institutions, for the next 50 years we need to give UNEP the space to live up to its original mandate.

4. Paloma Costa Oliveira - Member of the United Nations Secretary General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate

The latest IPCC report confirms what we already know, climate change is a result of our actions, and we have even less time than initially estimated to reach 1.5°C. In South America, we are facing a real collapse and as of now, no real compromise for addressing it. How can we continue to live like this? In Brazil deforestation and mining in indigenous lands continue to destroy the environment, even burning the precious Amazon.

There's so much destruction that is so difficult to recover, and still, environmentalists, youth, indigenous peoples, and local communities are being threatened for protecting the environment. There's no real space for genuine participation for these groups and to have a chance to be listened to, and despite being threatened and living in fear, many continue to defend life on Earth, which is a living being.

We are facing a collapse of existence as a result of a structural crisis and we need to act now. Youth mobilizes and can no longer live in a situation like this; they need to have a free future.

Thus, they need to have minimum guarantees like education, food, air, and water, for all! The limits of this Earth is in our conscience. We need to come together around Stockholm+50 for urgent, ambitious, and inclusive action now!

Discussion Panel 1 - Tools to enforce international environmental law

1. Yann Aguila - Professor at Sciences Po Paris and partner at Bredin Prat, a law firm in Paris, where he heads the firm's Public Law practice

Question: What has failed in the implementation and enforcement of environmental law?

The story of a 'Martian' that lands on Earth and sees little human beings that have destroyed the planet and he will solve and provide some answers to the problem.

In general, there are many failures, also successes, but after 50 years we can say that the history of international environmental law is a history of failures, in the elaboration of treaties because the decision-making process is not effective, and failures in the implementations because justice is an option.

The decision-making process is often paralyzed, such as in Copenhagen, because negotiators face a dilemma, the choice is between an ambitious agreement but not all countries will be on board or a universal agreement but not ambitious. At the end of the day, many agreements are not ambitious, non-binding, and are soft-law declarations. After 50 years we can see the results: the destruction of the planet, the decline of biodiversity, and increased emissions of CO₂. Secondly, implementation of environmental law means no sanctions for those who don't comply, despite existing committees that have no power and are only administrative bodies. Need to change the matrix of environmental governance, and build a new model based on a new concept on the idea we have of global public interest or the common con-

cern of humanity. If we share this idea, the interest of the State would be inferior to the public interest and in the decision-making process find a way to make decisions with the majority of States and not the unanimity of States as it leads to paralysis as we are always trying to have the agreement of ALL States.

2. Karl Burkart - Managing Director of One Earth, and formerly the Director of Media, Science & Technology at the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation

Question: How can science contribute these days to the implementation and enforcement of international environmental law? What are the tools that would help us to improve these failures that were just mentioned in the last intervention?

The Montreal Protocol and ozone layer were the gold standard of science; it was powerfully being presented and governments quickly aligned in a convention with teeth and legally mandated reductions were implemented. With the Kyoto protocol in climate, it tried to be replicated but failed. Currently, climate discussions are based on the concept of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) but it is a very inefficient process of how science informs the policy. But the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) assessment report no.6 (which provides a global understanding of the physics of climate science) is perhaps one of the greatest accomplishments of humanity that shows what's happened over the years since the first report came out in 1990, so, 30 years regarding acceleration of knowledge and how the climate system works.

However, there are risks with this approach. At the climate convention, the IPCC is mandated to have a report which is lacking in other Rio Conventions and despite increasing clarity on the science, we have a dire situation in the US (fires, floods), and just one senator in the US with vested interests to the fossil fuel

industry is committed to undermining the climate agenda for the US, which along with China and a couple of others are key actors in the climate negotiations. So, one single individual in one jurisdiction can shut everything down. One meta-problem.

We need a step change in the role of science in dictating the common agenda. Right now, it looks like an advisory and it has to move to have a more direct role if we are to survive as a society. Thus, we work to fill critical science gaps in decision-making at all levels.

The concept of 'Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)' of the climate convention also has a problem, which is one government's plan to decarbonize can harm another government; actually, the 'do no harm' principle isn't really in place in the Rio conventions. In the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) there's a problem in the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), as multiple conventions come under one and there are big missing ideas but currently, science is a lot clearer than when the convention started. But this remains unsolved: We can talk about the government that owns the land but, who owns the ecosystem? There's no agreement on these cross-border boundaries. We can determine a global carbon sink that keeps our global climate system in balance so if someone affects that carbon sink, there are no consequences for that. So, what are the restrictions that governments can put on this kind of activity? Unlike the IPCC science body in the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) of the CBD doesn't have a formal input wall which makes it even weaker.

Our research recently showed that roughly 30% of the world's land is very important for biodiversity and the other 20% very important for carbon storage, this is widely sided down the high ambition coalition of 68 countries includ-

ing the United States. Again, science can bring clarity but it is often misinterpreted by many of the national actors as it tends to be simplified. It is clear that the 3 big conventions are good at getting the discussion to happen and getting the global agreement but they are not good at implementation. Having compliance committees would be just the beginning. We need an infrastructure that is above the 3 conventions and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements that can dock into and start building compliance in governance, heritage, and global commons; we need to talk about common heritage and common ownership if we want actors to comply to the pledges they are making under the conventions. It is hard to attribute a portion of the commons to a country, we need science to drive implementation rather than be an advisory to a set of separate things.

3. Teresa Oberhauser - EU Project Lead at Circularise; Focal Point of the Youth Constituency of UNEP

Questions: Do you think that the international recognition of the human right to a healthy environment will make a difference and will contribute to improve the status of the Earth system and therefore, the protection of future generations? /What do you propose for implementing and enforcing these rights effectively?

The right to a safe and healthy environment is a ground-breaking step but it alone won't do enough and we need far-reaching legislation at all levels to concretize it. On the youth side, we see there's progress when it comes to inviting young people and integration in decision-making but still not based on inclusion by mandate and that is exactly what we need, a space at the table where young people can speak up without fearing retaliation for it.

There's still a lack of awareness of the need for a right to a safe and healthy environment. Even today's generation lacks awareness about po-

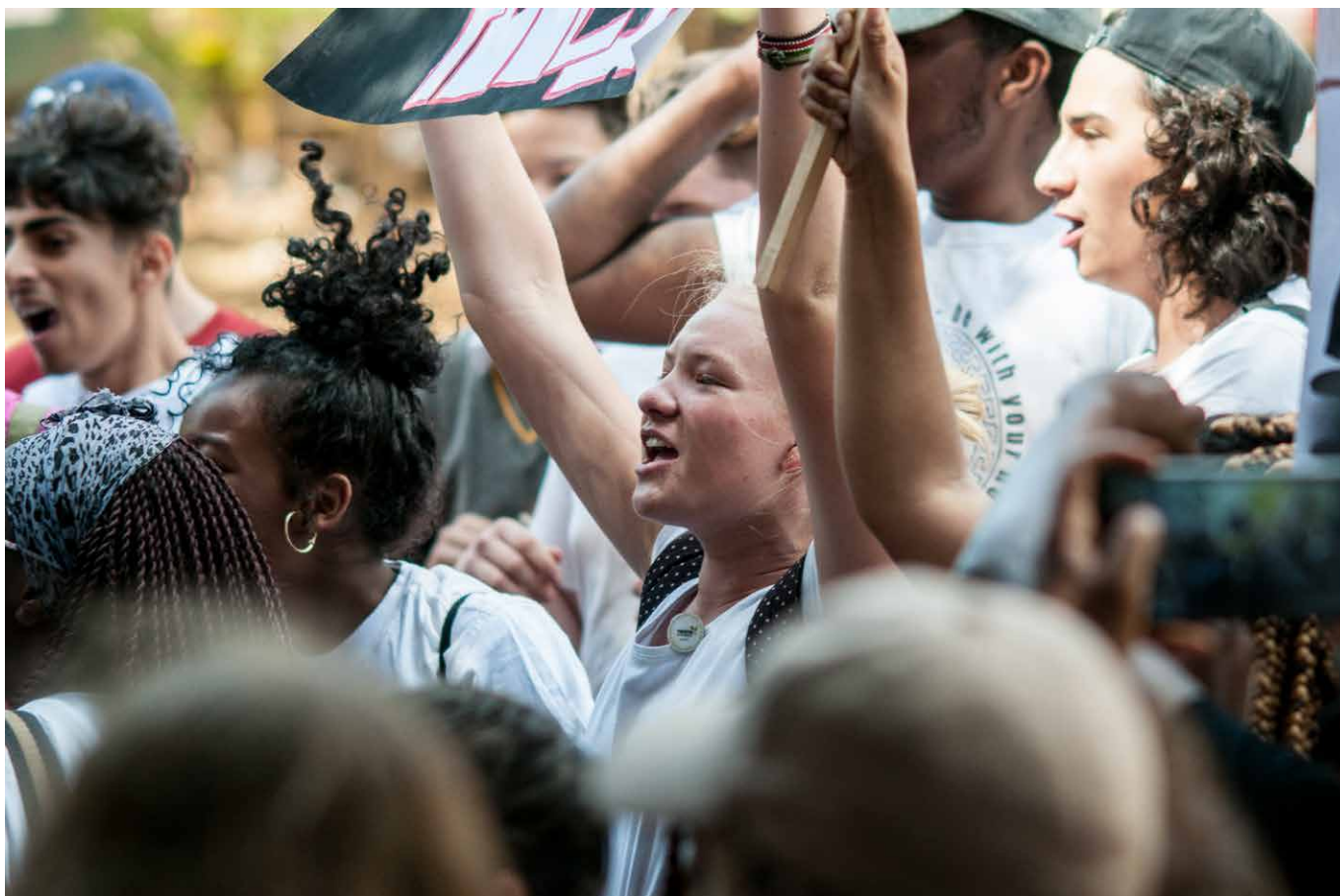
litical and business decisions that impact the well-being of the immediate next generations, but there's a clear connection. We have all these impacts that are happening today all over the world. This is a joint global activity that needs global solutions as people won't be able to tackle it on a step-by-step basis.

In the Global North, there are insurance systems that don't exist in other parts of the world. How can those costs in our society be distributed? How can we make sure that this right can also result in assurances for global rights on the system? We need more youth engagement on a mandated basis and understand that incremental change won't fix this situation.

As a representative of the Children & Youth Major Group to UNEP, coordinating the working group on Resolution 7333, we see that the Ministerial declaration to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) is not far-reaching enough. We are in a deadlock between binding agreements that lack concretization or non-binding agreements that are concrete but not implemented by the majority of countries; we don't just need more compliance but also a system of support for those countries that can't implement the right to a healthy environment by themselves.

But we mustn't forget the role of business in making change – environmental law is very closely linked to the operations of big businesses globally; to be accountable and have systems to hold them accountable for the human right to a healthy environment. And ensure that it is complied with not just on a national and government basis but also by the companies. They need to be responsible.

More transparency is required, no matter who is held accountable, either the company creating destruction or the consumer patterns in high-income countries. And more compliance and more accountability start with more knowledge and transparency. Citizens and civil



Youth gather in Karura forest, Nairobi, in solidarity with the global climate youth marches © UNEP

society need more information of government practices and specifically on companies, of the products that are being consumed, as well as clear and binding regulations for businesses and multinationals also disclosing their products practices. Often governments say that they can have far-reaching adjustments but companies can do so. We need specifications, and rules for the economy. The human right to a healthy environment is promising, especially when looking at the costs of inaction.

4. Jojo Mehta - Co-founder and executive director of Stop Ecocide International and chair of the charitable Stop Ecocide Foundation

Question: How could ecocide help to improve the implementation and enforcement of environmental law at all levels? What governance mechanisms do you propose to avoid ecocide?

Global systemic changes need to happen fast and a strategic intervention is needed. All the information we need is there but we are not moving fast enough, and criminalizing ecocide is a structural and simple intervention that is very precise and achievable in the context of the International Criminal Court (ICC) it is achievable as it is 1 State - 1 vote, it requires a 2/3 majority to adopt the statutes, you don't have to have the biggest dirtiest players to do it, and it is the only global mechanism that directly accesses the criminal justice systems of all its Member States; it is a complementary court. Any member ratifying it there would need to include it in its domestic legislation. It would be relatively easy to implement, a new rule that would work across jurisdictions and transnational corporations.

Ecocide has been taken seriously, several governments are talking about it internally, 16 ICC Member States are in (i.e. Bangladesh,

Bolivia, Brazil, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Finland, France, Luxembourg, The Maldives, Mexico, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the UK, Vanuatu, and many more). Besides, it is not a 500-page treaty but a once-sentence definition²; criminal law is simple and operates in a different way than civil law so is an enforceable parameter fitting into criminal justice systems, it doesn't require a new mechanism as many things are already there.

The potential is to create a foundation that is currently missing; for those working on human rights or social justice, there's an internalized knowledge reflected in the legal system (i.e. murder, mass murder, torture, crimes against humanity) but in the environmental arena there's none of that, no foundational piece, which is what ecocide looks at. The fact that there's no bottom line rule means that it is not taken seriously enough and then you put it at the highest international level, you say is not just criminal and unlawful but also bad and wrong, and so it becomes profoundly significant. But we don't have that same recoil for destroying the environment; we have a deep mindset problem that comes from centuries ago.

We have all sorts of divisions, a dualism that runs right through western thought, and thus, we ended up with our colonial system (i.e. domination, seeing nature as a resource, etc.). As soon as you put damage to nature on an equivalent with damage to humans, then there's a shift; it starts to acknowledge a profound reality of deep interconnection with the ecosystems around us and still goes beneath 'who owns what.' A simple pivotal point like ecocide in criminal law could also help support the right to a healthy environment, and the right to life. If we don't have boundaries and moral param-

eters in place (like criminal law), how can we move forward?

Discussion panel 2 - Tools to enforce international environmental law

1. *Marcello Palazzi - Progressive economist, entrepreneur, and leader*

Challenging innovation of the private sector towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the B-corporation.org movement of some 2,500 companies intends to go away from profit and bring benefit first. They use assessments according to social-environmental impacts and community objectives.

Six years ago, together with lawyers, they passed a benefit corporation legislation now active in 38 states in the US, and also in countries like Italy, Colombia, Ecuador, British Columbia in Canada, Rwanda, and France which made its own version.

There are 3 key principles to the legislation:

- Statements of purpose
- Transparency
- Stakeholders inclusion (stakeholders first)

Many companies in different countries have joined and many more want to join. They have started on the environmental side with the net-zero commitment; owners of companies to also become benefit corporations or sign a (voluntary) commitment to 'walk the talk', and are in contact with investors for this. Finally, this is an individual director's responsibility so they will be held accountable directly.

In the social sphere (i.e. inclusion, diversity, minorities), some advances have been made espe-

² Ecocide means "unlawful unwanted acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe or other wide-spread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by these acts".



UNEA 5. Emotions all around the house as the resolution on plastic is passed © UNEP / Cyril Villemain

cially in Scandinavian countries but headed to continue to bring more companies into this field. B-Corps get certified and every 3 years they have to renew the standards, some may not be able to keep up as the standards also evolve.

the productive capacity of their lands and territories. Additionally, there's an article on how they can use the traditional justice systems and customary laws to protect their land, resources, and others.

2. Vicky Tauli-Corpuz - United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Kankana-ey-Igorot, from the Philippines)

There are several approaches looking at how international environmental governance can really be instrumental in Indigenous Peoples' (IPs) territories. IPs work very hard at the international level to ensure international standards for the protection of the rights of IPs, embedded in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIPs): references to rights to self-determination, to land, territories, and resources, and the right to protect and conserve their environment and

IPs work at the Conference of the Parties (COP) on the climate and biodiversity processes to ensure that their rights are recognized and integrated into some of the decisions of these conventions, for example, the rights of IPs to their forests and consent of IPs in REDD projects for mitigation of climate change (UNFCCC), and the Indigenous and local communities' platform for the protection of traditional knowledge which is a contribution made under the biodiversity process (CBD). In addition, IPs work very closely at the national level with partners to look at the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and push for IPs issues to be included, and to monitor how these NDCs

include IPs proposals and/or participation. Also, as IPs have their own systems for protecting collective rights to lands and territories. As a rapporteur of IPs several complaints were received regarding governments displacing IPs due to conservation projects and protected areas, and even renewable energy projects. IPs find ways for integrating the UNDRIP in the 3 Rio Conventions, and use special procedures of the UN when governments don't comply with their obligations, both on human rights and environmental law (i.e. UN special rapporteur on the rights of IPs). In addition, IPs train communities to bring complaints to the relevant bodies but that is exactly what is really lacking in United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) or the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), as there's no mechanism as such for complaints or a grievance mechanism which is a gap that needs to be addressed.

IPs also have internal laws and justice systems, and independent parties to investigate – they have their own customary laws to watch for encroachment, extractives without consent, pollution, and deforestation, and they resort to self-mobilization, but there's criminalization and militarization of their communities for defending their rights, thus, much support is needed. Hence, global campaigns are created to gain support and make the issue more visible, raise them to a higher level and get the actions needed.

IPs do not always succeed, but there's a good track record of success in stopping threats. IPs try to strengthen communities themselves, create awareness of agreements and what it translates down to their levels, and to demand more accountability and transparency of the actors involved, for instance, push the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to have an IPs policy.

3. Christina Voigt - Chair of the IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law and Professor at the University of Oslo, Norway

International environmental law is a vast and dynamic field of law and is difficult to keep abreast of the developments, thus we need experts and people to follow. It is important because negotiations have important value to different actors (not just State actors), especially to those that are constructing something together and working towards a collective solution and thus, require to have a wide representation from different stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities.

Decisions on Conferences of the Parties (COPs) or new agreements are key governance tools in the international arenas to address the challenges we face collectively like biodiversity decline, climate change, ocean pollution, etc. They require these global consensus agreements to ensure fairness and inclusiveness in order to have a meaningful legal response to a given problem.

It is important to create a global level playing field that avoids pollution havens and places where is simpler and cheaper to continue environmentally destructive behavior; agreements are supposed to engage incorporations between these different actors but by the end of the day, they also deliver concrete legal obligations and commitments and rules. But legal obligations are not entirely clear cut, they are often general and abstract in nature, which links back to the need to find consensus in many areas, not necessarily in voting, and this is why they often get criticized as fuzzy and vague or not clear legal content. And here the judiciary comes in and plays an important role.

Courts do help solve disputes but in addition, is also a forum to give more clarity to international rules whenever the content is not clear. International courts could help with the judicial interpretation of these rules which is needed because negotiations don't deliver at that level of specificity. For example, in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, there's a general provision for all States to protect the



March 5, 2017. UNEP participates in the Global Goals World Cup in Nairobi. The all-women team played for SDG Goal #14: Life Below Water. © UNEP

marine environment, but it is up to the international tribunal of law on the sea and the international court of arbitration, to give more meaning to them (a due diligence obligation). Another example is the human rights, rights of Indigenous Peoples' and children's rights in the context of climate change which was brought to court by several children. International courts gave specific interpretations in this regard, such as the rights of the child on how climate change affects them, and although it resulted unsuccessful for procedural reasons, it was clear what kind of obligations they needed from States.

The role of the judiciary is also accompanied by non-compliance mechanisms, and although we don't have complaints mechanisms in many Multilateral Environmental Agreements, we do have non-compliance 'in-house' mechanisms in the specific agreements, for instance,

under the Paris Agreement an implementation and compliance committee, is looking at the legally binding obligations of States.

Complementing the role of judges, the judiciary is a role of national judges; all international agreements make sense when they are implemented into national legal systems, that's when they start to matter and even lead to enforcement mechanisms, and this is precisely where there has been the least progress and where we need more work in the years to come.

4. Maja Groff - International Lawyer and Convenor of the Climate Governance Commission

How to go forward together? Gathering input for a draft civil society declaration solicited by the organizers - a global civil society movement to initiate a process to create and develop a very succinct civil society statement on key

principles and key asks to help a fundamental transformation we collectively need in environmental governance and legislation.

The draft civil society declaration aimed at reaching a consensus around 4-5 key ideas for global civil society to speak with a unified voice: a paradigm shift to international environmental governance can be linked to the declaration.

The declaration aimed to push governments but also get points of contact with progressive governments willing to work with civil society and understand the real urgency of this moment.

Key points from the draft:

UNEP and others to facilitate a transformation paradigm shift for a sustainable future for all life on Earth, calling for a transformative Stockholm+50 outcome.

1. Implementing the Right to a Healthy Environment (R2HE) underlying principles of intergenerational equity – non-regression in environmental norms and mandatory progression in all spheres of environmental law.
2. Defining a global public interest.
3. True value accounting - How our current economic paradigms are not sufficient to tackle the current issues that we have.
4. States together - the international community committing to an innovating pathway forward, Stockholm+50 to be the start of paradigm shift movement and serious multi-lateral discussions - Transformative outcome from Stockholm+50 Universal periodic environmental review.

5. Richard Ponzio - Director of the Global Governance, Justice & Security Program and a Senior Fellow at Stimson

Next steps in actions → Relationship of Stockholm+49 plus other meetings, including the Summit of the Future in September 2024.

Some key terms as we come out of the pandemic: a lot of focus is on recovery, the need for major governance reforms, and some key principles we would like to see in the Stockholm+50 declaration; and the structural and institutional change as well as normative and legal changes. On the recovery side, the Stockholm+50 declaration must speak to the broader socio-economic and environmental recovery. Two key reports contribute to this dialogue: The Climate Governance Commission and 'Building back together and greener' by the Simpson Centre - green recovery with broader base justice and thinking about the most vulnerable and exposing these vulnerabilities.

A roadmap to the 2022 Green Pandemic Recovery Summit was developed that brings together the issues in the different intergovernmental processes (i.e. G20, climate COP26, High-level Political Forum on SDGs), and the declaration from Stockholm+49 feeding to Stockholm+50 very much speaks to the different themes (i.e. healthy environment and the pandemic, build back better, green recovery).

The key item, while connecting the dots on policies, near-term issues, and principles, we would like to see in the declaration of the major global governance reforms, is this commentary on the Common Agenda report regarding the 2024 Summit of the Future. Our Common agenda followed multiple tracks of wide consultations and fed to the UN 75th anniversary.

Three proposals, in particular, have come up during these past few days' meetings: the repurposing of the Trusteeship Council focus on global commons and promoting global public goods; similarly, and as it relates to the recovery agenda, bring together powerful G20 governments and a proposal to bring together heads of State of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN, along with the heads of International Financial Institutions and the UN secretary, every two years to deal with major social-economic-and environmen-



March 12, 2019. Nairobi Kenya. The 4th United Nations Environment Assembly UNEA 4
© UNEP / Natalia Mroz

tal policy issues; and a call for a special envoy on future generations. And, three core elements of the Stockholm+50 declaration: implementation, delivery, and intergenerational focus.

In the end, it is also about holding governments accountable for the many commitments acquired. Thus, we encourage people to engage not just in Stockholm+50 but beyond, including the Summit of the Future in 2024.

6. Ado Lõhmus - Permanent Representative of Estonia to the UNEP at the Government of Estonia

Highlight some of the areas important for follow-up and see how we can advance the global environmental agenda:

- UNGA Resolution 73/3333 – culminating during UNEP@50 commemoration
- Stockholm+50 – no negotiated outcome but invite everyone to focus on UNEP@50 in March 2022
- Strong linkages of the draft political declaration, including the Right to a Healthy & Clean Environment, and it should also reaffirm all the Rio principles
- Invite governments to incorporate existing principles in national legislation and use the tools of the Montevideo Programme that can help Member States on developing legislative frameworks for implementing international environmental law, and advance their current legal framework
- Stress in the political declaration, the hierarchy of international environmental governance. Member States have decided that UNEA should be the lead decision-making body but during the last 30 years, there has been a proliferation of environmental agreements and

none is more outstanding than the other. Therefore, it needs more collaboration and linkages as governments struggle to implement existing obligations at the national level. Also, UNEA should be the platform that keeps all these MEAs together (i.e. an overarching policy and guidance, an integrated agenda)

- Strengthening collaboration between MEAs including Rio conventions but also a collaboration with UNEA. There is independence and independent treaty bodies but if we overcome such legal constraints, UNEP could help the global community
- Recognizing the right to access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters are key aspects of this political declaration, and also relate to strengthening the science-policy interphase
- Need for quality environmental information which will help increase transparency and share information. For instance, currently, a gap is seen in the environment of SDG indicators where there's no information available in order to make informed decisions
- Member States made a wise decision at UNEA-4, a mandate to develop a global environmental strategy: the core for increasing the capacity and the quality of decision-making at the global level; the core part of the strategy should be harmonizing standards but also supporting capacity building at the global level
- International environmental law implementation needs a boost and full use of the Montevideo program could help, but is also missing proper monitoring and reviewing. With this political declaration, co-facilitators have been interpreting the Means of Implementation (MoI), how we can support capacity building in order to develop the periodic environmental performance review which is inspired by human rights' UPR; so far, there has been some criticism but performance reviews already exist.
- Create the mandate and place UNEP in the center of running the external assessments and supporting the governments through the recommendations, and assessing the progress in achieving environmental objectives, as well as mapping the capacity building gaps, including financial gaps. Understanding how far they are and what is needed – global reviews with the support of the global community.
- MoI are also very important for the Global South, so performance review mechanisms should be also built and developed together with financial mechanisms to support Member States' capacity needs.
- Finally, strengthening the interactions of Major Groups and stakeholders and Civil Society participation; Nairobi is consid-



UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya © UNEP



Group Photo of ACL Policy Dialogues. Kasane, Botswana© UNEP / Duncan Moore

ered the environmental capital but Major Groups' engagement in decision-making is not comparable to other UN headquarters. Therefore, the draft political declaration needs to strengthen the presence of Major Groups in establishing additional liaison offices and in supporting and enriching the discussion.

RESTORING OUR COMMON HOME: DECLARATION FOR STOCKHOLM+50

Humanity at a Crossroads – Breakdown or Breakthrough

The world's dire ecological situation, and the challenges faced by present and future generations, are increasingly clear. Youth are protesting in the streets and in the courts, as calls for deep transformation and renewal are heard from all segments of society. On October 8, 2021, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) recognized the "right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment". For this right to be implemented, structural changes to the legal, economic, social, politi-

cal, and technological spheres will be required to restore a stable and well-functioning Earth System. A shared consciousness of our global interdependence must give rise to a new common logic, to define and recognize the global commons that support life on Earth — the planetary system that connects us all and on which we all depend. This is a foundational step toward the establishment of a governance system to effectively manage human interactions with the Earth System. Fifty years after the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, the signatories of this civil society Declaration call upon the United Nations, its agencies, and all Member States to act upon a four-step pathway toward the critical paradigm shift we all need.

1 - Implement the Right to a Healthy Environment.

Member States should implement UNHRC Resolution 48/13 recognizing this right. This requires acknowledging and acting upon intra- and intergenerational equity which, in

turn, requires that principles are progressive and include obligations of non-regression – e.g., enshrining a “regeneration” agenda – in all spheres of environmental law. Non-regression must prevent erosion of protection, while principles of regeneration and progression will ensure that environmental laws and regulations consistently advance in both ambition and effectiveness. It entails ensuring procedural environmental rights, including access to information, public participation, and access to justice. The right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment (itself a core global public good) can only be achieved if our shared life support system – the Earth System – is protected as a single, indivisible whole.

2 - Recognize, Restore and Safeguard the Global Commons.

The foundational step for successfully managing a common good is to recognize and define it. This will facilitate the establishment of a genuinely effective global environmental governance framework, consistent with the indivisibility of the natural system that supports life on this planet. A well-functioning Earth System, keeping humanity in a “safe operating space” within all vital and interdependent Planetary Boundaries, must be recognized as a fundamental global common in need of urgent stewardship. It thus should be legally recognized as the “Common Heritage” of humankind. A stable climate is a manifestation of the Earth System functioning and represents more than an issue of “Common Concern,” as expressed in the Paris Agreement. Due to the urgency of the climate crisis, the recognition of a stable climate as a Common Heritage, to allow for its restoration and safeguard, must become an immediate flagship issue and central priority in the “Our Common Agenda” process.

3 - Establish a Regenerative Economy.

Our current economic system treats the consumption of physical natural resources as “wealth creation,” despite the resulting destruction of natural infrastructure. A prosperous future requires an economy in which the natural processes that support all life on Earth and maintain a stable climate become economically visible. Recognizing the Earth System and a stable climate as a “Common Heritage” will enable the proper valuation of these benefits for human societies, which today are considered mere “externalities”. This will provide the legal basis and catalyst to build a regenerative economy and a system of governance that restores and maintains a stable climate and other vital planetary boundaries.

4 - Prioritize Governance and Institutional Solutions.

The long-term governance of the global commons, the delivery of global public goods, and the management of global public risks all require a permanent system of effective governance to reliably manage our interactions with the Earth System as a whole. For example, a proposal to repurpose the inactive United Nations Trusteeship Council has been widely discussed, including most recently in the UN Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda (OCA) report. The OCA report calls for a Declaration for Future Generations and highlights the desirability of transforming the Council into a multilateral space for the governance of the commons and to give voice to the interests of succeeding generations. Ensuring adequate global ecological governance and strengthening today's fragmented institutional frameworks, and making them inclusive, representative, and accountable to global citizens, must be made a central priority for the international community.



Chobe National Park. Kasane, Botswana © UNEP / Duncan Moore



Official opening of a school for rangers and the environment, at the opening of the World Environment Day activities in Menongue, in the province of Cuando-Cubango, Angola. 2016 © UNEP



Stop Ecocide

by **Sue Miller**, Head of Global Networks
at Stop Ecocide International

Stockholm +50 was a symbolically significant event for the Stop Ecocide movement, marking 50 years since the first use of the word “ecocide” by then Prime Minister Olof Palme. It also highlighted the disparity between the strong support among civil society and the timidity at political level. Following an intensive programme of activities and events, the movement to criminalise ecocide internationally emerged from the conference having made some real progress, and in the knowledge that the case for ecocide had registered and was being taken seriously at the highest levels.

We, and an exponentially growing body of both civil and political society, see ecocide law as an essential piece of the framework of measures and regulations which is being created to protect the Earth and future generations. Whilst serious and widespread damage to nature remains legal and perpetrators unaccountable, it will continue to happen, regardless of the pacts, agreements, goals and targets we may put in place. It is simply too easy to continue established and profitable practices. A new international crime of ecocide, within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, would see the key decision makers of the companies behind acts of serious environmental destruction face personal criminal liability and potential loss of personal freedom. They will no longer be able to write off environmental harm on a balance sheet as a cost of doing business.

A new crime of ecocide will not only have a strong deterrent effect once it is enacted and ratified; it will start to curb destructive activity from the moment corporations realise that it is on its way. It not only has enormous preventative power, but it will also steer corporations and governments towards creative innovation and new ways of doing business. By supporting the recognition of the crime of ecocide in international law, businesses, organisations and their employees can play an active role in protecting people and planet.



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Preparation

Our preparation for Stockholm +50, like that of many other stakeholders, was to participate in the programme of workshops feeding into the Leadership Dialogues (LD). The two most relevant to ecocide law were LD1 *“Reflecting on the urgent need for actions to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity of all”* and LD3 *“Accelerating the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development.”*

At the end of the process, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) published a [synthesis report](#) of the five regional multi-stakeholder consultations it co-convened with the Global Opportunities for Sustainable Development Goals (GO4SDGs).

The report highlighted key recommendations from the Leadership Dialogues and from Working Groups on High-Impact Sectors identified by the regions as priorities. The first listed recommendation was:

“Criminalize “ecocide” and protect environmental defenders”

The meeting

We were disappointed to see that ecocide no longer featured in the final synthesis report of the five regional multi-stakeholder consultations convened in advance of the conference. There was no indication of why it had been removed during the editing process. This disappointment notwithstanding, we had a full programme of events planned for the duration of the conference, both as part of the official side event programme and as part of the unofficial programme. These included events covering law, finance and indigenous

wisdom and issues, the latter in both English and Spanish. They featured high profile speakers such as former President of Finland Tarja Halonen, US activist attorney Steven Donziger, IMF Assistant Director Ralph Chami, Kayapo Chief Rayoni, Nnimmo Bassey and Mindahi Bastida. A [hybrid event](#) was also organised at SPACE Arena in Stockholm by End Ecocide Sweden in partnership with Stop Ecocide International, We Don't Have Time, Carthiel and Sibelius Academy with support from The Swedish Postcode Foundation.

Stop Ecocide also featured prominently at the Youth March which took place in Stockholm during the conference.¹

The calls for ecocide law

The calls were heard. The groundwork Stop Ecocide had been doing over the last few years to build networks and to demonstrate the case for ecocide law had begun to resonate within the UN conversation and, by the end of Stockholm+50, there were clear demands from major stakeholders.

Youth Task Force

The Youth Task Force, when delivering the Global Youth Policy Paper in their plenary presentation outlining their demands, included a call to governments to:

"Introduce large-scale environmental destruction, ecocide, as a crime in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court."

Björn Fondén (Stockholm+50 Youth Task Force), in his plenary statement said:

"We cannot continue living our lives pretending that nothing has changed. [...] The

Global Youth Policy Paper is the action plan from Stockholm+50 and we call on you [...] to criminalise ecocide."

Interfaith statement

In an [interfaith statement](#) addressed to the plenary meeting, nearly 200 faith leaders and representatives of world religions also called for criminalisation of ecocide. One of their 10 calls to action from governments, UN entities, civil society, as well as the signatories own constituencies, was to: "Adopt and implement an **Ecocide** law² and promote the Faith for Ecocide Law initiative by FBOs (Faith Based Organisations)".

Chief Raoni Metuktire of the Kayapo people

In a filmed intervention featured in our 'Law and Finance in Harmony with Nature' side event, held on 31st May in association with Stockholm+50, Nobel Peace Prize Nominee **Chief Raoni Metuktire of the Kayapo people**, Brazil, said: *"So to you all, I call for the recognition of the crime of ecocide that we must obtain for the future."*

Laureates of the Right Livelihood Award

Also, during the course of the conference, 57 laureates of the Right Livelihood award (often considered the "Alternative Nobel Prize"), including household names such as David Suzuki, Vandana Shiva and Greta Thunberg, signed a message to the meeting urging governments to:

"enhance the concepts of Rights of Nature and Earth Trusteeship in our relationship with the earth and in our political and legal systems: This includes acknowledging earth systems as living systems, 'ecocide' as a crime against hu-

¹ For a full account of our activity in Stockholm visit our website <https://www.stopecocide.earth/stockholm-50-summary>

² As it was first mentioned at the Stockholm conference in 1972 by the Swedish prime minister Olof Palme.

manity, and the Rights of Nature as relevant and binding on governments”.

UNEP's Executive Director

At the event, UNEP's Executive Director Inger Andersen, stated: “*ecocide... has floated to the top, it's a conversation here in the (UN) halls, and the interesting part is, the word was used by Olof Palme in 1972.*”

And, in an interview with “We Don't Have Time”, the review platform for climate solutions, Inger Andersen said:

“sooner or later...
'**ecocide**' will walk its
way into the United
Nations vocabulary”

The time is now

We believe that ecocide is already walking its way into conversations at the United Nations. At a simultaneous UNEP event being held in Nairobi, our representative was, for the first time, given the floor to make a speech about ecocide. Since Stockholm, our applications to hold official side events have been accepted in a number of UN events, including the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the UN Oceans Conference and UNFCCC COP27. Our COP27 event, “Curbing crisis and enabling implementation: the role of criminal law” will be moderated by Patricia Kameri-Mbote, Director, Law Division, UN Environment Programme.

At the UN Oceans Conference, Keriako Tobiko, Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for the Environment and Forests, announced landmark legislation

as part of Kenya's revision of their Environment Management Coordination Act. He said that the legislation submitted for discussion and approval by the Kenyan parliament will “*revolutionize environmental governance*” and that it “*contains critical principles, which include the recognition and protection of defenders of environmental rights, protection of forests and green spaces, recognition of the right to nature and, most importantly, creation of the crime of ecocide*”.

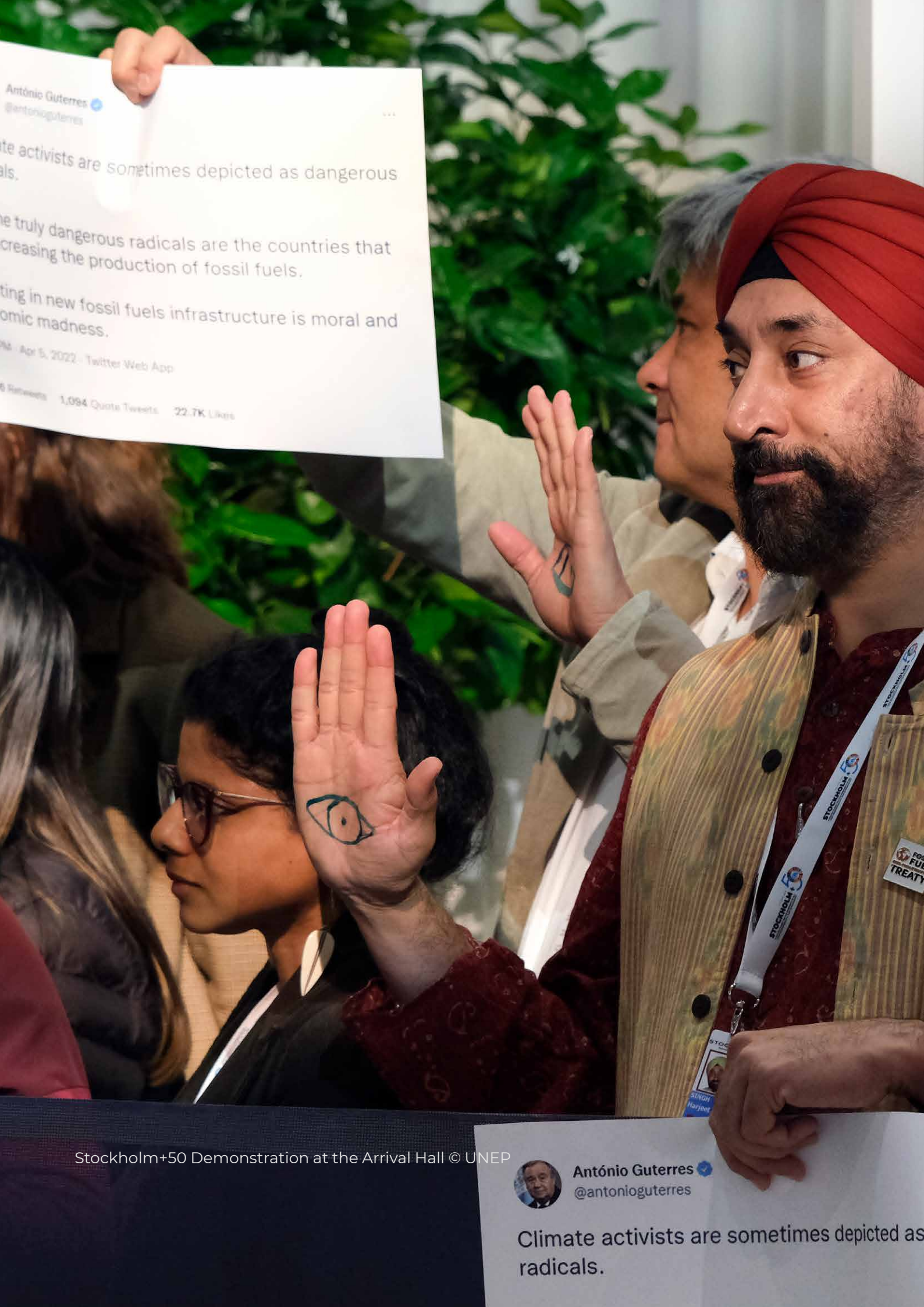
The word is resonating. The calls are growing. We believe ecocide law is essential to the future health of the planet and a concept whose time has come.



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Fridays for the Future Stockholm © UNEP / Duncan Moore



António Guterres
@antonioguterres

Climate activists are sometimes depicted as dangerous radicals.

The truly dangerous radicals are the countries that are increasing the production of fossil fuels.

Investing in new fossil fuels infrastructure is moral and economic madness.

PM - Apr 5, 2022 - Twitter Web App

6 Retweets 1,094 Quote Tweets 22.7K Likes

Stockholm+50 Demonstration at the Arrival Hall © UNEP



António Guterres
@antonioguterres

Climate activists are sometimes depicted as radicals.

Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty:

UN Recommends - phasing out fossil fuels

by **Alex Rafalowicz**, Director at Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty

The Treaty

Climate change, like nuclear weapons, is a major global threat. Bold and immediate action is needed to address the climate emergency.

The main cause of the climate emergency is fossil fuels. According to the latest IPCC report, coal, oil and gas are responsible for 86% of all carbon dioxide emissions in the past decade.

Phasing out fossil fuel production, and fast-tracking progress towards safer and more cost-effective alternatives, will require unprecedented international cooperation in three main areas – non-proliferation, global disarmament and a peaceful, just transition.

Thus, the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative¹ emerges, and these are the three pillars of a proposed Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty:

¹ See an introduction to the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65-RrXFU8cl&t=104s>

NON-PROLIFERATION

Prevent the proliferation of coal, oil and gas by ending all new exploration and production

The world is on track to produce more than twice as much coal, oil and gas by 2030 than is consistent with limiting the rise in global temperature to below 1.5C, according to the United Nations and other organizations. An immediate end to exploration and expansion into new reserves is needed to prevent the proliferation of unnecessary and unburnable fossil fuels, to protect workers, communities and investments from becoming stranded, and to avoid locking the world into catastrophic and irreversible climate disruption.

FAIR PHASE-OUT

Phase-out existing production of fossil fuels in line with the 1.5C global climate goal

The world's oil and gas fields and coal mines contain enough carbon to push the world beyond the Paris Agreement's temperature limits. Phasing-out fossil fuel production must start by regulating fossil fuel supply, limiting extraction, removing subsidies for production, dismantling unnecessary infrastructure, defending the rights of Indigenous Peoples and impacted communities, and shifting support to safer alternatives, in order to align fossil fuel supply with the goals of the Paris Agreement. Wealthy countries are the ones with the capacity to lead and support this managed phase-out of fossil fuels.

JUST TRANSITION

Fast-track real solutions and a just transition for every worker, community and country

The scale of the challenge demands urgent collective action. A peaceful and just transition calls for a clear path and a proactive plan to enable economic diversification, implement

renewable energy and other reliable, cost-effective low-carbon solutions, and to support every worker, community and country. We can either intentionally develop new ways to meet our needs or lose the window of opportunity to ensure a safe climate, healthy economy and sustainable future.

Stockholm+50

The Treaty Initiative and its allies decided to focus on Stockholm+50 with a clear goal: secure a mention in the outcome document on the urgent need to stop fossil fuel production. After six months of tireless work with our partners and allies, our collective efforts have paid off.

The UN, meeting officially with every Member State represented and agreeing, has issued its 'Key Recommendations for Accelerating action towards a healthy planet for the prosperity of all' – also known as the Stockholm+50 outcome document. Our [first draft note analysing the recommendations](#) can also be found below.

Recommendation 3 is clear - as part of 'system wide changes in the way our current economic system works' we must '**phase out of fossil fuels** while providing targeted support to the poorest and most vulnerable in line with national circumstances and **recognizing the need for financial and technical support towards a just transition.**'

It seems unbelievable that this is the first time a UN summit has officially said this – but it is. It is still frighteningly insufficient, simply a recommendation and statement of intent – and it does not clearly state that there should be no new projects. However, it is also a significant step forward worth celebrating.

Stockholm+50 was an official UN conference, co-hosted by Sweden and Kenya, with secretariat support from UNEP, and a mandate to issue a set of recommendations for action.



Stockholm+50 Demonstration at the Arrival Hall © Non-Proliferation Fossil Fuel Treaty

After the Glasgow COP26 failed to grapple with the fossil fuel system and delivered a weak outcome on fossil fuels (albeit it being the first consideration of fossil fuels under the Paris Agreement), [the steering committee of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty initiative](#) decided to focus on the Stockholm+50 conference as an important moment to both raise up the movement-wide demand for focus on the constraint of fossil fuels at all levels of government; and to welcome more and different allies into our movement.

Across the Fossil Fuel Treaty network we worked together to follow the (at times difficult!) process, prepare submissions, register to make interventions, and to share back analysis of how the conference was advancing.

We intentionally organised for different parts of our movement to discuss how they might relate to the Stockholm+50 conference, and how they could raise their voices to state clearly how and why the world needs to shift off coal, oil and gas. Urgently.

We supported the Coordinators of the Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon (COICA) to discuss it at their anniversary summit in March. We held discussions and conversations with youth leaders from across the world in the [Stockholm+50 Global Youth Task Force who took up the treaty proposal as a key demand](#). We worked with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and others to [make links between the war in Ukraine, war in general, gender injustice and fossil fuels](#). With the Church of Sweden, GreenFaith and Laudato Si Movement we held [gatherings of faith-leaders to reflect on the moral case for action on fossil fuels](#). With the Parents for Future we supported parents to make the case for including Fossil Fuels in the outcome of Stockholm+50, [for the love of their children](#). We activated champions, such as [members of national parliaments](#) (coordinated via the Asian People's Movement on Debt and Development) to make interventions in the UN process. Healthcare Without Harm activated medical professionals to raise the alarm. We saw the [cities who have endorsed the Fossil](#)

[Fuel Treaty](#) issue their declaration on why this issue is so important.

When the first draft of the recommendations was released, we were very disappointed. Fossil fuels were barely mentioned.

So, we decided to double-down. We launched a global week of advocacy sending 1000s of personalised letters to Ministers and to the UN itself. Leading thinkers at the Center for International Environmental Law [published articles](#) and we pushed [journalists across the world to cover this issue](#). We worked with the Nordic Council and the Stanley Center on Peace and Security to co-host an official [pre-Summit event focussed on the global just transition from fossil fuels](#), including space for a private meeting of policy-makers.

The pressure worked.

As Prime Minister Bob Loughman of Vanuatu, opened our official pre-summit, saying “Vanuatu supports any pathway that leads to more international climate cooperation and to getting off the addiction to oil, gas and coal;” we saw a new set of recommendations released by the UNEP.

These recommendations included ‘multilateral processes to ensure a just and equitable phase out of fossil fuels and finance for the transition.’

Throughout the day on June 1st, we heard from leaders of Indigenous peoples like Nemonte Nenquimo and Anoshka Violeta Irey Cameno, Pacific Climate Warriors, other youth movement leaders, global debt and tax justice campaigners, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation, doctors sounding the alarm on air pollution, senior clergy, feminist leaders, peace activists, scientists, economists, parents worried for their children, all sharing why they were part of the same struggle – against the fossil fuel system – and all calling for a global plan to transform the energy system.

In fact, we even released an academic report on [how coal, oil, and gas undermine every single sustainable development goal](#) with 18 partner organisations spanning Indigenous peoples, gender, climate, human rights, food and water, and energy transition constituencies, including our partners in the development sector such as Stamp Out Poverty, and the UN Research Institute for Social Development. The report demonstrates that fossil fuels are not *only* a climate problem but a major threat to a healthy and thriving planet.

During the formal dialogues of the Stockholm +50 conference we were heartened to see Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Sweden, Finland, and France, all make strong reference to the need to phase out our dependency on fossil fuels to address the triple crisis. The UN Secretary General was just as forceful on the podium in singling out the issue of fossil fuels, and particularly their financing, as a key target for action.

They were reflecting the numerous calls from the non-government participants to clearly state that there should be no new fossil fuel projects, that we need a plan for an equitable phase out of production, and we need to re-source a global just transition. In the last session, more than 5 interventions from the floor of the UN called for the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty directly, including [Mitzi Jonelle Tan of Youth Advocates for Climate Action who came straight from the climate strike](#).

Vanessa Nakate, a climate justice activist from Uganda, addressed our pre-summit event and carried many of our shared demands forward at Stockholm+50 with her unique and powerful voice. While sharing the stage with John Kerry, she noted the recent G7 announcement recognizing for the first time the need to provide vulnerable countries with additional financial aid to cope with the loss and damage. Vanessa challenged the US to “do the right thing” and contribute to a loss and damage fund at COP27. She finished with a clarion call, boiling down

our report on the Sustainable Development Goals into just three sentences: “We cannot eat coal. We cannot drink oil. And we cannot breathe gas.”

As the conference entered its final day we were worried that it would end with empty words and not a clear call for action on fossil fuels.

The youth activists in the Fridays for Future network were planning a climate strike in the center of Stockholm and wanted to bring some of their demands into the UN directly. [With support from 350.org and led by the youth, we disrupted the main hall](#), the only protest action inside Stockholm+50, and raised our voices to call for the final outcome to address coal, oil, and gas production.

At midday, [tens of thousands of young people took over the center of Stockholm](#), and a [joint letter from more than 50 Right Livelihood Laureates](#) - such as Greta Thunberg, Nnimmo Bassey, Siila Watt-Cloutier, Vandana Shiva, Herman Daly, David Suzuki and Amory Lovins - was published in Sweden's largest newspaper outlining clear demands to the conference, including a call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

As the Summit drew to a close, [we held a press conference, to reiterate the centrality of addressing fossil fuel production to people on every continent](#). At that moment the final key recommendations were read out to the plenary. Including the words ‘phase out of fossil fuels.’

Immediately after the plenary, the UNEP hosted a press conference where journalists asked the Executive Secretary, Inger Anderson what had happened to the fossil fuel language in the recommendations, and directly asked her about the many calls that had been made for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty. Anderson emphasized that the need to phase out all fossil fuels had been included in the final text.

It's clear our efforts forced decision-makers to pay attention, [you can see their attempts to incorporate us in the UN's wrap up video...](#) although in this one they do seem to have forgotten to mention fossil fuels.

[The documents released on Friday](#) night are just the top-level key recommendations. We will be watching to make sure the strong and more detailed language on ending expansion of the industry and enhancing international co-operation on the just transition from fossil fuels are kept in the full final report too.

These words on paper are nowhere near enough. But they demonstrate that our movement is shifting the standard of what climate action looks like. And we're doing it by building more power and drawing more people in to use their voice and to stand with us.

As more of us stand together, we will build a world where everyone can live a life of dignity - and one without the weapons of mass destruction that are coal, oil, and gas.





One Planet, One Habitation

*A Bahá'í Perspective on Recasting Humanity's
Relationship with the Natural World*

The BIC statement on the natural world suggests that the gulf between intention and action is one of the central challenges facing humanity today. © BIC

A STATEMENT OF THE BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

“One Planet, One Habitation”

Climate Initiatives of the Baha'i International Community at Stockholm+50 and Beyond

by **Daniel Perell**, Representative to the
United Nations, Baha'i International Community

The Bahá'í International Community (BIC) represents the worldwide membership of the Bahá'í Faith, organized through some 200 national affiliates, to the United Nations. First established in 1948, the BIC has consultative status with ECOSOC and UNICEF, as well as accreditation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Department of Global Communications (DGC).

At the heart of the BIC's message at the Stockholm+50 conference was one central message: the coordinated contributions of numerous populations around the world will be required to rebalance humanity's relationship with the natural world.

Among a range of activities it undertook at the conference, the BIC released a major environmental statement entitled ***One Planet, One Habitation: A Baha'i Perspective on Recasting Humanity's Relationship With the Natural World***.

The statement suggested that one of the central challenges facing humanity today is bridging the gulf between intention and action.

“Moving humanity to a more sustainable and harmonious relationship with the natural world will require a strong and actionable consensus, along with collective will, around key principles that are to shape the affairs of the international community,” it read.

“Consensus that has been well settled is demonstrated not merely by the name and claim of text on a page, but through coordinated, collaborative action; its touchstone is deeds, not words.”

Concepts explored in the statement included the need to empower masses of humanity to contribute to processes of constructive social transformation, the need to redefine notions of progress and success in more holistic and less material terms, the need to align personal and institutional choices with higher principles, and the need to base collective action on consciousness of the oneness of humanity, as expressed through relationships of justice and appreciation for diversity.

“Will humanity act on the truth that its own destiny and that of the planet are irrevocably intertwined?” the statement asked. “Or will still greater calamities be required to move it to action?”

One Planet, One Habitation joins contributions the BIC made to other notable environmental milestones, such as the 21st meeting of the UNFCCC Conference of Parties, from which the 2015 Paris Agreement emerged ([statement](#)), the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development or Rio “Earth Summit” ([statement](#)), and the original 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment ([statement](#)).

The statement was launched at an [event](#) that the BIC co-hosted at the Swedish Parliament with several other civil society organizations, including the Climate Governance Commission and Global Women Leaders: Voices for Change and Inclusion. The event was moderated by Swedish Members of Parliament Anders Österberg and Mattias Vepsä.

Titled “Global Environmental Governance: Ethical Foundations & Practical Proposals in an Age of Interdependence,” the event explored elements required for global environmental governance to meet the needs of both present and future generations.

“Concepts of human environment, sustainability, and the triple planetary crisis are part of an evolving discourse,” said Daniel Perell, a Representative of the BIC who spoke at the event. “As understanding deepens, we must continually refine our methods and approaches.”

Maria Fernanda Espinosa, former President of the United Nations General Assembly, noted in opening remarks the need to align systems of global governance with widely recognized ethical values.

“A new pact for the future requires a values-based multilateral system,” Ms. Espinosa said. “This is not an abstract statement. It means to transition from greed to solidarity and the redistribution of wealth and power, from prejudice to empathy and kindness, from indifference and hate to radical love for human-kind and nature.”

Other speakers at the event included Augusto Lopez-Claros, Executive Director of the Global Governance Forum; Maja Groff, Convenor of the Climate Governance Commission; and Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, Board Member of the International Environment Forum.

Joining Mr. Perell on the delegation to the conference was Peter Aburi, who represents the BIC at UNEP in Nairobi, Kenya, and Nogol Rahbin, from the Baha'i Community of Sweden.

Other Baha'is attending the conference as United Nations staffers, members of national delegations, and with civil society groups included Arthur Dahl, who represented the BIC at the 1972 environmental conference in

Stockholm and later served in senior leadership positions at UNEP and the International Environment Forum. Following the statement launch, Mr. Dahl was featured at a roundtable event, hosted by noted Swedish journalist Erik Halkjaer, Editor-in-chief of Sveriges Natur Magazine and President of Reporters Without Borders Sweden.

The BIC subsequently hosted a follow-up event at its Offices in New York, in collaboration with the UNEP and the government of Sweden, to share outcomes from the conference with those based at the UN headquarters.

The BIC's activities at Stockholm built on a range of past efforts around climate issues and laid foundations for further engagement going forward. It hopes to share narratives of what the principles laid out in *One Planet, One Habitation* look like when put into practice at all levels, and is looking forward to continued engagement with UNEP and other related UN processes going forward.

In the view of the BIC, Stockholm+50 represented a moment to reflect on progress made over the past 50 years but more importantly, consider the road to come for the next 50. Because it did not aim to produce a negotiated outcome document, the conference fostered a different kind of atmosphere, more supportive of mutual learning and shared endeavour. An important focus going forward will be ensuring that the exchanges made possible by this environment are translated into long-standing and action-oriented partnerships.

Extraordinary scientific advancement since 1972 has put the international community in a well-informed position, from which appropriate policy can be derived. This reality was foundational to all the deliberations at Stockholm+50. Yet institutions and systems, as well as patterns of thought, behaviour, and culture continue to act as barriers to taking full and necessary action in response to this scientific knowledge. The work of the coming years will be to answer the ethical call to enact policy contrary to dominant narratives and in favour of our obligations to present and future generations—generations which will increasingly feel the negative impacts so long as our obligations remain unmet.



Panelists share thoughts at an event co-hosted by the BIC, titled “Global Environmental Governance: Ethical Foundations & Practical Proposals in an Age of Interdependence” © BIC

“Concepts of human environment, sustainability, and the triple planetary crisis are part of an evolving discourse”



Delegation members **Peter Aburi**, **Daniel Perell**, and **Nogol Rahbin** represented the BIC at the Stockholm+50 environmental conference © BIC



Patricia Gualinga (Pueblo Originario Kichwa de Sarayaku) at Stockholm+50 © UNEP

Stockholm+50 Indigenous Peoples' Declaration¹

Excerpts from the outcome documents at Stockholm+50

We, Indigenous Peoples attending the Stockholm+50 that commemorates the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment and that marks 50 years of global environmental action, after listening to the contributions in the program, present the following Declaration.

We acknowledge that since the first Stockholm Human Environment conference in June 1972 50 years ago, there has been some progress. However, humanity has failed to comply with many commitments regarding the environment. States have not yet delivered fully on the promise of the first Stockholm conference. We cannot afford to not deliver at this one. We all face climate change, loss of biodiversity, hunger, land degradations, soil erosion, water scarcity and pollution, among other issues troubling humanity. The degradation of our environment is threatening our lives, our well-being and our safety. And it is threatening the lives, well-being and safety of our children.

Over centuries Indigenous Peoples have endured many difficulties including hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, wildfires, diseases, and droughts. We know about resistance and creativity. We keep our cultures, knowledge and food systems alive. We, Indigenous Peoples, are not inherently vulnerable people. We are strong people. But the systemic lack of recognition and respect of our rights, our culture and the discounting of our knowledge have placed us in situations of vulnerability.

Our Indigenous Peoples' institutions and scientific knowledge systems are based on our world-view that values the inextricable link between humans and nature. This has been the main safeguard of the environment and biodiversity for future generations. The passage of knowledge to new generations using our own language allows the transfer of complex concepts and creates conditions for continuous innovation. Our governance systems, anchored in participation, collective rights, social justice, equity, and inclusiveness, have kept conditions of social peace

¹ The IPs declaration @Stockholm+50 is also available via https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/40167/STOCKHOLM%2b50%20INDIGENOUS%20PEOPLES%20DECLARATION_FV.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

that is much needed for the evolution and innovation in our societies.

Based on these livelihoods and way of life, we, Indigenous Peoples in our territories, manage and sustain approximately 80% of the world remaining biodiversity, occupying 25% of the global surface. We still have sustainable food systems in parts of the world where we have developed technology, knowledge and expertise to successfully deal with climate change. We know how to regenerate our soil, restore ecosystems and how to help the water cycle. We are delivering on our promise for living in harmony with nature. Now it is your turn.

Our own knowledge systems are often excluded from the design and implementation of conservation and climate change measures and programs. Conservation is often done for us and around us, not with us. It is about time to move in new directions. In Stockholm+50 the recognition of Indigenous Peoples and our role in the human environment is encouraging, but it remains just the beginning of a promising process. We must keep the momentum.

In the last fifty years, the centrality of institutionalized scientific knowledge alone to solve our myriad of environmental challenges has failed humanity. Scientific knowledge and Indigenous Peoples' knowledge can work and grow side by side. They are peers. Our scientific knowledge has been useful in addressing the issues of climate change and biodiversity loss in the various ecosystems over hundreds of years. We call for an effective and immediate mainstreaming of our scientific knowledge into all relevant decisions and actions to address climate change, biodiversity loss and land restorations.

We, Indigenous Peoples, are ready to be full partners in the journey ahead. It is, therefore, essential that you engage us as full participants in climate change, biodiversity and fight against desertification decision making.

We, Indigenous Women, have played a fundamental role as holders of collective scientific knowledge and technical skills for agriculture, sustainable food production, conservation, and restoration and the transfer of these knowledge over generations. It is, therefore, essential to promote concrete steps that directly support and empower our commitment.

We, Indigenous Youth, represent the present and future of our Indigenous Peoples. We play a key role in ensuring the continuity of our cosmogonic systems, scientific knowledge, languages, practices and ways of living. It is, therefore, essential that you hear our voices and support our meaningful participation in decision-making processes that affect our future.

We, Indigenous Peoples, uphold that there is a correlation between respect for our collective rights and the protection of the environment that is well documented. This includes the right to land, territory, natural resources and effective conservation outcomes. However, despite international commitments to protect our rights, our rights continue to be denied in practice. In denying our rights you are putting the continuation of successful conservation at risk. In many places, too many of those of us who dare to fight for these rights and for the conservation of the natural resources on land and sea suffer increasing intimidation, harassment, stigmatization and criminalization. This is wrong. This is unacceptable. We demand an immediate stop to such abuses. We demand an immediate stop to the murder of Indigenous Peoples and environment defenders.

We welcome the \$1.7 billion pledge in support of Indigenous Peoples made by governments and private funders at COP 26 of the UNFCCC in Glasgow. However, we are concerned that this pledge does not go far enough to adequately address the effects of climate change. Effective responses to the challenges presented by global climate change requires a concerted effort that recognizes the interconnected-



Arrival Hall at Stockholm+50 © UNEP

ness of all life and encompasses all ecosystems impacted in the seven socio-cultural regions of the world.

We reaffirm that Indigenous Peoples are game-changers and guards of biodiversity around the world. We are ready to participate with our practice, knowledge, expertise and wisdom. We simply demand equity, equality, and inclusiveness in the process. We will continue to do our part and to deliver on the promise of a truly sustainable planet.

We stand in solidarity with our Indigenous Peoples and Nations to call upon States, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental development organizations, international financial in-

stitutions including public and private and civil society partners to:

1. Recognize the existence of Indigenous Peoples within their borders and in the national legislation with respect to their collective rights to lands, territories and natural resources in accordance with the UN Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples.
2. Ensure that Indigenous Peoples participate in consultations to give their free, prior and informed consent when formulating, adopting, implementing and monitoring legislative, administrative measures, policy, programs, trade and investment decisions and projects

involving their lands, territories, and resources including the right to say NO.

3. Take urgent measures to guarantee adequate and effective participation by Indigenous Peoples in the design and implementation of national plans for the transition to clean and green energy.

4. Stop the imposition of “protected areas” on Indigenous Peoples’ lands without their Free, Prior, and Informed Consent in the name of environmental protection. Therefore, ensure a human rights-based approach to Indigenous Peoples’ rights to land, waters, territories and resources, governance, and secure customary tenure is essential for their continued contribution and significant role in achieving the post- 2020 global biodiversity framework. Indigenous Peoples’ land, waters, and territories need to be recognized directly and as a category separate from Protected Areas or “Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures”, including recognition of the land rights of Indigenous women.

5. Call for protection and a halt to criminalization and killings of Indigenous environmental rights defenders.

6. Respect the crucial role of languages, knowledge and cultural heritage in the economic development of Indigenous Peoples, as well as our entrepreneurship role for the enjoyment of our rights to culture, language and scientific knowledge.

7. Give attention to the role of Indigenous Peoples’ languages in the preservation of food and knowledge systems that are important to climate change adaptation and conservation strategies.

8. Request that the pledge-givers from COP 26 include Indigenous Peoples from all seven sociocultural regions as recipients, and redefine the scope of their commitment so that

the funding is not only for forests and land tenure, but also reflects Indigenous Peoples’ self-determination, building of alliances and the strengthening of Indigenous Peoples’ local economies, governance systems and resource management strategies and serve all the ecosystems.

9. We urge for more funding mobilization for the direct access to Indigenous Peoples seven sociocultural regions to protect the biodiversity, fight climate change and restore land and its various ecosystems to keep the Paris Agreement Goal of 1.5, stop loss of our world’s biodiversity species and restore the land for food security and nutrition in accordance with the 2030 agenda.

We acknowledge the collaborative nature of the work we must do to save our planet and to save our present and our future. Humanity has not delivered on the promise of a sustainable future for all. Humanity is not living in harmony with nature. We call upon Member States, UN Agencies, civil society and NGOs, the scientific community and the private sector for better coordination and much greater action. We call upon you to stand in solidarity with us and to respect and value us as essential partners, as we will value and respect you.

Stockholm, Sweden, June 3rd, 2022.



Stockholm+50 Side Event © UNEP



Arrival Hall at **Stockholm+50** © UNEP



Arrival Hall at **Stockholm+50** © UNEP



The Youth Movement and Stockholm+50

Excerpts from the outcome documents at Stockholm+50

The relevance of the youth movement in environmental governance has been increasingly growing, especially during this century as the main voices rising demanding government and private sector action against climate change come from the youth. Therefore, it was just logical that for the commemoration of the 50 years of the first human environment conference, youth would be playing a key role. And so, the Swedish government as well as the main organizers of Stockholm+50 enabled youth participation and ensured they had an active voice before, during, and after the event.

The engagement process of the youth movement in Stockholm+50 entailed different phases.

Initially, in November 2021, **the Stockholm+50 Youth Task Force (YTF)** was constituted through an open application process, and it was responsible for facilitating youth engagement in the Stockholm+50 International Meeting processes ensuring global representation, with 57 international youth delegates from different countries ranging from 16 to 35 years of age. They came from different regional, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds to bring their perspectives on Youth Engagement. The YTF comprised focal points, representatives from youth engagement mechanisms, constituencies, and platforms relevant to the work of Stockholm+50, including the National Council of Swedish Youth Organizations (LSU), and the Children and Youth Major Group of UNEP (CYMG).

The YTF worked closely in cooperation with the Stockholm+50 secretariat and relevant supporting partners responsible for coordinating and organising outreach to young people, sharing the messages of the commemoration conference, and creating a proactive movement of youth engagement in all the Stockholm+50 processes at grassroots, national, regional and global level.

The YTF also helped amplified youth co-leadership, where youth activities were led and shaped by young people with support from relevant partners. Therefore, youth were not only benefi-



Inger Andersen at Youth Assembly, Stockholm+50 © UNEP / Duncan Moore

ciaries but also drivers and enablers in creating change, making both the Stockholm+50 conference and its preparatory process an empowering exercise for the young generation.

Once the YTF was consolidated, three **capacity-building** sessions were held on December 11th, 12th, and 20th of 2021. The first two sessions were organised for the Task Force constituents and the third meeting was attended by the Task Force and the members of the Stockholm+50 Youth Working/Focus Group. These sessions were organised to enhance the knowledge and understanding of the members of the Task Force and the wider constituents about Stockholm+50 considering that the team had members who were new to environment and development policy as well as United Nations processes.

Some of the issues discussed in detail included: key actors involved in the Stockholm+50 meet-

ing, 50 years of multilateral history, the political context to the negotiation processes, and the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) enabling and modalities resolutions on convening this international meeting. In following up with the capacity-building sessions, the PPT and recordings of the session have been shared with the members.

Subsequently, regional **consultations** were held to integrate the vision and reality of all regions into a unified youth position. Local consultations were also held in various countries around the world and global consultations were held online and in person. Thus, we ensured a link between the youth 'leaving no one behind'.

In the framework of the youth engagement processes for Stockholm+50, a **Global Youth Environment Assembly** (GYEA) was held from February 25th to 27th in Nairobi at the Stockholm

Environment Institute (SEI); high-level guests included Mrs. Inger Anderssen and Johanna Lissinger-Peitz.

During the Leadership Dialogues, there were active contributions from youth all along, including to the first Informal [Working Groups on Leadership Dialogues](#) in March 2022 which interventions can be accessed directly.

In addition, a [Youth Handbook](#) was prepared in a way for youth voices to be brought to the highest level of decision-making. This toolkit provides activities like mobilizations, consultations, and other actions, as well as tips and resources to help every youth activate in their localities. Therefore, their work would be more visible and reflected in the outcomes of Stockholm+50. As youth, we hold real social power - this toolkit still enables youth to take the first step and to bring in their community, and to use that social power to create change.

A key excerpt on youth engagement included in the handbook is presented below:

“How crucial it is to involve young people in the decisions of today’s world - Young people are the present and the future, and they must be the key stakeholders at all times, in order to achieve sustainable development. Youth participation and engagement in Stockholm+50 is critical to ensuring that the outcomes of the meeting meet the needs of the youth of today and of future generations. Today’s youth are already facing a myriad of environmental issues, from biodiversity loss to food and water shortages, from environmental degradation to the climate crisis, which will intensify unless urgent action is taken. Young people are the present and the future, and they must be the key stakeholders at all times, in order to achieve sustainable development. A key product from the YTF was the [Global Youth Policy Paper](#), the product of initial research, discussions, and hybrid consultations to ensure representation of the views of as many

young people as possible. In keeping with the themes of Stockholm+50, youth have developed key demands that we believe will contribute to achieving these goals.

This document was developed in three stages, which is why there are three drafts of the policy paper; they integrate the diversity of opinions received during the consultations carried out. Here, we include the Global Youth Policy Paper Executive Summary:

The youth across the world come together to express our deep concern regarding the current state of our home - Planet Earth, the previous and current mishandling of the perception of the global environment by the people in power. This policy paper outlines our vision for the road ahead and the steps required to achieve it with mutual respect. Coordinated by the Stockholm+50 Youth Task Force, this policy paper is the product of research, discussions, and numerous global youth hybrid consultations ensuring that as many youth voices as could be reached by the task force were heard, ensuring international representation irrespective of country or region. In keeping with the themes of Stockholm+50, youth have developed key demands that we know to be crucial to achieving these goals. We urge you to read the demands in their entirety as they reflect the scale of work needed and more importantly to act urgently to meet these demands.

In “Reflecting on the urgent need for actions to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity of all”, we call on governments to:

Protect and restore all ecosystems by halting deforestation, banning bottom trawling, unsustainable mining and other environmentally destructive practices - recognising that the best solution to many of our environmental problems lies in letting nature heal itself. Introduce large-scale environmental destruction, ecocide, as a crime in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court - as a means to hold governments and corpo-



Stockholm+50 youth participants © Connect4Climate / Kaia Rose

rations accountable for their damage to our common planet.

Submit strengthened nationally determined contributions (NDCs), financing commitments and long-term strategies in 2022 to halve global GHG emissions by 2030.

In “Achieving a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic”, we urge governments to:

Ensure access to W.A.S.H. (water, sanitation and hygiene), COVID-19 vaccines and health-care for all.

Align all recovery spending into low-carbon investments, green jobs and future-proof sectors to avoid carbon lock-in of fossil fuels and stranded assets impeding sustainable development.

Transform the animal-industrial food system, recognizing its significant impact on climate, deforestation, animal lives, and future health risks including those of zoonotic diseases and excessive use of antibiotics and hormones. Transition to regenerative agriculture that strengthens biodiversity and improves carbon sequestration.

In “Accelerating the implementation of the environmental dimension of Sustainable Development in the context of the Decade of Action”, we urge governments to:

Commit to expanding formal and non-formal education regarding the causes, effects and solutions of the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation to enhance capacity among youth, prepare them for green jobs and build a sustainable future.

Immediately establish a fossil-fuel non-proliferation treaty to phase out fossil fuels and scale up 100% safe, clean and sustainable energy for all in order to reach net-negative emissions by 2050. Strengthen the environmental rule of law and ensure that the polluter-pays principle is applied by integrating all environmental, social, welfare and health costs to harmful activities.

Finally, in addition to previously established themes for Stockholm+50, we would like to highlight the importance of “Ensuring Inclusive Processes for Decision Making” and urge governments to:

Adopt participatory and inclusive decision-making processes at every level to ensure the meaningful engagement of all rights holders, highlighting youth and those most strongly affected by the triple planetary crisis.

Safeguarding the peaceful democratic order through the principles of press freedom, free speech, free and fair elections and the protection of all youth activists across the world.

Increase investments in children and youth through targeted programs, support to civil society organisations, entrepreneurs and marginalised groups - recognizing that investing in children and youth gives a strong leverage towards a sustainable future.

The current world system is not delivering on its pledges towards a sustainable future. Time is running out - and we have had enough. It is the final hour to move beyond empty words and broken promises. Stockholm+50 needs to be a turning point towards a better, brighter future for all - redefining our relationship with nature. We call on all governments to deliver strong commitments to Stockholm+50, and to engage in meaningful dialogue and decisions with us, the young people of today, to ensure a better future for the children of tomorrow and

ensure intergenerational justice in all policies of the United Nations. The time is now.

Finally, a final report on all activities from the youth movement around Stockholm+50 is expected to be published soon.



Stockholm+50 youth participants © Connect4 - Climate / Kaia Rose



Inger Andersen at Youth Assembly, Stockholm+50 © UNEP / Duncan Moore



Youth Protest at Venue Stockholm+50 © UNEP / Duncan Moore



50 years of United Nations Environmental Policies – a Feminist Perspective

by **Sascha Gabizon**, Executive Director,
Women Engage for a Common Future
WECF International

I was born in the 1960ties. It was the time of Vietnam war, when the pesticide Agent Orange was used as a weapon of war, leaving behind polluted soils, water and children born with irreversible [birth-defects](#). It was a time of global nuclear arms build-up during the cold war, threatening the very survival of the planet. It was the time of the 'Green Revolution' in India, as a means to finally shed the shackles of colonialism, but with its intensive use of pesticides also bringing chemical pollution and health risks which Rachel Carlson had warned about in her book '[The Silent Spring](#)'.

The 1972 [United Nations Conference on the Human Environment](#) paved the way for governments to finally address the human health and global dimensions of environmental pollution. It was a historic moment, which allowed for the first time the engagement of civil society, with their parallel forum. It really brought together the environmental, peace and human rights movements. It was the first time China joined a United Nations global conference, who together with India, brought the notion of the right to development in order to reduce environmental pollution into environmental governance negotiations. It was historic also in the sense that the Soviet Union boycotted the conference. The impact of the UN 1972 Conference in Stockholm has been essential

for where we stand today. It advanced the creation of ministries of environment in the [first environmental policies of the European Union](#). A few years later, the first 'Green Party' was created in Germany, amongst others with eco-feminist leader Petra Kelly.

It was in 1992 at the next [United Nations Conference on Environment and Development](#) (Earth Summit), in Rio de Janeiro, that not only more government ever joined a UN conference, but also civil society joined in large numbers. The '[Global Forum](#)' was a huge tent-camp in Flamengo park on the beach, with 10-17.000 non-governmental participants, as had never been seen before at a UN conference. I had joined the few women from Europe who were there, including Marie Kranendonk of [WECF](#), on invitation of the 'Planeta Femina' (the Women's tent) a group of feminists, with leadership from Wangari Matthai (Kenya), Vandana Shiva (India), Thais Corral (Brazil), Chief Bissi Ogunleye (Nigeria) and Bella Habzug (USA). We eco-feminists had our own tent where we were working day and night to provide input into the texts being negotiated by governments. Bella Habzug ([WEDO](#)), a lawyer herself, had earlier organised a 'people's tribunal' during the Women's forum for a Healthy Planet in Miami, bringing cases by women leaders to 'court' on how environmental pollution and destruc-

tion were an attack on their human rights. It was the first time that human rights and gender equality were put as a priority for environmental policies¹. The pressure from the 'Global Forum' helped to bring strong results from the Rio 1992 UN conference, the [Rio Declaration](#) with its 27 principles including principle 20 on women's full participation, the [Agenda 2021](#), and the creation of the Conventions on [Climate Change](#) and [Biological Diversity](#).

For the first time in the history of the United Nations, civil society in its diversity were recognized as important stakeholders ([Major Groups](#)) to help achieve Sustainable Development. And the 'Planeta Femina' had advocated loud and strong that the women in all their diversity should have their own seat at the table, leading to the recognition of the [Women's Major Group](#), alongside 8 other groups of civil society. The '[planeta femina](#)' also contributed to the chapter 24 of Agenda 21 on the role of women in sustainable development, and why that requires heaving out of the way the discriminatory barriers women face in law and traditional gender roles. In all, Agenda21 has over 145 references to the priorities and rights of women in sustainable development.

Back in 1972, in Stockholm, one of the main issues of debate had been about population increase and its impact on environment. In Rio 1992, we had to fight hard to debunk this same argument, which was inciting governments to justify draconian measures to control women's reproductive rights, including in Brazil itself where women from indigenous and lower income communities were often coerced into sterilisation. We managed to change the dis-

course, showing that the environmental impact of one person from the United States was tens or even thousand times worse for the environment than from a person from the Global South². The per capita emissions of pollution and waste were the highest for Americans and other global North countries. We argued we should stop blaming women in the global South for having children and finally change the environmental harmful production processes, and the over-consumption in the Global North. This then led to President Bush to retort angrily, that '[the American lifestyle was not up for negotiations](#)' at UNCED.

Rio 1992 agreed on key principles of sustainable development, including that of the 'Polluter Pays' Principle³ and that of the 'Precautionary Principle'⁴. Too often the most vulnerable pay the cost of the pollution created by more powerful corporations and states. In the same year of 1992, the [Basel Convention](#) came into force, which had resulted from one of the many waste trade pollution scandals, the [Khian Sea waste incident](#), where a ship carrying highly toxic incinerator ash from the United States, dumped it on a beach in Haiti. When the pollution is suspected to have long-term, irreversible impacts and destroy the lives and livelihoods of people, the [Precautionary Principle](#), introduced at Stockholm 1972, has to be an imperative. The 'burden of proof' is to be on the polluter, not on the victims of the pollution. The Precautionary Principle was key in the development of new environmental treaties such as the Stockholm Convention on chemical pollution, and the Rotterdam Convention that require prior informed consent before harmful products such as asbestos can be brought into a country. In

1 Women Reclaiming Sustainable Livelihoods: Spaces Lost and Spaces Gained <http://www.genderanddevelopment.org/issues/21-1-working-with-men/women-reclaiming-review/>

2 Sustainability: A Task for the North <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24357316>

3 Nr 16 - Polluter Pays Principle <https://www.iisd.org/articles/polluter-pays-principle>

4 Nr 15 - Precautionary Principle https://environment.ec.europa.eu/research-and-innovation/science-environment-policy_en



Women's Major Group at UNEP. Gender quality. Plastic free sustainable menstrual hygiene for all!
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the negotiations of these Conventions, the role of [indigenous peoples from the Arctic](#), in particular women activists, has been key. Their health and livelihoods are threatened by the persistent organic pollutants (POPs), that were/are used in our countries such as DDT and other pesticides and industrial chemicals, but then migrate to the North-pole and other remote regions, with a risk of leading to infertility, cancers and other often irreversible diseases.

As a result of Rio1992, environmental governance made great strides in advance. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and on Biological Diversity were set in motion, and the key Principles of the Rio Conference were being transposed into national and regional legal frameworks, on polluter pays, pre-

cautionary principles and also [Principle 10](#) on the right to access justice, information and participation on environmental matters, resulting in the UNECE [Aarhus Convention](#), which has civil society representatives in the bureau. Our colleagues from [Black Sea Women's Club](#) in Odessa, Ukraine, took the Aarhus Convention under their arms to the court case which they had called for in their city of Odessa, to oppose the pollution by the oil industry of their neighbourhood, and the judge gave them access to the environmental information that finally led to them winning their court case.

Our ecofeminist movement was actively engaged in the implementation of the outcomes of the Rio1992 conference. We got the [Women and Gender Constituency](#) officially recognized

in the Climate negotiation process, and have been a powerful civil society constituency since 2006. We focus on the one hand on what we call the 'false solutions' being promoted by private sector groups. Our constituency exposes and resists unsustainable technical climate activities, such as nuclear energy – which is entirely unsustainable – and large-scale monoculture tree plantations, that destroy biodiversity, local peoples' livelihoods and result in pesticide pollution. On the other hand, we demonstrate what should be at the core of climate programs and funding, what we call "gender-just climate solutions" where local democratic control over climate solutions, with women's leadership, are protecting communities and natural resources, and transiting away from harmful practices that degrade the climate and environment.

Environmental Health has been a key focus for our organisation. The health impacts of chemicals, waste and minerals such as mercury are devastating as they are often irreversible, and impact children in particular. The [Stockholm Convention](#) to ban the most hazardous chemicals globally, resulted in the European Union's chemicals regulation REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restrictions of chemicals) thanks to the tenacity of the then Commissioner for Environment, [Margot Wallström](#), from Sweden, with strong support and engagement from the environmental and ecofeminist organisations. Even though progress is slow, and the chemical industry uses all the loopholes, these legally binding processes are helping to stop the pollution with carcinogenic, reprotoxic and endocrine-disrupting chemicals. And thanks to continued advocacy by civil society, including through our partner networks, recently the global convention to [ban mercury](#) was adopted, and this year at

the UN Environment Assembly, governments decided to start negotiating a global treaty to [end plastic pollution](#).

Why does this matter now, on the anniversary of Stockholm+50? Because we now have all the science, the social, economic and technical solutions, for a just transition to avoid a total climate and environmental collapse of our planet. But while we have this knowledge, we don't have the political will, and see a strong push back against environmental governance, including, against the gender-justice principles of this transition. As in 1992, we still have a handful of billionaires responsible for the highest climate impact, while those least responsible for the disaster are faced with total loss of livelihoods⁵, with women and children amongst the majority of those destitute⁶. We all need to resist the billions of investments and subsidies that continue to go towards climate damaging activities – from bailing out airlines to subsidising industrial agriculture – and push for a just transition to a care economy that is sustainable and fair, that invests in social protection, health and child care, has polluters pay for loss and damage, and creates safe and green jobs for people in all their diversity, for women, men and non-binary people, from all countries and backgrounds.

That is why we needed to have the ecofeminist movement strongly represented in Stockholm on June 2022.

5 Carbon emissions of richest 1% set to be 30 times the 1.5°C limit in 2030 <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/carbon-emissions-richest-1-set-be-30-times-15degc-limit-2030>

6 Report on women, gender equality and climate justice https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2017-0403_EN.html



Women's Major Group at UNEP © WMG/UNEP



Feminist Climate Justice Panelists at Stockholm+50 © UNEP / Maria Nilsson

**Section Seven:
What really
happened with
Stockholm+50
and the 50th
anniversary?**



2-3 JUNE 2022

STOCKHOLM

A HEALTHY PLANET FOR THE PROSPERITY OF ALL
– OUR RESPONSIBILITY, OUR OPPORTUNITY



Leida Rijnhout at Stockholm+50. 50 Years of Environmental Policies © FoRUM Norway

Strengthening International Environmental Governance: The golden key

by **Leida Rijnhout**, Associate Stakeholder Forum

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading authority within the UN system and in the world dedicated to protecting the environment - the only UN agency given that as its central and exclusive task. But it needs to be reinforced to enable it to give stronger leadership in this era of environmental crisis.

The world is facing enormous and urgent environmental and ecological challenges (irreversible biodiversity losses, pollution of land, water and air, the climate crisis....) Ambitious and far-reaching policies and actions are needed to cope with these challenges. UNEP needs to have the mandate, the authority, the resources and the visibility to inspire and lead the necessary changes in the world, and to galvanise more decisive and effective action at national level.

There have been several attempts to strengthen UNEP during its 50 years history, and the 2022 special session of the United Nations Environment Assembly or UNEA (UNEP@50) has recently adopted a powerful political declaration reaffirming the importance of UNEP's role and reinforcing its mandate.

But much remains to be done to deliver on that new mandate, and to enable UNEP to make a more substantial impact on the major environmental challenges facing the world.

Hitherto UNEP has not been a strong body within the UN family. It has been inadequately resourced to deliver fully on all its functions and has lacked the political authority to exercise any real oversight of individual countries' implementation of their environmental obligations. It will need all the recognition it can get from Member States, from business and from civil society to enable it to play more effectively the leading role now mandated by UNEA.

This is not a new insight. Many articles have been published over the years about the limited authority of UNEP¹ and the huge challenge involved in strengthening international environmental policies and their implementation. A strong UNEP is crucial to obtain this.

A previous major effort to strengthen UNEP took place during the Rio+20 negotiations in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. Many Member States took up this cause and pushed for a stronger UNEP. The major achievement on that occasion was that the former limited membership Governing Council of UNEP was upgraded to a United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA) with universal membership². The upgrade was intended to create a stronger and more effective system of International Environmental Governance and Law-making, with stronger political engagement and oversight of UNEP by a strong politically led Environment Assembly (UNEA).

Some of the principal functions and responsibilities of the new UNEA were to:

- a) promote international co-operation in the field of the environment and to recommend policies to this end;
- b) provide general policy guidance for the direction and co-ordination of environmental programmes within the United Nations system;
- c) review their implementation;
- d) keep under review the world environmental situation in order to ensure that emerging environmental problems of wide international significance receive appropriate and adequate consideration by governments;

- e) promote the contribution of the relevant international scientific and other professional communities to environmental knowledge and information; and
- f) to maintain under continuing review the impact of national and international environmental policies and measures³.

UNEA was thus mandated to work with UNEP to set priorities for global environmental policies and develop international environmental law. Decisions and resolutions are taken by all Member States at the Assembly which gives guidance to all Member States on actions needed at the national level and approves the work programme for UNEP itself. UNEA is, in the words of one of the former Executive Directors, Achim Steiner, "*the world's parliament on the environment*".

In the run up to UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50 in 2022, several books and articles were published on the history of UNEP and what it has been able to achieve or stimulate in its first 50 years. Without doubt UNEP has delivered a number of impactful results. Much scientific research was co-ordinated, and many useful reports published. Many international conventions and environmental agreements were negotiated and agreed. UNEP leads some international processes that encourage Member States to deliver on environmental issues.

There is, however, little public recognition for the work of UNEP – or indeed of its very existence. Many people know that UNESCO or UNICEF exist, and the kind of things they do, but comparatively few know of UNEP and what it does. The creation of UNEA has attracted a little more attention to UNEP through its bienni-

1 WRI 2002; Ivanova 2010; Bierman and Bauer 2007; IGES 2011

2 Rio+20 Outcome - §§ 87/88

3 Perrez, 2020



Looking back, 50 years of UNEP at UNEP@50 © UNEP /Cyril Villemain

al meetings, but UNEA itself has struggled to gain global recognition and attention.

An additional factor tending to obscure UNEP's visibility at the present time is that climate change is perceived as such an overwhelmingly important issue that it soaks up much of the available attention to global environmental issues, both of the public and of the global media. The meetings of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP) are fully covered by the media – UNEA meetings hardly at all.

Meetings of UNEA, the Environmental Assembly where all ministers for the environment of all Member States gather biennially to discuss new resolutions and policies, are hardly mentioned in the national newspapers. It is a sad comment on media priorities that the UN

body, responsible for developing environmental policies or legal frameworks on a wide range of environmental challenges beyond climate change gets so little media attention.

At the same time this is at least in part a reflection of the sad fact that neither UNEA, nor UNEP nor any of the countries of the world have yet proved able to lift their environmental ambitions and actions to the level and severity of the great environmental challenges they face. In principle, UNEP has the mandate and authority to be more ambitious on the big issues. But in practice it has had to concentrate most of its efforts on smaller incremental steps forward on the more manageable and tractable environmental challenges. It has always lacked the political leadership and resources, the depth of contacts and networks among the scientific and civil society communities, and the political support from some-

times timid and low decision-making level of Environment Ministers to be able to operate at a level commensurate with the scale of the major environmental challenges themselves, and to command the attention of the world's media and the global public.

In truth the totality of UNEP's activities over its 50 year life have been useful and respectable, but in the final analysis they have been insufficient to meet the ambitious goals originally set for it by the international community in 1972, the year UNEP was founded. The successive Directors of UNEP and their staff have undoubtedly had the vision and the ambition to do more – but they have been limited by the very limited funds which Member States have granted them over the years (in spite of their high-sounding political declarations) and by the painfully slow-moving process of building consensus for new actions in the Governing Council and UNEA. And often blocked by the vested interests of the wrong corporate lobbies, that are too powerful in (all) environmental negotiations.

In the 1972 Stockholm Action Plan, it was mandated that UNEP should be a normative body that provided guidance for the direction and management of environmental programmes. The new institution was to catalyse synergies among existing UN agencies, to undertake environmental assessments, and to promote good environmental management and supporting measures⁴. Ambitious and necessarily visionary, UNEP was intended to set the stage by establishing core principles for environmental policies and environmental law.

The core functions of UNEP and its governing body can be clustered into three functions: first, a scientific function to keep the world en-

vironment under review and identify emerging environmental problems with international significance. Second, a policy function to promote international cooperation and law or treaty making, provide general policy guidance, and coordinate the environmental activities within the UN. Third, a catalytic function to stimulate environmental cooperation, action and policy implementation. These three functions form a cycle: science, policy, and the catalysis or promotion of action should be followed again by reviewing the environmental situation and determining whether additional policies are needed⁵.

Without doubt UNEP has made progress on all three aspects over its 50-year life. Within the UN system environmental issues have become more important, and better integrated into other UN bodies. UNEP has also played a leading role in the hundreds of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) signed and/or ratified by Member States. UNEP was also effective in bringing together and publishing a wide range of scientific environmental data and in producing regular comprehensive assessments and appraisals of the state of the global environment and changes in it (GEO – the Global Environmental Outlook). They are partnering in many programmes to protect the environment.

So, yes, without the work of UNEP the environmental policies and law making would be significantly worse off! But still it is fair to state that if funding, efficiency and the political mandate had been bigger or better used, more goals would have been achieved and a major impact made.

One problem in the field of international governance of the environment is the multipli-

⁴ Ivanova, 2021

⁵ Ibid 3

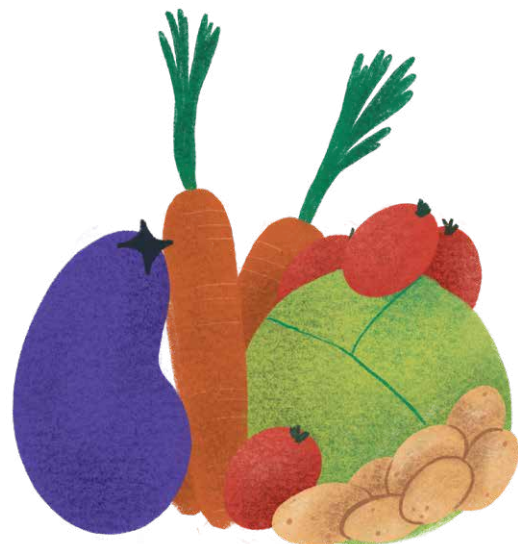
cation of separate multilateral environment agreements (MEAs). Member States are having to deal with more than 1300 MEAs, many overlapping and some still with significant gaps on important issues. Governments may sign and ratify these agreements, but their number is so great that institutional memory of their requirements sometimes fades away and implementation and monitoring are neglected. Civil society organisations also find it hard to keep track of the multiplicity of agreements and the extent to which they are being implemented effectively.

UNEP's website InforMEA⁶ gives a helpful overview of existing MEAs. The database of International Environmental Agreements of the University of Oregon⁷ shows how many multilateral and bilateral environmental agreements have been signed, ratified and implemented, country by country. Both websites make clear that the tangle of legislation is too much to handle for most national governments and needs bold streamlining and coordination at international level together with guidance to national authorities on the key issues and priorities at that level.

This is a difficult task since most of the MEAs have their own free-standing governance arrangements and no direct oversight or co-ordination by UNEP (even though many of the agreements have arisen from analysis and discussion initiated by UNEP). Stronger and more coordinated International Environmental Governance (IEG) has been a widely held aspiration for decades. As the world's environmental problems become bigger and more urgent, the need grows ever greater. Scientists are ever clearer on the facts and figures, related to biodiversity loss, overall pollution, climate change and increasing health problems. And

also, about the links between all those topics. A more integrated and coherent approach is necessary, drawing together the work and priorities of the MEAs and of UNEP itself in a single framework. Several UN declarations have urged such integration; but so far UNEP and UNEA together with the Member States have not been able to fully achieve this objective.

A stronger framework of international environmental governance is needed to define global principles and objectives, to identify appropriate strategies, instruments and tools and to facilitate funding and capacity building. A stronger international framework of this kind would then enable national progress to be more readily monitored, compared and assessed. At present too much progress on environmental goals is too lightly self-assessed by complacent governments. Too much environmental law is soft and aspirational. Compliance with targets is too much voluntary and unenforced or unenforceable. Too many separate agreements produce a complex patchwork of obligations that is impossible to implement and monitor effectively in a coherent way.



6 <https://www.informea.org/en>

7 <https://iea.uoregon.edu/>

Role of Civil Society in International Environmental Governance (IEG)

It is generally (but not universally) recognised that civil society groups have a crucial part to play in achieving implementation and enforcement of environmental objectives at both the national and the international level.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) involvement in environmental governance can take a variety of forms⁸:

- Expert advice and analysis. NGOs can facilitate negotiations by giving politicians access to competing ideas from outside the normal bureaucratic channels;
- Intellectual competition to governments. NGOs often have much better analytical and technical skills and capacity to respond more quickly than governmental officials;
- Mobilization of public opinion. NGOs can influence the public campaigns and broad outreach;
- Representation of the voiceless. NGOs can help vocalize the interests of persons (or the environment) not well-represented in policy-making;
- Service provision. NGOs can deliver technical expertise on particular topics as needed by government officials as well as participate in operational activities;
- Monitoring and assessment. NGOs can help strengthen international agreements by monitoring negotiations efforts and governmental compliance;
- Legitimisation of global-scale decision-making mechanisms. NGOs could broaden the base of information for decision-making, improving the quality, authoritativeness, and legitimacy of the policy choices of international organisations.

Many environmental problems of the present day have local, national, regional and local dimensions. Effective action to deal with them requires interaction and collaboration between the different levels.

Governments and public institutions at the different levels need to interact and collaborate, as well as civil society groups if they are to play their part most effectively.

At international level, civil society groups have a key role to play for successful international environmental governance as thought leaders or instigators, as watchdogs of governmental performance and as allies in national and local implementation. They need to have a solid base of local knowledge of environmental problems and their impacts, but also to be able to integrate this knowledge and concern into relevant and appropriate messages and proposals for action at global level, and then be able through their networks to transmit the implications of international work and agreements back to national and local level.

The sheer complexity of the present structure of international agreements is a challenge for civil society as much as for national governments. It is hard for such organisations and networks to keep up with all the different agreements their governments have signed and ratified and what implementation measures are or should be in place.

Even lawyers and judges are often not fully aware of the full extent of existing international environmental law and how it should bear on national law and regulations. Some environmental organisations are, however, beginning to make more of this legal channel and finding

8 Gemmill & Bamidele-Izu, 2002



World Environmental Day's cleanup and tree planting at Kibera informal settlement. Nairobi, Kenya. 2018
© UNEP

ways to challenge governments or big corporations in the Courts for failure to comply with international law and standards.

The last few years have seen a snowballing of court rulings in favour of environmental protection around the world. The cumulative number of climate change-related cases has more than doubled since 2015. Just over 800 cases were filed between 1986 and 2014, while over 1000 cases have been brought in the last six years. Thirty-seven of those cases were “systemic mitigation” cases brought against governments⁹.

One of the most high-profile was when the Hague District Court in 2015, in which a court ruled that The Netherlands’ government

has the duty of care when it comes to protecting its citizens from climate change. The judges ruled that the government’s plan to cut emissions by 14-17% compared with 1990 levels by 2020 was unlawful given the threat of climate change. They ordered the target to be increased to 25%. As a result, the Dutch government closed a power plant four years earlier than planned and introduced a new climate plan in 2019¹⁰. In 2019, the Supreme Court of the Netherlands pursued the case and ordered the government to cut the nation’s greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent from 1990 levels by the end of 2020. It was the first time a nation has been required by its Supreme Court to take action against climate change.¹¹

⁹ Bateman, 2021

¹⁰ Ibid 9

¹¹ New York Times, December 20, 2019 - <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/20/climate/netherlands-climate-lawsuit.html#:~:text=The%20Supreme%20Court%20of%20the,take%20action%20against%20climate%20change>.

The success factor in those cases was obviously the expertise and knowledge of the (environmental) lawyers in building their cases on the fundamental obligation for the government to take care of their citizens – the “duty of care”. By not protecting the environment (in this case by being inactive on climate policies), the government was found to have failed in its duty of care and was forced to take more effective action and to behave as a steward for the environment and health of people.

There are more examples where environmental activists are using environmental law to protect their surroundings, sometimes using procedural rules like those established by the Aarhus Convention as the basis for their case. But many organisations are still not fully aware of the (legal) instruments that are already available to them and how to establish their right to bring cases on behalf of the environment or the population at large rather than of individually affected citizens. There are too many international agreements, too diverse in character, too difficult to interpret at a national level, too few legal institutions, lawyers and judges able to handle and understand the legal language of the environment, and too few resources to fund and support what can be complex environmental cases through the Courts and appeals processes.

Coordination and streamlining the goals and targets for environmental protection

The Global Resource Information Database in Geneva (GRID-Geneva) is a partnership between UNEP, the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) and the University of Geneva (UniGe). They have created a map of all existing international environmental policies and legislation and how it is implement-

ed and monitored. This Environment Statistics Explorer¹² is a useful tool for governments and civil society groups. Among other things it clearly shows how the international environmental law that has been established so far, a somewhat confusing patchwork, including a large number of mainly voluntary goals and targets, that are very unevenly monitored and complied with.

In 2006, Switzerland took an initiative to ask UNEP to take the leadership in coordinating this patchwork of environmental objectives. They referred to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for the international cooperation work in the development field where a consensus had already been achieved between countries on a single set of goals and targets for the international development agenda. It was widely felt that something similar might be attempted for the international environment agenda. At the Global Ministerial Environment Forum/UNEP Governing Council 2006 in Dubai, Swiss President Moritz Leuenberger, underlining the crucial necessity of an effective protection of our natural resource base, urged that “[w]e need two things in order to fulfil our responsibilities and defend our interests better: firstly, strong institutions, and secondly, goals”. He therefore launched the idea of Global Environmental Goals (GEGs). The core idea of this proposal was to compile a set of goals, targets and indicators for international environmental policy in order to complement institutional measures to strengthen international environmental governance. One year later, during the ministerial discussions at the Global Ministerial Environment Forum/UNEP Governing Council 2007 in Nairobi, several ministers referred to and supported this proposal and the Global Ministerial Environment Forum assigned to UNEP the task to “monitor

¹² <https://gegslive.unepgrid.ch/>

and evaluate existing global environmental objectives and actions”¹³.

Despite the support of some Member States, there was no immediate follow up at that time.

A decade later, in June 2017, more than 100 environmental law experts over 40 countries took an initiative to create and present a proposal for a “*Global Pact for the Environment*” (GPE) with the aim of making environmental governance stronger and more broadly agreed, and of creating instruments to monitor and enforce compliance with environmental laws, goals and specific targets. It was an attempt to create a simpler and more coordinated approach (endorsed by all Member States) to be more effective and consistent in protecting the environment. A level playing field between countries in respect of environmental laws and enforcement practices would also have the advantage of discouraging companies from seeking to undermine environmental standards by locating their businesses in countries where environmental law is weak or non-existent.

This Club des Juristes¹⁴ (a legal think tank) called on governments to adopt a text codifying the general principles of the environment, and to make it easier to hold governments and other bodies to account in legal terms for their actions or inaction on environmental matters. This proposal was taken up by Emmanuel Macron, President of France, who presented the GPE to the UN General Assembly (GA) in May 2018. The GA resolved to explore this further (Resolution 72/277)¹⁵ and established an ad-hoc open-ended working group, with Mrs

Amal Mudallali (Lebanon) and Mr. Francesco Duarte Lopes (Portugal) as co-chairs for this purpose. This working group produced a technical and evidence-based report¹⁶ that identified and assessed possible gaps in international law and environment-related instruments with a view to strengthening their implementation.

All the work was welcomed and agreed upon by the GA. Therefore, in August 2019, Resolution 73/333¹⁷ was adopted as a follow up to Resolution 72/277¹⁸, which forwarded “*these recommendations to the United Nations Environment Assembly for its consideration, and to prepare, at its fifth session, in February 2021, a political declaration for a United Nations high-level meeting, subject to voluntary funding, in the context of the commemoration of the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972, with a view to strengthening the implementation of international environmental law and international environmental governance, in line with paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled ‘The future we want’*”, implying that UNEP is from now on the mandated body to lead this process further. Two co-chairs, Mrs. Saqlain Seydah (Pakistan) and Mr. Ado Lohmus (Estonia) were appointed to organise the future work and draft this political declaration.

During the negotiation process it was initially assumed the political declaration would be presented at the High-level Conference

¹³ Perrez, Ziegerer, 2008

¹⁴ <http://www.leclubdesjuristes.com/pacte-mondial-pour-lenvironnement/>

¹⁵ <https://globalpactenvironment.org/uploads/Resolution10mai2018EN.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/27070>

¹⁷ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N19/267/90/PDF/N1926790.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁸ <https://globalpactenvironment.org/uploads/Resolution10mai2018EN.pdf>

Stockholm+50. Fifty years after the founding of UNEP, the ambition, at least from civil society groups, was that Environmental Governance and Law would be finally put as the highest priority for Member States, and that UNEP would put greater emphasis on strengthening environmental governance and law, and particularly on its implementation and enforcement.

Subsequently, however, it was decided that the new political declaration should be finalised and adopted at the special session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP@50), rather than at Stockholm+50.

And so, it happened. After long and sometimes difficult negotiations a final version of the Political Declaration to strengthen Environmental Governance and Law was adopted at the UNEA Special Session in March 2022¹⁹.

Civil society organisations were very active in the negotiations leading up to this outcome document. Environmental lawyers, judges and experts were part of the civil society group and made a major contribution. Many very concrete proposals were put forward and discussed by Member States in the expert working groups. But, as it often happens in environmental negotiations, some countries were far from happy to agree on language that would commit them internationally to strengthen their own environmental policies, laws and implementation strategies at national levels, even worse if it would be legally binding. Language respecting the Human Right for a Healthy Environment²⁰ (recognised by the OHCHR in 2021) was also

for some countries a “No Go” area. Other countries objected to the idea of imposing specific monitoring requirements on grounds of protecting national sovereignty. Discussions went slowly. Multilateral joint agreements are getting more difficult nowadays, especially when they touch upon national sovereignty and the idea of external monitoring of compliance with international standards.

The invasion in Ukraine caused the political isolation of one of the reluctant countries and this was maybe the only positive results from the war in Ukraine, that the Human Rights related language was not contested anymore, but could pass without major comments as no other country wanted to be associated with the aggressor.

The final declaration fell short of the ambitions of Civil Society Groups and some of the more progressive Member States. Nevertheless, the text represents an important reaffirmation of the central role of UNEP and a significant strengthening or deepening of its mandate in some respects. It should provide a good basis for Member States and advocacy groups to keep on pushing for stronger implementation, enforcement and accountability mechanisms of existing environmental governance and law on the national level.

Two of the paragraphs in the preambular text at the beginning of the declaration are particularly significant in this context:

“Recognizing the importance of fostering environmental rule of law and effective international environmental governance through multilateral processes, and conscious of ongoing initiatives to promote coordinated ap-

19 <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/39995/UNEP.EA.SS.1.4 - POLITICAL DECLARATION-English.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

20 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G21/289/50/PDF/G2128950.pdf?OpenElement>



Masoumeh Ebtekar, Vice President of Iran and head of Environmental Protection Organisation, and **Amina J. Mohammed**, UN Deputy Secretary-General, Nigeria, at UNEA Unplugged © UNEP

proaches and complementary actions for addressing biodiversity loss, climate change, desertification and land degradation, as well as pollution and unsound management of chemicals and waste [...], and

*“Recognizing also the crucial importance of effective domestic legal frameworks and governance structures for promoting compliance with obligations under international environmental law, and of the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals, while acknowledging the importance of international cooperation in this regard [...]”*²¹

It will be an important task for environmental organisations to follow-up on the declaration and to keep pressing UNEP and Member

States for action to strengthen their systems for implementing agreements and monitoring the results. They need to be active on this generic theme of establishing good environmental governance at all levels as well as on the particular environmental issues that are their own top priorities.

Why is strengthening environmental governance and law so important?

Without strong environmental governance, access to justice and the rule of law, the adoption of policies, conventions and treaties can achieve little; they will remain a dead letter. Political leadership from UNEP and political commitment by Member States are essential to achieve this. International Environmental Governance

²¹ <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/39995/UNEP.EA.SS.1.4%20-%20POLITICAL%20DECLARATION-English.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

(IEG) is no governance at all unless countries genuinely implement the commitments they undertake in international agreements.

Closing the implementation gap requires clear lines of responsibility and accountability for reaching internationally agreed-upon goals. That is why the Swiss proposal for the Global Environmental Goals and the Global Pact for the Environment were so important: clear definitions of principles, goals and targets. UNEP has the potential to leverage partnerships and to become the cornerstone of an implementation-monitoring mechanism. Currently, there is no global standard for measuring whether countries are fulfilling their international environmental obligations, what efforts they are taking to implement them, or what gaps in national capacity need to be addressed. Furthermore, there are no systemic review mechanisms to compare progress of national policies (Ivanova, 2021). In this light, it is very difficult to establish how far existing law and policies are efficient or effective.

Member States need to establish a clearer legal framework for protecting the environment in their countries. The basic Human Right for a clean healthy and safe environment should be given legal force. Damaging the environment should be made criminal. Within this general structure, specific legally enforced targets and rules should be mapped out for the different aspects of the environment and the different type of potentially polluting activity. UNEP should play a leading role in mapping out and codifying the main features of this structure, and establishing a global system for monitoring and comparing national performance against internationally agreed goals and targets.

During the UNEP@50 negotiations civil society representatives strongly urged that the political declaration should contain more than declaratory words, but should be the launch-pad for the development of a legally binding frame-

work to strengthen environmental law and governance with the principal aim of improving implementation, enforcement and monitoring of progress at the national level. Like the 2030 Agenda which launched the SDGs, the environmental framework should include:

- Principles (cf: Agenda 21 – Human Rights agenda)
- Goals (including coordination of existing ones (MEAs))
- Targets
- Indicators
- Monitoring tools – measuring progress - reporting
- Means of implementation (re: Montevideo Program)

In the end, the final Political Declaration was not as ambitious as it should have. But it contains several useful pegs that will be useful in developing the arguments further in the years ahead. Civil Society Groups will need to keep up the pressure in the follow-up.

One useful way to follow-up would be a world-wide campaign to strengthen legal expertise and capacity throughout the world amongst judges, lawyers, non-state actors, and to integrate environmental law into the core curriculum of all Law Departments of Universities. This all would help to put environmental governance again high on the priority agenda of the legal world, which is not always the case nowadays.

A second objective might be to campaign for the environment to be given a higher profile and standing in governments and among ministries. In recent years, an increasing number of countries have been integrating the responsibility for the protection of the environment into other ministries, like energy, finance, natural resources, tourism, agriculture. This may have had some specific short term advantages in terms of integrating environmental considerations more closely into the agendas of the partner ministries. But it has also made it more

difficult to identify a single department responsible for an oversight of the environment as a whole and for shaping and guiding the kind of comprehensive approach to environmental governance advocated here. If goals and targets are to be more clearly defined and monitoring schemes put in place, a country needs a senior minister and department to drive the process, as well as to overcome the internal obstacles that will arise without a doubt. No pain, no gain.

Monitoring schemes are crucial for accountability

Several UN bodies do have monitoring schemes in place. The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) established at Rio+20 to monitor progress on sustainable development, works with **Voluntary National Reviews (VNR)**, where countries present their self-assessment report about the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Targets. It encourages Member States to “conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven” (paragraph 79²²). These national reviews are expected to serve as a basis for the regular reviews by the HLPF, meeting under the auspices of ECOSOC.

As stipulated in paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda, regular reviews by the HLPF are to be voluntary, state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and involve multiple stakeholders. The voluntary national reviews (VNRs) aim to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The VNRs also seek to strengthen policies and

institutions of governments and to mobilize multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In the best cases, civil society groups are engaged in the development of those VNRs, in other cases, they present shadow reports. This is an interesting exercise but stays as the title already mentions: voluntary.

These VNRs already include a significant environmental element in so far as the environment features amongst the SDGs themselves. But the SDGs do not cover all the detailed environmental issues and objectives included within the Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and other international environmental agreements. Nor do they monitor in detail the state of implementation, enforcement and delivery of specific legally binding environmental targets and requirements. Although valuable in themselves, the VNRs cannot, therefore, be regarded as a sufficient answer to the more comprehensive monitoring of environmental performance which civil society has been pressing for in the UNEP and UNEA debates.

The Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) uses a stricter monitoring scheme - the so-called **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** which is based on objective and reliable information - of the fulfillment by each State of its human rights obligations and commitments in a manner which ensures universality of coverage and equal treatment with respect to all States. The review is meant to be a cooperative mechanism based on an interactive dialogue with the full involvement of the country concerned, including the national civil society groups and with consideration given to its capacity-building needs. This mechanism is complementing and not duplicating the work of treaty bodies. During the review pro-

22 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

cess, UN members and observer States make recommendations to the State under Review (SuR) on how to improve its human rights situation. On average, SuR receives 200 recommendations per review. The UPR is a peer-review mechanism, as recommendations are made to States by other States. The report submitted by civil society groups are a full part of the process. UPR recommendations cover all human rights issues: economic, social, cultural, environmental, political, civil and the principles of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). This monitoring mechanism would be a good model for how to measure (and promote) progress on environmental governance and law.

Another review and monitoring mechanism that is applied by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is the **Environmental Performance Review (EPR)**. The EPR Programme assists and supports ECE Member States in improving their environmental management and performance; promotes information exchange on policies and experiences among countries; helps in the integration of the environmental policies into economic sectors; promotes greater accountability to the public; strengthens cooperation with the international community; and contributes to the achievement and monitoring of relevant Sustainable Development Goals. An EPR is an assessment of the progress a country has made in reconciling its environmental and economic targets and in meeting its international environmental commitments. As a voluntary exercise, the EPR is undertaken at the request of the country under review.

The EPR process consists of the following main steps: Preparation, Review Mission, Expert Review, Peer Review, Publication, and Launch.

- First-cycle EPRs establish baseline conditions regarding trends, policy commitments, institutional arrangements and routine capabilities for carrying out national evaluations.

- Second-cycle EPRs assess progress and help to stimulate greater accountability. Emphasis is placed on implementation and financing of the environment policy, integration of environmental concerns into economic sectors, and promotion of sustainable development.
- Third-cycle EPRs include environmental governance and financing in a green economy context, countries' cooperation with the international community and environmental mainstreaming in priority sectors.

EPR is a voluntary instrument, but it supports countries in prioritising, coordinating and performing better on the implementation of environmental policies and law.

In all review and monitoring schemes, it is of absolute importance that civil society organisations are part of the process and/or active in shadow reporting. Those organisations are often as well or better connected to the reality and the needs of the citizens and local circumstances of the eco-systems, than official bodies.

Civil society engagement to strengthen environmental governance and law

It is often asserted and is by now generally agreed that the role of civil society groups is very important for the implementation of environmental governance and law. Without those groups, the representatives of citizens in the country or community, there would be no success stories to tell when it comes to embedding environmental protection actions, holding governments and business to account or bringing new and innovative thinking to the table. In Stockholm 1972, civil society groups played a prominent role in helping to shape the decisions that were made. Ever since, UNEP meetings have been very open for civil society groups and participation has been well facilitated.



World Environmental Day celebration UNON, 2018. Making products from recycled plastic © UNEP

The follow-up at national level is, however, less well-developed by both governments and civil society groups. There should be greater clarity as to what specific implementation measures are expected from governments, and as to how civil society can monitor progress on this and challenge any shortcoming.

UNEP and Member States should strengthen and support civil society groups in making the bridge between the international agreed language and implementation on the national levels. Unfortunately, that is not happening. UNEPs work on stakeholders' participation is

mainly focused on bringing in more groups into the meetings in Nairobi. But being present in Nairobi is far from enough to guarantee national and regional implementation of UNEP work and agreements. It is about creating organisations with the knowledge (and the funding) to push their national government for the implementation and enforcement.

The success of the upcoming Global Treaty on Plastics is mainly thanks to a huge and active network of civil society organisations worldwide (Break free from plastics²³) that have the knowledge and the capacity to undertake per-

23 <https://www.breakfreefromplastic.org/>

sistent advocacy toward Member States and UNEP the whole year around. More investment is needed to support this kind of work and for the networks needed to make the outcomes of UNEP more visible and effective. A liaison office to support those networks should be established in Nairobi.

What after Stockholm+50?

The modest outcome of Stockholm+50 and the absence of a political declaration was something of a disappointment. The world needed a strong political message from the Heads of States presenting a concrete political commitment with specific goals and targets for environmental improvement over the next 50 years: A clear and agreed Roadmap for the Future.

That did not happen, the political appetite was still not there. But that does not mean that the work stops here. The outcome document of UNEP@50 was in itself a weighty commitment that gives several hooks to continue the pressure on Member States and UNEP to deliver on the strengthening of environmental governance and law.

The following paragraph of the Political Declaration UNEP@50 places a huge task on UNEPs secretariat and the Executive Director to make the strengthening environmental governance and law in the current work of UNEP.

“Invite the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to identify further options, in line with the Programme’s medium-term strategy and programme of work, for providing assistance to Member States and members of specialized agencies upon their request, including through United Nations country teams, to improve implementation of their environmental objectives, international environmental law and the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national level, including access to scientific information,

technologies, technical assistance and financial resources, while ensuring complementarity with the work of treaty bodies”;

UNEP could develop a framework and a working strategy, as a key part of the Program of Work (PoW), that clearly lists and covers all obligations, goals and targets for the Member States to achieve. On the national levels, Member States should (re)appoint ministers for environment that are responsible for the overall implementation. Protecting the environment is a “stand-alone” objective and cannot be mainstreamed or “away-streamed” in other ministers of economy, energy or agriculture, as is increasingly happening in many countries. Without the environment, there is no healthy economy, there is no future for mankind.

This trend should be reversed. It will be reversed when governments finally manage to elevate enforcement of environmental policies and law to be a top priority on all levels. When they finally recognise that priority they will then perhaps, at last, find the courage and determination to empower and resource UNEP to be the powerful and visible global champion of the environment that the world really needs.

UNEP should act as the political and technical authority, the protagonist to protect the environment, facilitate and develop policies and instruments to implement, guide and monitor the governments to do the same. Civil Society Organisations should put emphasis on good and strong environmental governance, as the golden key to unlocking delivery of all environmental objectives.

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Stockholm+50 Humanity's Last Chance Saloon - Indigenous Traditional Knowledge And Custodianship
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UNEA 5.2 Opening Plenary, 2022 © UNEP / Cyril Villemain

Stockholm+50: all that took place before, during and after –

a documented narrative with an analysis

By **Jan-Gustav Strandenaes**, Senior Adviser, Stakeholder Forum

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes is senior policy adviser for Stakeholder Forum and convener of the project which has resulted in this report, the People's Environment Narrative. He was nominated by UNEP and elected by the UNEP accredited major groups as a member of the Stockholm+50 Task Force. As a veteran civil society person, he has followed UNEPs work closely from Stockholm in 1972 through Stockholm 2022. Having worked closely with the development of the Stockholm+50 Conference, which he did for nearly four years observing its process, this is his personal and documented narrative from his civil society vantage point, of the work before, around, through and after the two day Stockholm+50 Conference

Closing Stockholm+50, the final day, June 3rd, 2022

“Success or failure?” My seasoned delegate friend looked at me over the rim of his coffee-cup. The Stockholm+50 Conference had finished, slightly ahead of schedule and I was eager to sit and talk to him about what we both had experienced. I could see he was formulating an answer to my question. A diplomat all his life, always a supporter of UNEP and the environment. As a young diplomat he earned his negotiating experiences from long hours of deliberations during the years of the Commission for Sustainable Development¹. Later he took on the entire environmental spectrum for his country – biodiversity, climate, environmental law. You name it, he was there, committed, engaged, knowledgeable. He lowered his cup, placed it carefully on the table, looked at me and said – “you know, when there is no line of delegates or civil society people waiting in the morning to get through security, when you never have to queue for lunch, when there are too many empty seats in the plenary, you get this uncanny feeling that there is something missing. And with Stockholm+50, there are too many things missing for me to label this a success. It is however, not a downright failure. But I am afraid that this turned out to be more of a missed opportunity.”

¹ The UN Commission for Sustainable Development, UN CSD, was agreed to in 1992 by the UN Conference on Environment and Development, UNCED, which also adopted Agenda 21. CSD was subsequently established by the UN General Assembly in 1993 and mandated to be the key responsible entity at the UN to follow up Agenda 21 and the Rio Principles. CSD was operative between 1993 and 2013, when it was replaced by the High Level Political Forum, the principal UN body to follow up the SDGs.

I wanted to protest. I had, after all vested a lot of time and energy in contributing to making this conference, if not a success, at least a memorable one. I had begun working on it before the formal decision had been taken at the UN Environment Assembly, UNEA 4 in 2019 to commemorate UNEP's 50th anniversary. Two conferences were to be organised – one in Nairobi named UNEP@50, and the other in Stockholm generally referred to as the Stockholm+50 Conference. Thinking back 50 years, to the warm June days in Stockholm in 1972 when UNEP was established, I remembered how elated and happy I had been – we all had been. As a young man back then, I had worked as a volunteer for the secretariat which organised and ran the UN Conference on the Human Environment. We all felt we had contributed to making the 1972 Stockholm Conference a formidable success. Elderly diplomats, scientists and hordes of civil society and NGOs had been quite happy with the outcome back then. We were on a roll to save the world in 1972. The final documents and decisions were hailed as important steps towards saving the planet's environment. It had been the first ever global conference on the environment. The 1972 Stockholm Declaration had included the right to a clean environment, a first formally agreed proposal to safeguard the environment.

Now, 50 years later, there was no feeling of elation among the participants after the Stockholm+50 Conference was over. People I had been working with and who had been organising elements of this commemorative conference, had at the beginning of the process expressed high expectations and had hoped for an invigorating, dynamic and forward-looking outcome document expressing global support for the environment. Following the UNEA 4 decisions, we had thought that we could build on the successes from 1972. After all, we could trace and document a series of successes for UNEP during its 50 year efforts to safeguard the environment. Should we not use this occasion, any occasion to energize all efforts to

protect and preserve the environment for the good of humanity? The environmental situation in 2022 was in dire need of success stories. And here my delegate friend had said that the Stockholm+50 was a missed opportunity. "Was it a failure," I asked. "It was definitely not a success", he answered.

Over breakfast the same day, I had enjoyed the company of another friend. From a different country, but nearly with the same experienced background as my critically inclined friend. She was of a different opinion, leaning towards a much more nuanced view with positive overtones in judging this Stockholm conference. These two delegates knew each other well, had collaborated on several issues over the years, together championed innovative thematic approaches that had made a constructive and positive difference to environmental policies. Over my morning coffee I had presented my breakfast friend with my own critical analysis. My main critique centred around the construction of the outcome document, the 2022 Stockholm Declaration. I had met my breakfast friend with the following greeting: "There are ten points in this Declaration, that are not only the result of what the co-chairs have written together, they are also not negotiated, nor are they in any way binding. How is this going to make a difference? Let alone inspire future conferences? Or make the people at large believe in UNEP?"

My breakfast friend paused me and said quietly – "but this conference was never going to be a conference where we were going to negotiate the outcomes. This is in the resolutions agreed to by the UN General Assembly. You know this as well as I do. The format agreed to for Stockholm+50 was that it should be more informal and hopefully more participatory. All delegates and civil society could enter the plenary halls, civil society were invited on to the podium and engaged in debates in the leadership dialogues with influential decision makers and ministers. And they all felt more



The 4th United Nations Environment Assembly UNEA 4. Nairobi, Kenya. 2019 © UNEP / Natalia Mroz

at ease in this setting and made statements which were not scripted and had good ideas and recommendations.”

My breakfast fiend had a point. As did my seasoned delegate friend. What then did take place in Stockholm in June 2022 and in the run-up to this conference when the world was set to commemorate UNEP's 50th anniversary? Will the Stockholm+50 Conference go down in the annals of environmental history as a hallmark conference, with a watershed message to accelerate the work needed to protect and safeguard the environment, or will it be thought of as a missed opportunity?

My two delegate friends had looked at me at the end of our discussion asking me what I thought about the event. From your point of view, they inquired, as a civil society person, how do you assess the outcome?

An optimistic beginning killed by a pandemic?

What was my assessment? This question had been mulling around in my head from the time the preparatory process had been formalised through the agreement of the modalities resolution in September 2021. I had high hopes and high expectations and had looked forward to the entire process from its beginning. I felt a peculiar ownership of these fifty years as I had been in Stockholm when it happened in 1972 and had followed UNEP since. Now I was neither happy with process nor outcome. What had started on a high note with high expectations seemed to have ended in something akin to a dissonant chord. What had changed?

Stephan Löfwen, the Swedish Prime minister in 2020, had presented the Stockholm+50 conference as an important event. He had

spoken during the opening of the UN General Assembly in September 2020 and had invited leaders of the world to come to Stockholm in 2022 to discuss environmental issues and commemorate the 50th anniversary of the UN Conference on the Human Environment which had taken place in Stockholm in June 1972. The Prime Minister had spoken on the occasion of the High-level Meeting of the Assembly to Commemorate the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the United Nations. Beginning his address with a reference to the very foundation of the UN, he had said: "Seventy-five years ago, leaders came together in the conviction that we could only build a peaceful, just, and sustainable future by working together across borders. The United Nations was founded on this vision". Then he continued with an invitation to the world: "In 2022, it will be 50 years since the world gathered in Stockholm for the first UN conference on the environment. We will use this opportunity to host another high-level conference in Stockholm in 2022, aimed at accelerating the green transition and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement." He ended his short speech on behalf of the Swedish government with a strong commitment to multilateralism and to the UN².

There it was – short and concise, an invitation from a Prime Minister to a global high level conference on environmental issues. When a PM invites, and the reference is high level, the participants should be high level, in other words Heads of State. He also outlined in general terms the key points of the agenda: Accelerate the green transition, implement the 2030 agenda on sustainable development and the Paris agreement on climate. An important set of issues though perhaps not directly

what we would think of as key issues for the UN Environment Programme.

The invitation took no one by surprise. But what followed did. Many wondered why for instance we got two commemorative conferences. The fact that 50 years would have elapsed in 2022 since the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment was well known. Anyone with a calendar and some basic knowledge of UN environmental history could understand the significance attached to celebrating this 50 year birthday. Everybody also expected the Swedes to organise a commemorative conference. If not the Swedes, then surely UNEP would. A couple of Swedish NGOs had already been pushing the Swedish government to make announcements concerning a possible commemoration expecting their government to organise something akin to a people's forum for the environment. The 2022 Foundation³ was the most adamant at trying to create a collective interest in Sweden for the arrangement. Though these NGOs kept reminding everybody of the fact that 2022 also marked the half-way point to the completion of the 2030 Agenda and tended to focus more on the 2030 Agenda than the environment and UNEP.

Still, the Swedish government had been quite slow and even reluctant in making anything official about a possible upcoming UNEP related event. The reluctance was explained by the fact that Sweden was to have general election later in 2022, and the election campaign was expected to begin during the summer of 2022. The slowness seemed later to penetrate the entire preparatory process. Clearly the outbreak of the corona-pandemic at the beginning of 2020 with the ensuing global lock-

² <https://www.swedenabroad.se/en/embassies/un-new-york/current/news/address-by-prime-minister-of-sweden-stefan-l%C3%B6fven-to-commemorate-the-seventy-fifth-anniversary-of-the-united-nations/>

³ <https://www.2022initiative.org/#news>

down could explain why the preparatory work had become difficult. But a difficult preparatory process did not have to result in a poor outcome. Besides, as 2020 came to a close more and more people began to talk about the Stockholm +50 Conference in June 2022 as the first global meeting where people again could meet in person after a two year isolation. This in itself was seen as a formidable event and could be used to spearhead the importance of a strong and enthusiastic outcome for the environment. As we approached the opening date of the Stockholm+50 conference, expectations grew. Yet so many left the conference in June 2022 with a bland feeling tantamount to disappointment.

What had taken place between the time of the formal decisions in March 2019 by UNEA 4 to commemorate 50 years of work to safeguard the environment and the end of the Stockholm conference in June 2022 which resulted in a document that several observers quickly described as insignificant.

UNEP prepares for its 50th anniversary

During UNEA 4 which took place in March 2019, a decision was taken to begin preparations for the 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP. This UNEA instructed the Executive Director of UNEP, Ms. Inger Anderson to begin preparation and present an overview of plans at the following UNEA, UNEA 5 scheduled to take place in 2021. I was in the plenary session when the announcement was made. No bravo statement, merely a low key, almost cursory reference to the upcoming event. And no comments from the Swedes. I had expected more from the host of the 1972 conference. Still, I thought, March 2019 is still early hours for the event which will be in June 2022. Though if there was an ambition to use the occasion

to focus on the environment and give environmental efforts a proper boost and make this a summit-like event at the highest level, a preparatory process would have to start soon. The UN with the Swedish hosts had used five years to prepare for the 1972 conference. The UN had also used five years to prepare for the 1992 Rio Earth Summit which gave the world Agenda 21. The preparatory process for Rio plus 20 in 2012 had lasted two years. Knowing a thing or two about Swedish organisational talent and the country's commitment to environmental issues, I was not worried.

With Sweden at the helm of the preparatory work, there were reasons for high expectations

Sweden had always been at the forefront in the fight for the environment, be that on a national, regional or global level. Their political representatives had always made strong statements about justice, human rights, equality and the environment. We all remember the late Secretary General of the UN, Dag Hammarskjöld fighting for the rights of small nations against the big ones in the 1950s by making democracy strong at the UN. The late Swedish Prime Minister, Olof Palme, and host to the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment had made a strong statement on behalf of the environment and even emphasised the need for using the concept of 'ecocide' in international negotiations. Jan Eliasson⁴, the Swedish Diplomat and the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the UN had been the President of the UN General Assembly at its 60th Session, and later served as Deputy Secretary General of the UN between 2012 and 2016 fighting for the same ideals with fine diplomatic skills. Sweden represented a legacy of democratic justice in international affairs and was a pioneer in environmental diplomacy.

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Eliasson

I remember well the Swedish Minister for the environment. Ms. Karolina Skog and her statement to UNEA 3 back in December 2017. The thematic focus of UNEA 3 had been the environment and health. Beginning her statement, she referred to an article in the *Lancet* which connected 9 million deaths in the previous year to pollution. But then she focussed on interlinkages and how important the environment was and would be. She had said that “UNEP should be the number one authority for environmental issues in the world”. She gave pollution a wide context. Referring to the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agenda on climate, the Montreal protocol⁵, the Minamata Convention⁶ and the June 2017 UN conference on the oceans of the world, she emphasised that clean air, clean seas, sustainable management of chemicals and waste management were all key elements in sustainable development. In her generosity and understanding the importance of environmental issues, the Swedish government had allocated 100 million US dollars to fight pollution of the seas and of air. In a quiet but unambiguous way the Minister had also pointed to the importance of science and research. Referring to the Swedish Environment Institute she told the audience that the institute had presented an analytical model demonstrating that the environmental dimension is at the basis for health and the centre economic and social development and as such key to sustainable development. A continuous collaboration with NGOs also ensured that Sweden’s environmental policies were anchored in strong public support. Concluding her statement, the minister said that UNEP and UNEA span all environmental issues in a unique way and that UNEA represents a platform enabling environment ministers to act together.

Two years later, in December 2019, the Swedish government adopted a new strategy for Sweden’s partnership with UNEP with a duration from 2020 until 2023. There was a new Minister of Environment, Ms. Isabella Lövin, but the politics were still the same: “Through our support to UNEP, we want to strengthen the UN’s role in the environmental area and inter-governmental environmental cooperation. In times when global cooperation is being called into question, it is more important than ever to strengthen these institutions and stand up for the value of our joint efforts,”⁷ the Minister for Environment and Climate said. She then underlined a few key points. UNEP is a key cooperation partner in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Sweden urges UNEP to take global leadership in areas including biodiversity, climate and air, chemicals and waste, and oceans, coastal areas and water. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, UNEP and countries around the world must harness the potential inherent in synergies between these areas, such as links between environment and health. “We want UNEP to highlight the 50th anniversary of the 1972 Stockholm Conference – the first ever environmental conference – in a way that moves the environment and climate agenda forward. The world is facing major environmental challenges, and we see this as an opportunity to tackle them together,” said Ms Lövin⁸. In summary, these were strong statements for UNEP and for the environment.

Such statements, from two successive environment ministers revealing strong, dedicated and committed environment policies fuelled the hope for a strong and uplifting outcome from Stockholm+50. Ms. Lövin, who belonged to the Green Party in Sweden, which

5 The Montreal protocol, banning the use of Ozone harming substances

6 The Minamata Convention on Mercury, see the article by Elena Lymberidi and Michael Bender in Section 2 of the PEN

7 Quoted from a press release from the Ministry of Environment, Stockholm, Sweden

8 *ibid*



Ms Karolina Skog, Swedish Minister for the Environment at the Opening Session, Science Policy Business Forum of UNEA 3. Nairobi, Kenya. 2017 © UNEP / Natalia Mroz

was then a partner in a coalition government with the Social Democrats, made sure the Stockholm+50 work began in Sweden and initiated what later became the Secretariat for the Stockholm+50 Conference.

The feeling of hope and expectations was clearly connected to the history of Sweden's fight for a better environment. Sweden's legacy is that of a nation fighting for the environment with dedication and creativity. In an op-ed in the influential Swedish newspaper Dagens Nyheter⁹, as late as May 30, 2022, two days before the opening of the Stockholm+50 Conference, the Swedish professor of environmental history,

Professor Sverker Sörlin¹⁰ presented a forceful historical backdrop to this legacy and ended his commentary with a hope that Sweden's legacy will influence the outcome of the conference. Why was he hopeful? Because of Sweden's history with environmental commitments and long-standing work for the environment. "The legacy from 1972 is a compelling brand for Stockholm and a gold reserve of goodwill for Sweden. The foreign policy aspects of the environment were formidable," Professor Sörlin wrote, and he continued in a polemical way stating that in the world there were capitals for investment, for technology and even for fashion. But where is the global centre, the

9 <https://www.dn.se/kultur/sverker-sorlin-sa-blev-stockholm-en-varldsstad-i-kampen-mot-miljoforstorelsen/> my translation to English

10 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sverker_S%C3%B6rlin, <https://www.kth.se/profile/sorlin?!=en>

global capital for the environment, he asked. With its background in environmental politics and research, Stockholm certainly has the potential to become one, he suggested. He listed the research in environment and environmentally related results emanating from Swedish researchers, in climate, in water related issues, in forestry and not the least in environmental governance. With this legacy and with the conference to begin in a couple of days, he expressed cautious expectations, but ended his writing with a question: "But how we manage this legacy is an open and urgent question."¹¹

Back in December 2017, sitting in the large and spacious plenary room in UNEP's headquarters in Gigiri in Nairobi, I thought that with such a strong and succinct statement for the environment and for UNEP, that the then Swedish Minister of environment had delivered, we had every reason to think that the commemoration of UNEP in Sweden in 2022 would be a significant event. Still, five years is a long period in the world of politics, and I realised that much could happen that could either strengthen or undermine my hopes. Looking back over statements and comments made by civil society from 2017 and to the opening of the Stockholm+50 Conference in June 2022, we see that the content is filled with high expectations. But we also see that the closer we come to the opening date, June the 2nd in 2022, a sense of foreboding is creeping into the statements.

The formalities around UNEP@50 and Stockholm+50

When considering the fact that the 50th commemoration had already been discussed be-

fore UNEA 4 in March 2019, the slowness in political responses to the commemoration is remarkable. It was not until late in 2021 that Sweden with Kenya, the other host to Stockholm+50 pushed their preparations into a higher gear. But before a decision had been taken to organise two events, one in Nairobi and one in Stockholm, UNEP had begun its preparatory work. Already during early autumn in 2018, UNEP had produced a discussion paper for its two governing bodies – the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representative, the CPR and the Presidency and Bureau of UNEA. This was indeed a visionary paper. One paragraph in this paper was titled: "Looking ahead: Stockholm+50 and the possible need for a long-term vision for the global environmental agenda."¹² The paper suggested that "The anniversary may be a useful opportunity to take stock of progress, and possibly consider a new comprehensive vision for the global environmental agenda applying a long-term [2050] perspective. Several options to frame such a discussion could be considered." Among these options, three were focussed on (here quoted in full):

- "A Special Session of the UN Environment Assembly (in accordance with rule 5 of the Environment Assembly Rules of Procedure) could be organized in 2022 in Nairobi, Stockholm or elsewhere, with the participation of Ministers of Environment, high-level representatives of the UN system and representatives of Major Groups and other stakeholders. Such a meeting could explore which efforts and policies implemented over the past 50 years have solicited effective action, strengthened cooperation among Member States, and raised awareness

¹¹ <https://www.dn.se/kultur/sverker-sorlin-sa-blev-stockholm-en-varldsstad-i-kampen-mot-miljoforstorelsen/> my translation to English

¹² From the United Nations Environment Programme "The second Joint Retreat for the Bureaux of the UN Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives" Agenda Item 5 - Discussion Paper 2020.

to protect and conserve the environment worldwide. The Special Session could identify challenges that still need to be addressed, secure renewed political commitment to act, and effectively contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This would require a specific decision to be taken at the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly in March 2019. The meeting could result in a Ministerial or other High-Level Declaration outlining a vision for addressing future environmental challenges. Alternatively, it may also be a ceremonial meeting, without substantive negotiated outcomes.

- Another option is to organize a dedicated United Nations Environment Conference or Environment Summit in 2022 focusing on the environmental dimension of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. This conference could also commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Stockholm Conference and the UN Environment Programme and consider a vision for addressing future environmental challenges. This would require a resolution of the UN General Assembly, including on the date and venue of the special conference/summit, as well as the outcomes.
- A third option is to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Stockholm Conference and the UN Environment Programme and consider a long-term vision for the future at a dedicated meeting during the high-level segment of the General Assembly in September 2022. This would also require a specific decision of the General Assembly.”¹³

The first bullet point identifies formal elements and indicates that a decision on the commemoration had to be taken at the up-

coming UNEA 4 in March 2019. Such a decision was taken, but the following months would reveal that there was no unanimous agreement on how, what, nor where a commemorative event should take place. This particular paper was indeed discussed but did not lead to any formal decision on what to proceed with, or where to organise the conference. At the beginning, most people thought Stockholm would be the natural and only venue for the conference.

After the discussions during UNEA 4 in the spring of 2019 on the commemoration of UNEPs 50th, we were eagerly waiting for the official go-ahead from Sweden. When could we in earnest begin the work to prepare for a vibrant Stockholm+50 conference? The UNEP civil society unit had established two task forces in connection with “UNEP’s 50th birthday” already in 2019, and by the summer of that year had begun producing its own concept papers with different ideas on creating a new momentum for environmental work. Civil society had responded quickly, eagerly and creatively.

Efforts had been made by a small group of international civil society stakeholders to engage the Swedish authorities that by then (2019) had established a small secretariat in the Swedish Ministry of Environment to work for the Stockholm+50 conference. The secretariat was headed by an ambassador. The response of the secretariat to the civil society initiatives was inexplicably tepid and surprisingly reserved. Still, undeterred, as often is the nature of civil society, a series of online meetings were organised during the fall of 2019 and spring of 2020 by civil society stakeholders making efforts to create a platform for the 2022 meeting. But nothing materialised until 2021. The first meeting which the Stockholm+50 secretariat organised with the Swedish NGOs was held in December 2020.

¹³ Ibid

No meeting with the global non-state stakeholders had been planned – at least none that were publicly known. The enthusiasm and interest from engaged stakeholders began to show signs of frustration. There was however one exception to this – the Youth Major Group from the major groups processes at UNEP. A combination of eager, creative and knowledgeable youth leaders within the Youth Group had received a prioritised response from the Swedish government. The government explicitly stated that they would work for youth involvement in the Stockholm+50 process and inspired the youth to build a strong coalition for the Stockholm+50 process. The Swedish government also afforded the youth group with a generous grant, thus allowing them to work and build this strong coalition. But by prioritising one of the nine major groups and not all the nine major groups, which had been the standard approach at any UN environment conference since the Earth Summit in 1992, unfortunate divisions might develop, which also could weaken a common approach by civil society to important issues. The Swedish government often displayed a surprising unwillingness to understand and respect the sensitivities of organised civil society throughout the preparatory process, which did not contribute to building trust nor did it inspire to increased input and willingness to work harder.

Whereas the Stockholm+50 did not generate any fervent enthusiasm or reveal much activity before 2021, at least not publicly seen, the UNEP staff and its two governing bodies, were more engaged in the process for which they had been given responsibility, the UNEP@50 process. One explanation for the difference in activities between the two processes was offered – the Stockholm+50 process, though geographically to be held in Sweden, would for-

mally be conducted under the auspices of the UN General Assembly at the UN Headquarters in New York and was thus awaiting the decisions on formal resolutions giving mandates to this process. UNEP got its 'marching orders' for UNEP@50 at UNEA 4 in 2019. By late August of 2020 it was clear that there would be two commemorative conferences in 2022. The efforts to organise only one such conference had come to nought. The decision to have two conferences had been cemented. One was to be held back to back with UNEA 5. 2¹⁴ in March 2022, and the other the Stockholm+50 conference in June of the same year.

Clearly the pandemic with the ensuing global lockdown made all international processes cumbersome, but not impossible. The UN family has experience in preparing global conferences, and when allowed can display a resilient and effective organisational system to organise the most awkward meetings. Several large conferences had to be postponed while others were carried out virtually as a result of the lock-down. But they were carried out. UNEP used its extensive network of nations and civil society to bring life into the UNEP @50 processes. Part of a compromise decision was that the two events should be seen as two parts of the same coin and that they should mutually strengthen each other. Whereas UNEP@50 should focus on the organisational aspects of UNEP, Stockholm+50 should be visionary, looking ahead at the next 50 years. That at least was the idea expressed at the beginning of 2021.

The two resolutions deciding the content and format of Stockholm+50

Whereas the UNEP@50 process organised and administered by UNEP and its governing bodies was rather transparent, the Stockholm+50

14 Due to the Covid epidemic and global lockdown, UNEA 5, originally to be held in 2021, was divided into two sections, UNEA 5.1 in 2021, a strictly virtual event, and UNEA 5.2 a hybrid meeting in Nairobi, in February/March 2022.



UNEP@50 - World Environment situation room © UNEP / Cyril Villemain

process that was now solidly positioned under the auspices of the New York based delegates at the UNGA, was a highly non-transparent and closed affair. Even UN civil servants complained of the lack of transparency with this process. It also dragged out and made any preparatory process difficult.

Finally, a text proposal for a resolution for Stockholm+50' hence: "Finally, a text proposal for a resolution for Stockholm+50 was floated and was floated and set under silence procedure. The silence was not broken, and by the 24th of May 2021 the first of two resolutions concerning the Stockholm+50 conference was adopted. The Swedish government

had for a year used a detailed name for the conference, and now it became official. Resolution 75/280 on the Stockholm+50 conference stated that the international meeting was entitled "Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity".¹⁵ Then we were all informed that this was the first of two resolutions. The first one gave the mandate to the conference, the second one, which was yet to be negotiated was the enabling resolution, the one where accreditation, participation and all the other modalities would be itemised. People noted that time was running and commented that a few days after having agreed to the mandating resolution, there would be just a year un-

¹⁵ A/Res/75/280: International meeting entitled "Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity"

til the Stockholm+50 conference would open. Many began asking if the governments took this process seriously.

I quickly downloaded the first resolution. After a few readings I called a friend of mine at the UN. I needed to discuss my initial reactions to the content of the resolution. We spent a good two hours discussing and dissecting content and language. We were both a bit taken aback by the resolution. One thing was clear – this was not an ambitious resolutions. Is this the importance that member states at UN Headquarters afford UNEP and the environment, I mused.

First of all, this was a resolution anchored in the reality and politics of sustainable development. A preambular text outlines the framework of a resolution. The references in this resolution were to earlier conferences and documents affirming the importance and necessity of sustainable development. Then, to my surprise, the resolution mandated the organisers to convene an 'international meeting' to commemorate UNEP's fiftieth anniversary. That was indeed a far cry from the Swedish Prime Minister's invitation to a high level conference. This had become neither a UN conference nor a high level conference. Language matters in UN resolutions. High level conferences are high level – as when heads of states attend international meetings and turn them into decision-making bodies. The Paris COP on Climate in 2015 was transformed from a regular COP into a hugely important high level decision making conference by the attendance of state leaders. I had seen ambitions being curbed and deflated by language. A few years back, European states had wanted to invite to a high level conference on water issues. Russia had reduced its importance to a meeting by exactly using this word in the mandating resolution. No Heads of State came. But there was more. The Swedish gov-

ernment had wanted a three day conference, the resolution reduced it to two days.

The theme of the conference was outlined in paragraph one: it was about the environmental dimension of the SDGs, it was about delivery of the sustainable development goals and it referred to the Decade of Action which had been adopted at the summit on the SDGs in 2019 and it was to be about the sustainable recovery from the coronavirus. These were all important themes that needed urgent attention. But none of them dealt with core environmental issues which was what UNEP was all about. Then the final straw of disappointment: the result of the meetings should be "a summary of discussions as its outcome document"¹⁶. I was actually stunned. No negotiations and the outcome entirely to the discretion of the two Presidents of the 'meeting'. Paragraph 7 seemed to give room for a slight adjustment to the identified key themes. But it felt like an afterthought. As if some had made a comment to the themes for the Stockholm conference and indicated that the language did not really embrace what UNEP stood for. Paragraph 7 invited the UNEA and other relevant bodies of the UN to come with input. But could these bodies actually override an agreed resolution and suggest other themes? It was as if the official political world did not understand the meaning of the expressed urgency behind the protestations of the world formulated in a simple statement 'we must save the environment'.

I did not look forward to the second resolution which would be on the modalities of the Stockholm conference.

The Swedish delegation pushed for the second resolution and delegates set to work on the modality resolution. Again, the lack of transparency. Some tried unconvincingly to explain

¹⁶ Ibid Para 5

the lack of information about the negotiations as a result of the covid restrictions. They were not believed. Modalities are about participation and access, and the non-state stakeholders were concerned. The major groups community tried to reach out to friendly delegates in New York and to the Swedish secretariat and inform them about the way major groups had been involved in earlier conferences, such as the 2012 Summit and the various UNEAs. They were met with silence. The modalities resolution was agreed to on the 10th of September 2021¹⁷. In less than a year, the conference would open. By now, I had a palpable feeling that time was running out. Would the Swedish secretariat with UNEP be able to carry out a proper and qualitatively good preparatory process?

The preambular text of the modalities resolution repeated the content from the mandating resolution. It also acknowledged the governments of Sweden and Kenya as the official hosts. It explicitly identified all the bodies of the UN that should be invited, and which would be expected to participate. It made a vague concession to the original invitation about a high level conference by saying that member states were encouraged to participate at the highest possible level. Then the resolution decided the choreography of the meeting – how to do it, when to do it and what theme to speak about and discuss, but not negotiate. The Leadership Dialogues would be the cornerstone of the conference, three of them and run at the same time. Each had a specific theme, which were identical to those mentioned in the preambular text.

Leadership dialogue one should reflect on the urgent need for actions to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity of all; the second should discuss how to achieve a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the coronavirus disease

(COVID-19) pandemic; the third leadership dialogue should discuss how to accelerate the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.

A year later, during Stockholm+50 a cynically inclined delegate, quipped to me during a break in the ongoing dialogue sessions the first day in Stockholm on June the 2nd – ‘a leadership Dialogue is a pompous name for an activity pretending to be politically important, but which is merely window dressing’. I had just stopped my seasoned delegate friend to agree on a time for our summary coffee talk after the conference was over and asked him in passing what he thought of the Leadership Dialogues. He had overheard the cynical remark from the other delegate and seemed to concur. “Because so many intergovernmental meetings run into stalemates or end up in negotiated back alleys and are forced to repeat old truths, getting people with an important position in decision-making processes on a podium or on a stage participating in a dialogue moderated by a famous radio or TV host, is supposedly sending important messages to people indicating that issues are being taken seriously. But whereas dialogues are important and are backbones of any negotiated agreement, these dialogues are without accountability and whatever is said is non-binding. Calling it Leadership does not make them more transparent or accountable. And as the resolution for Stockholm underlined – the outcome document will be a summary of statements written by the two Presidents of the conference. Hence – non-binding. I was not in favour of this when we were negotiating the two resolutions last year in New York,” he said, excusing himself because he had, somewhat reluctantly, agreed to be on the podium for the afternoon session

17 UNGA/Res/ 75/326. Modalities for the international meeting

in one of the dialogues. We both recognised the irony of his position.

I had been disheartened when I had my first reading of the modalities resolution that September less than a year before the opening of the conference. Three things had caught my eye immediately, also because I was looking for them. The first one was found in paragraph 19. It had a direct reference to procedures in the General Assembly, the GA, and stated that “established practice of the General Assembly apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the procedure of the international meeting;” I was always apprehensive of references to GA procedures as this usually meant that civil society organisations would be restricted in participating. The strict rules of procedures were however contextualised in the two annexes to the resolution, which also warranted a closer reading. The second element was the reference to the preparatory process. Only one meeting was to be held to prepare for the Stockholm meeting. And it was to be held in the General Assembly hall. That meant that access would be highly restricted. The final thing I noticed was the reference to the major groups, and in particular one reference which was important – the reference to the modalities resolution of the High Level Political Forum, the HLPF. Paragraph 16 of the Stockholm modalities resolution stated: “The provisions of paragraph 15 of General Assembly resolution 67/290 of 9 July 2013 shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the international meeting and its preparatory process.”

This was important. We had been in contact with the UNEP office in New York and pushed for this inclusion. They had responded positively to our efforts. UNEP was still using and respecting the nine Major Groups and had done all they could to make their UNEP@50 meeting as transparent and participatory as was feasible. The Major Group Facilitating Committee, the MGFC, had tried the same with the secretariat for the Stockholm conference and had been met with silence. Efforts had all the same

resulted in a strong statement for inclusion of civil society. Resolution 67/290 from 2013 is the resolution which gives mandate and *modus operandi* to the High Level Political Forum, the HLPF, the coordinating body of the SDGs. Resolution 67/290 contains several paragraphs giving the major groups rights and privileges within the UN. Its obvious inclusion of civil society into multistakeholder processes in intergovernmental affairs had made it a target for delegates from less inclined democratic countries. Their efforts to obstruct its meaning had over the years displayed fascinating creativity. Paragraph 15 of 67/290 is one of the most important paragraphs found in a resolution adopted by the GA in the long history of the UN which gives civil society and the major groups the most important rights and privileges. The paragraph warrants a complete quote, not the least because it should have given clear marching orders to the secretariat organising the Stockholm conference:

“§15. Decides, in this regard, that, while retaining the intergovernmental character of the forum, the representatives of the major groups and other relevant stakeholders shall be allowed:

- a) To attend all official meetings of the forum;
- b) To have access to all official information and documents;
- c) To intervene in official meetings;
- d) To submit documents and present written and oral contributions;
- e) To make recommendations;
- f) To organize side events and round tables, in cooperation with Member States and the Secretariat.”

And with the reference “*mutatis mutandis*” maybe the prep meeting in the GA would not be that excluding.

In the meantime, UNEP continued its efforts to create a relevant content for its UNEP@50 high level meeting. This meeting it had been decided, was to take place back to back with the



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second part of UNEA 5, the UNEA 5.2 in March 2022. UNEP@50 had however also adopted the Leadership Dialogue as a central element of their commemorative event. The content was however closer to environmental issues – of necessity of course.

Why two commemorative events in 2022

At the outset, most people involved in the process of marking 50 years of work for the environment had hoped for one large celebratory conference. If not a summit-like conference of epic proportions, at least a substantive conference, with an evocative outcome emphasising progress for the environment, identifying future problems and rife with challenging and uplifting language embracing the urgency of safeguarding the planet for present and future generations. Political weight would be given to its outcome by the attendance of heads of

state expressing their commitments to all this and give the world some visionary language of hope. Statements from Swedish ministers up to at least 2019 had seemed to corroborate these hopes. And then, it dawned upon us that we were to have two conferences, one in Nairobi at UNEP and one in Stockholm, the original site for the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment. What had happened?

It is fair to assume that the entire process was made difficult by the outbreak in early 2020 of the global pandemic caused by Covid 19 – difficult, but not impossible. Definitely not an explanation for having two conferences probably resulting in environmental messages split apart and thus weakened. The global lockdown however did make a few things difficult – gleaning information about processes was one. The lockdown clearly contributed to lack of transparency. We also saw that several authoritarian countries used the opportuni-

ty to invoke draconian laws to curb freedom of movement and expression under the guise of safeguarding the health of the nation and its individuals, protecting them from covid as the excuse was. Intergovernmental processes had to be conducted to a large extent in online, in virtual contexts – all unfortunately also conducive to censorship and exclusion of participation. The global gap between rich and poor became an even bigger gap with the internet gap.

Understanding process and being able to input issues and influence processes had relied and will rely on access to decision makers in informal settings. Jokingly referred to as 'reliable gossip' this type of information is often key to an improved outcome. Getting this kind of information became increasingly difficult during the preparatory process running up to June 2022 because of the global lockdown. Resorting to direct emails and on-line calls with people in the know still offered a picture of what was taking place, even though this picture became more a result of individual interpretations than was normally the case. But summarising bits and pieces of these impressions resulted in – if not a clear picture – at least contours of a picture where political issues and formal procedure had become more important than what should have been the focus of the deliberations – the environment.

Compounding the struggle was the division between the two UN hubs – the UN environmental headquarter in Nairobi, Kenya and the UN policy headquarter in New York. Observers have opined over the years that the understanding of fact-based environmental issues including their political, social and economic ramifications differ between these two hubs. A recurring explanation has been the background of decision makers populating these

two hubs – distanced by the vastness of the Atlantic. Civil servants and decision makers in Nairobi at UNEP do usually have a background in environmental affairs, a majority of delegates are from or have served in the various national ministries of environment. Their colleague delegates in New York are mostly political scientists, economists or lawyers and they come almost exclusively from offices of foreign affairs with a generalist view of the environment. The two groups may share the same concerns about the environmental sustainability of the planet, but their background and work contexts do differ. Their work often imply and involve different priorities and goals. These different worlds may offer one explanation as to why the deliberations on the Stockholm +50 resolutions at UN Headquarters in New York came to be handled so differently from the UNEP@50 process that took place within the framework of UNEP and UNEA and their governing bodies in Nairobi. But there was more.

It has been reported that G-77¹⁸ in New York was the first to oppose the Swedish initiative on having a fifty year commemorative conference in Stockholm. Their arguments were simple, and highly political – UNEP was and is the only proper UN hub in the global south; it was also the first UN office of some importance to be positioned in the global south, hence it would be only correct and proper that the celebratory event would take place in Nairobi, members of G-77 claimed. The Kenyan delegation in New York did not oppose this argument as the Kenyan government, host to the UNEP headquarters, also had political motives for attaching a significant role to any commemoration relating to UNEP.

The Russian delegation is reported to have thrown itself into these diplomatic polemics.

¹⁸ G-77 is one of the informal political groups of member states at the UN Headquarters which is constituted by almost all nations from the Global South

Their opposition centred on the high level issue. They are reported to have said flat out that they were not interested in having the environment discussed at Heads of State level. In addition, Russia was always a difficult player when it came to conferences where civil society would be involved. It is also tempting to speculate if they already then, in the autumn of 2020 knew that their Head of State would be committed to waging a brutal and unnecessary war in June 2022 and therefore would not come to Sweden? In addition to this, reports seeped out from the locked down UN that Brazil under the ultra-conservative government of Bolsonaro did everything they could to undermine initiatives to upgrade and safeguard the environment. The pace of deforestation in the Amazon had been taken to dangerously high levels under his government and Brazil obviously did not want anyone to be given an opportunity to shed light on this devastating policy causing havoc to the global environment.

In addition to all this, there was no country brave enough or with a focus on the environment strong enough to come forward as a champion for the environment. Sweden's allies in New York allowed Sweden to do the negotiations apparently only with their tacit support. G-77 in New York has never been considered as champions for the environment and they did not want any strong references to purely environmental themes. Together with the pro-active Brazilian and Russian delegations that were adept at stalling the process on the development of the two Stockholm+50 resolutions, the end result of all this was two watered down resolutions. The slow process also resulted in an agreement so late that the time which was available for a formally based preparatory process was reduced to merely 8 months. The biggest casualty of this political squabble was the environment.

Was this also a diplomatic quarrel of almost traditional proportions between the global, rich north and the global south? To outsiders

this must have appeared as dialogues stuck in a diplomatic quagmire where ulterior motives other than those of the environment had played significant roles.

Transparency and access, a guarantee for participation but not at the Prep Com

While UNEP allowed major groups and civil society to interact and participate with its UNEP@50 process, the Stockholm+50 process now under the auspices of the General Assembly became an opaque one. Despite the positive language about participation concerning all sorts of non-state stakeholders, including the reference to paragraph 15 of the HLPF 67/290 resolution (explained above), the entire process also appeared confusing. Civil society was apprehensive about their participation in the only preparatory meeting which took place in New York on April 28, 2022. It is not only delegates and UN employees that can be labelled experienced participants at UN processes. Hundreds of members of civil society also know the UN system well, and they knew that anything that related to the UN General Assembly hall was subject to strict rules of admittance. Generally speaking, the GA Hall is restricted area. It has not always been like this. Even during the early days of the CSD in the 1990s, accredited civil society had access to all floors and to most meeting rooms. A few areas had always been restricted and subjected to special invitation only, the Security Council was one such area. However, during the new century, restrictions applying to various rooms increased in number, and the General Assembly had become a space off limit.

The language in the modalities resolution about participation in the entire process, was imprecise, opaque at worst, subject to interpretation at best. On the one hand there was the strong reference to paragraph 15 of the HLPF resolution affording major groups a wide range of participatory privileges. Also, a

quick read through the modalities resolution for Stockholm+50 would give you the impression that the entire process, including the preparatory one, would be all out inclusive, subject only to accreditation – which was a normal requirement for any participant, government or civil society. However, a meticulous reading of the modalities resolution revealed something else. Paragraph 16 talked about the establishment of the preparatory meeting and the need to prepare a concept note for the meeting. Paragraph 19 stated that as the prep meeting was to be held in the GA room, GA rules of procedures would apply. Then there was the use of the Latin words – *mutatis mutandis*, perhaps incomprehensible to many, yet with consequences in practice. It simply means that one can make necessary alterations of the intention expressed in a resolution, relying on usual or normal practices, while not affecting the overarching purpose of the resolution. Thus, it was permitted to adjust the restrictive rules of admittance to the GA hall and allow civil society in during the prep com. In other words, it was up to the secretariat of the Stockholm process to interpret this. However, paragraph 22 of the resolution makes it clear that one needed an invitation from the organisers to be admitted. There were precedents for admitting accredited stakeholders to meetings in the GA hall, and to be able to move freely in the famous hall, but an initiative would have to come from the responsible organiser of the meeting in question. A general admittance could be organised. No such general admittance was issued. Civil society was not allowed to participate. A symbolic gesture to civil society was made. 12 identified members of non-state organisations which had been active in the Stockholm process so far, were given separate invitations and asked to make a statement.

The elected NGO, civil society and non-state stakeholder system were side-lined

UNEP in Nairobi and UNDESA¹⁹ in New York were both used to working with the integration of civil society and non-state stakeholders and had done so for decades. UNDESA had made sure that the Rio+20 Summit in 2012 had been open, transparent and highly participatory as well as interactive. Every major meeting organised under the auspices of UNEP had followed the same interactive, transparent and participatory policies. Both UN bodies and both processes had also used the Major Groups system. The Major Groups at UNEP had over the years and in close cooperation with UNEP's office for civil society and through its guidance established a system with a democratically elected body consisting of all nine major groups which coordinated civil society's interaction with UNEP and UNEA. The elected body, the Major Groups Facilitating Committee, the MGFC, coordinated all of civil society and non-state stakeholder input into plenaries and other group work, it helped inexperienced NGOs understand what was going on, organised consultative meetings with political groupings, and coordinated plenary statements. The coordination was always done through regular morning meetings as well through separate caucus meeting for each of the nine groups. At larger global conferences, the MGFC at UNEP – or its counterpart at DESA – organised the process on a meta level, thus allowing maximum leeway to work for each of the nine major groups including initiatives emanating from individual organisations within each recognised major group. The coordinating body saw to it that the relevant rules of participation agreed to at every conference were heeded and respected by the UN and by the national delegates

¹⁹ The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs which, among many process also runs the HLPF process



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and also made sure that each of the nine major groups had their own meeting rooms. The coordinating body also functioned as an information hub, on politics as well as on logistics for all accredited non-state stakeholders.

Despite the reference to the Major Groups in the two resolutions, the major groups system was completely side-lined in the Stockholm process. Several efforts were made to approach the secretariat in Stockholm, but every time these approaches were met by evasive and non-committal responses. UNEP had initiated and the major groups had elected two task teams on the commemoration, one on UNEP@50 and one on Stockholm+50. UNEP collaborated closely with the UNEP@50 Task Team. The UNEP civil society Stockholm+50 Task team was totally ignored by the Stockholm+50 secretariat. One consequence of all this was that several organizations lost interest in participat-

ing in Stockholm. At UNEA, the MGFC together nominated and selected those who spoke for them. At Stockholm+50 the civil society people who spoke in public were selected by the secretariat.

There was one exception to this – and that was the youth group. The Stockholm+50 secretariat had gone out of its way to fund the youth group and had given them a prominent position including attention. The Youth Group had regular meetings with the secretariat and developed their own programme. What was probably meant as giving the Stockholm+50 a strong youth and future orientation ended up in creating dissonance among the civil society organisations present. Give privileges to one group of many, and you end up in splitting its unity. As an experienced global NGO muttered to me at one of the very few attempts to convene a civil society meeting during the brief

Stockholm+50 preparatory process: “When you pamper the youth the way the Swedes have done, you will end up with two parallel civil society conferences in Stockholm. Instead of unity, you will have disintegration.”

From the prep com to the conference, waning expectations

Had it not been for the pandemic and the global lock-down, UNEP had most probably used UNEA 5, scheduled to have taken place in March 2021, as a major venue for discussions of the 50th commemorative event. Several observers with a critical evaluation of the final Stockholm+50 outcome document have opined that the two conferences might have been closer, stronger and bolder in content if that had been the case. The two resolutions for the Stockholm+50 process as well as decisions made by UNEPs governing bodies²⁰ indicated that the two conferences should be seen as two parts of the same coin, not overlap but mutually strengthen each other. The fact that this did not happen, may explain why the result of the two conferences not only differed in content, but also ended up with rather bland outcome documents rife with self-evident statements.

On the other hand, reading background papers and concept notes for the two commemorative events, one is left with the feeling that double communication had taken place. Every time an official person in either of the two organising units made a strong statement in favour of the environment, the statement was in a way retracted by what took place following the state-

ment. No comments, or right out silence were effective ways of making issues go away.

2021 began with high expectations for the following year's commemorative efforts. UNEA 5.1²¹ which was an online session in February of that year, spent substantive time discussing what the content might be in the commemorative events the following year. The President of Kenya, Mr. Kenyatta addressed the Assembly on-line, and expressed the strong support of the Kenyan government to the celebration. UNEP's Executive Director, Ms. Inger Anderson outlined in broad strokes key issues to be dealt with. The summary of UNEA 5.1 quotes the ED as saying, inter alia, that “the coming year would provide an opportunity to learn from those visionaries from Stockholm in 1972 and reflect on lessons from the past to chart a path for strengthening UNEP”. There was much to consider, such as “how to make UNEP “the” authority rather than “an” authority on the environment; craft meaningful relationships among UNEP-hosted multilateral agreements; reinvigorate multilateralism; carve a space for the voices of the youth; use digital technologies for faster delivery of real-time solutions to environmental crises; deepen environmental engagement in every step taken by the United Nations system; and keep scanning the horizon for environmental change”.²²

Soon after, the Stockholm+50 secretariat circulated its concept note in preparation of the April 28, 2021, preparatory meeting in the General Assembly. Its introductory note makes generous offers – all stakeholders, basically from all walks of life, and that have an

20 They are; The Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, The Bureau of the UNEA and the UN Environment Assembly

21 See footnote 14

22 UNEP/EA.5/25 of 24 February 2021: “Proceedings of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fifth session.”

interest in the environment, are invited to contribute to the input of the process including to the conference. There was precedence for this. The Bureau of the Rio+20 Conference had actually made the same promise and kept it. Thousands of contributions had been sent to UNDESA before the Rio+20 Conference in 2012, and a hard working staff with political input from the Bureau of Rio+20 had used these contributions and written what was back then known as the Zero Draft Document. But such an offer with a meaningful result demanded time and staff, none of which the Stockholm process possessed. It also became obvious that none of the organising parties were interested in widening the agenda beyond the title of the Leadership Dialogues.

Those organising the Stockholm+50 process did deliver a concept note.²³ It was not widely discussed but may have inspired some of the statements made during the preparatory meeting in the General Assembly hall on April 28. The vast and prestigious assembly hall appeared almost empty. Several participants left after the formal opening statements. And civil society was not granted access. Those who tried to participate were directed to the galleries of the UN building where they could listen to the statements being read. The same they could have done sitting at home anywhere in the world listening to the transmission. The spoken word was available, access was not. The Minister for Climate and the Environment from Sweden, H.E. Ms. Annika Strandhäll assisted by her colleague Mr. Keriako Tobiko, EGH, SC, Cabinet secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Kenya, opened the meeting and continued to chair the meeting.

The concept note did in some ways also set the tone of content for the prep meeting. It began by highlighting a number of environmental is-

suues. "Fifty years after Stockholm, with increasing environmental challenges and growing inequality affecting development and wellbeing, the global community comes together to reflect on the urgent need for actions to address these interconnections. Climate instability, biodiversity loss, chemical pollution, plastic waste, nitrogen overload, anti-microbial resistance, and rising toxicity through reduced and altered ecosystem goods and services are unprecedented challenges for humanity."

But tied as the concept note was by the focus of the three leadership dialogues, the content turned to a more traditional approach to sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda. Comments were made about its content, and from environmental organisations came a common critique. The concept note was well crafted, they opined, but missed completely the environmental urgency. The focus was off, several people stated and quoted a concluding line in the concept note: "Stockholm+50 opens the way for accelerating actions to achieve the 2030 Agenda and beyond to a 50-year timeframe." Some of the participating organisations in the regional outreach meetings kept referring to this focus. Even if 2022 also marks the mid-term between the agreement to the SDGs in 2015 and the final year for their completion in 2030, they said that what they had wanted and what the world needed was a conference on the environment, not yet another conference on sustainable development.

Outreach

There was outreach to countries and civil society in connection with the commemorative year. Sweden granted UNDP a large sum of money to finance over 50 national consultations on the national environment. UNEP organised with civil society and the Major Groups, 5 regional

23 <https://www.un.org/pga/76/wp-content/uploads/sites/101/2022/03/Stockholm50-concept-note.pdf>

conferences. The Stockholm+50 secretariat organised and carried out a number of webinars on general themes on sustainable development and the environment and on the content of the Leadership Dialogues. Stakeholder Forum organised with Forum Norway six expert seminars, four on the legacy themes referred to in more detail in Section Four of this report. Several hundreds of participants subscribed to these seminars. (This report has summarised the major outcomes and recommendations from the UNDP and UNEP workshops in different sections). The Major Groups organised webinars for their constituencies. The Youth Group was given more publicity. With the organisers of the Stockholm+50 process, the Youth Group for Stockholm+50 was launched during the Climate COP in Glasgow in 2021. The group was very active and had a formidable outreach. The outcome from the Youth Group is also presented in this report.

Approaching the opening of Stockholm+50, still with sufficient enthusiasm

How do you measure success? By the number of participants including their rank? Or by binding commitments, new issues brought to the agenda, new revelations, new approaches. Stockholm in 1972 did all of this in a formidable, voluminous and qualitative way. The Stockholm conference 50 years later did not.

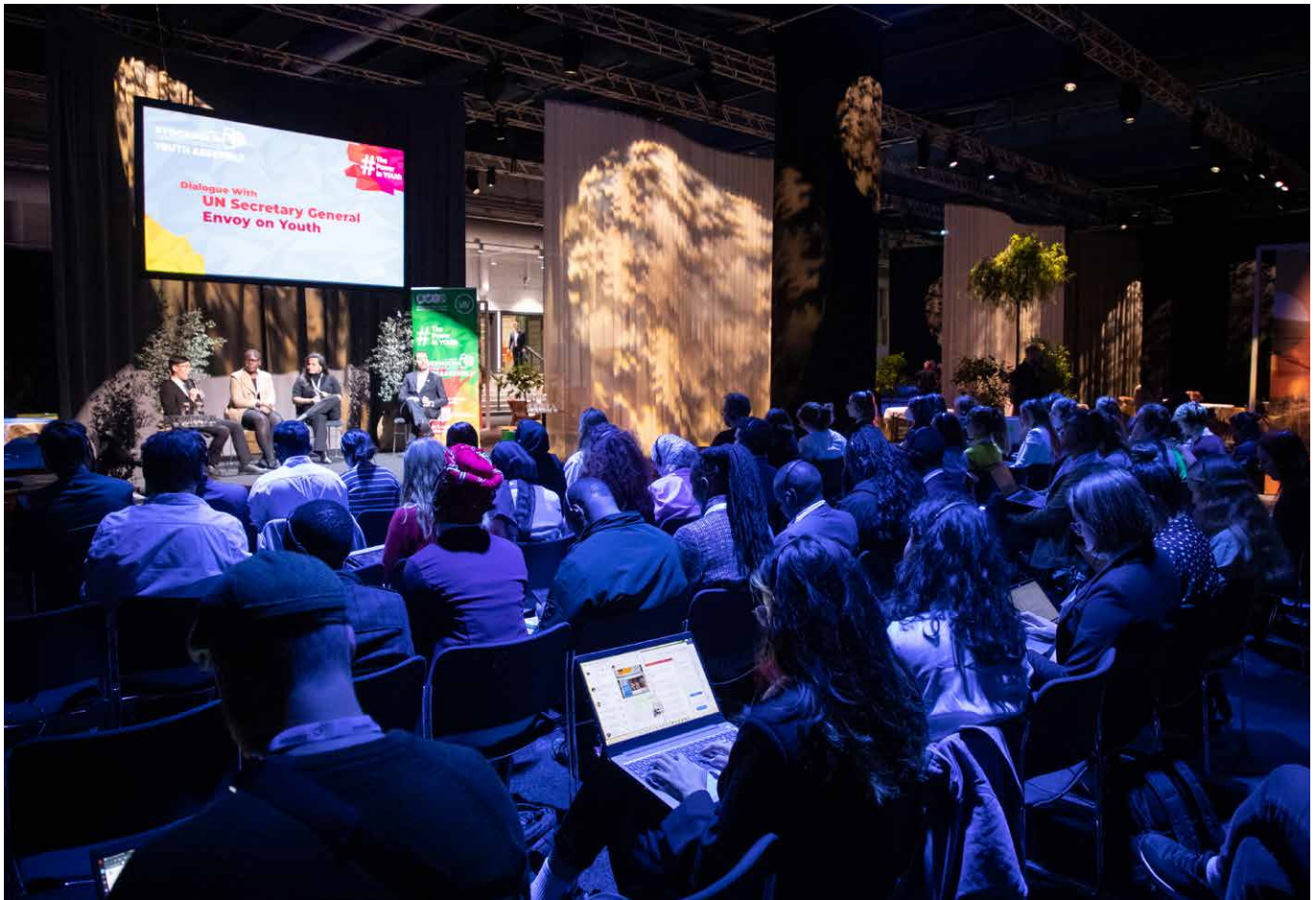
The ethos of civil society working to safeguard the environment and the well-being of people, is optimism. Justice, equality and equity, progress for all, betterment for humanity, respect for all, human rights and environmental rights – all are elements of what these civil society organisations believe in and are fighting for. Focussing on the best rather than the worst, hoping for the best and fearing the worst are characteristics of the *modus operandi* of civil

society. This may be some of the reasons why civil society organisations had felt strongly optimistic with the commemorative events to celebrate 50 years of work for the environment. It had listened intently to the encouraging statements from involved politicians and civil servants working on these processes.

Two ministers of environment from Sweden have been quoted earlier in this report emphasizing the need for strong outcome documents from the Stockholm 2022 conference. A last quote dates from October 2021 and is uttered by a third minister. The day after the Secretary General of the UN, Mr. Antonio Guterres had appointed the Executive Director of UNEP, Ms. Inger Andersen as the Secretary General of the Stockholm+50 Conference, the again new Minister of Environment and Climate in Sweden, Mr. Pär Bolund, had stated: “Our aim is clear, we want Stockholm+50 to make a concrete contribution to accelerating the transformation to a sustainable future. We call this meeting to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the 1972 conference. We are running out of time and urgent action is needed. These challenges are global, and we must meet them with a global response that drives action on the ground.”²⁴ Mr. Bolund was also then Deputy Prime Minister in Sweden. No need to doubt his words.

On October the 11th the day before Mr. Bolund spoke, when she had been appointed as the SG of Stockholm+50, Ms. Andersen had said: “We need to urgently work to transform our economies and societies, but our branches will spread only as far as our roots are deep. By remembering Stockholm at 50, we also remember how the world came together to heal the ozone layer in 2013, phase out leaded fuel this year (2021) and stop endangered species from going extinct. By convening in Stockholm,

²⁴ <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/stockholm50-international-meeting-accelerate-action-towards-healthy>



Stockholm+50, Youth Assembly © UNEP / Duncan Moore

we also recommit to human and planetary health, responsibility, prosperity, equality and peace – as we have seen only too clearly in COVID-19.”²⁵ No need to doubt her words either. Seven months later, the conference opened in Stockholm. It took place during the week of the International Day for the Environment, which is on June the 5th, the day the original Stockholm Conference opened in 1972.

Stockholm, June 2nd, 2022, Stockholm+50 is real and opened

The opening of the 2022 Stockholm+50 conference was a solemn and formal affair. The Swedish King, King Carl Gustav spoke. The Crown Princess of Sweden was also in his en-

tourage. The Swedish Prime Minister spoke as did the Secretary General of the UN, the President of Kenya, the President of the UN General Assembly, the President of the UN Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC, and the Secretary General of the conference, the Executive Director of UNEP. They all emphasised the importance of the conference and the urgency in safeguarding the environment. To make the most out of the event and the fact that quite a few people from all over the world had come to Stockholm for the conference, several civil society side-events and seminars had already started days before.

More than 4,000 people participated during the two official days, slightly less than the orig-

²⁵ <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/stockholm50-international-meeting-accelerate-action-towards-healthy>

inal estimate which had been closer to 6000. Several Heads of State and Government and more than 60 ministers, participated in the conference. Over 50 official side events were organised in addition to what was called the Action Hub events.²⁶ Several pre-meeting seminars, webinars, national and regional conferences and workshops had been held during the early months of 2022. These had been organised jointly by the Swedish secretariat, UNEP and UNDP.²⁷ Some of the official outcomes from all these events have been summarised in this report (Section 5 in this report). In addition, several initiatives had been taken by civil society and non-state stakeholders to focus on environmental issues which we have summarised in Sections 2, 3 and 6 in this report.

The not so positive comments

The head of the Stockholm+50 secretariat, Ambassador, Ms. Johanna Lissinger Peitz was interviewed by the largest Swedish Daily, Dagens Nyheter, on May 26, 2022²⁸, 6 days before the official opening. She had been hopeful and optimistic in the interview. She had made an interesting statement though and said that the agenda was quite open. During the plenaries any country or stakeholder would be free to formulate their environmental issues and discuss them. That might have been an idea which had been cultivated by the secretariat, but several of the issues raised and identified by civil society never reached the final official report – the issue ecocide is perhaps the most important one. It must also be said here that some tried to raise other issues during the dis-

cussions but were told that the agenda did not allow new issues to be discussed.

On May the 25th, days before the conference, Mr. Anders Wijkman, a Swedish member of the Club of Rome and known environmentalist had been interviewed by a paper specialising in sustainable development issues called *Aktuell Hållbarhet*²⁹. Wijkman was an elected parliamentarian in Sweden representing the Christian Democrats when the original Stockholm conference took place in 1972. He had also served ten years in the European parliament working on environmental issues. He was highly critical of the conference in this interview and said directly that the Swedish government had lost its direction with this conference. The lack of proper preparatory work meant that the government lost a huge opportunity to make a difference, he claimed. According to him, the conference also failed in addressing the key question which is at the bottom of all environmental problems – the present market-economic system.

The Swedish daily, Dagens Nyheter³⁰ covered the conference closely. On the closing day of the conference, June the 3rd, in a commentary, the paper reflected this critical approach to the conference. The commentary cited poor preparatory work, no prior consultation with key governments, a very general thematic focus leaning more towards sustainable development than to the environment and a non-negotiated outcome document filled with self-evident truths about the necessity to increase implementation. It was, the article stated, far

26 The Earth Negotiations Bulletin has an extensive overview with an analysis of the two official days and outcome available at <https://enb.iisd.org/stockholm50-summary#brief-analysis-stockholm50>

27 This link brings you to the official documents and reports: <https://www.stockholm50.global/resources/stockholm50-recommendations-and-actions-renewal-and-trust>

28 <https://www.dn.se/vetenskap/ambassadoren-for-fns-miljomote-forhoppningsvis-ett-startskott/>

29 Editor: karin.tidestrom@aktuellhallbarhet.se

30 <https://www.dn.se/sverige/jannike-kihlberg-motet-blev-inte-den-blaslampa-i-baken-som-varlden-behover/>

less than what had been expected. The outcome document was far from the strong final document that was hoped for: a rousing appeal to go forward with credible and timely solutions based on the urgency behind the environmental challenges, according to the newspaper.

What not to do with an important environment conference, was the subtitle of an analysis of the conference by another Swedish e-paper known as "Altinget Miljö och Energi samt Altinget Säkerhet"³¹ (the Council on Environment, Energy and Security, my translation). The criticism repeated what had been said but also offered an explanation for the lacklustre performance which was attributed to the social democratic minority government, which faced a difficult domestic government situation. A recent series of embarrassing environmental issues in Swedish domestic politics had obviously distracted the attention and taken it away from global concerns to local issues.

On the other hand – there were also positive outcomes

We all arrive at events with different expectations, because we have different backgrounds and experiences. My delegate friend was sceptical to the outcome and its reception. As it was merely a summary of issues composed and written by the two Presidents of the conference it would lack political gravitas, he claimed. Or put more accurately, it would be composed by their underlings and sanctioned by the two Presidents. My delegate friend was a seasoned negotiator and in addition to his passion for the environment, he also wanted continually to move the issues forward. A negotiated and forward looking document to which nations

had made commitments would have pushed the process forward. His disappointment was perhaps connected to his early efforts to make the conference into something different, more akin to what had been expressed in the early concept papers.

I agreed to my friend's assessment. But I also thought that what had been done to the major groups and civil society by ignoring the entire major groups system was unforgivable. I knew that the UNEP representatives had done all they could to honour the major groups system and worked to steer the participation in this direction. I had over the two conference days spoken to several participating NGOs who did not think this had been the best venue for civil society. I was also aware that the participatory issue was an extremely sensitive issue to civil society as more and more intergovernmental processes made participation difficult for civil society. I had a feeling that civil society had expected to be treated almost like delegates when the conference took place in one of the most democratically organised and run countries in the world. What civil society did not include in this expectation was that the Swedish organisers could only venture forth as far as the most conservative UN member allowed them to move. After all, this was an intergovernmental conference where every member of the UN had a say. Several right wing, authoritarian governments opposed civil society. Still, could the Swedes have done more?

The unforgivable, unnecessary, brutal and unprovoked war by Russia against Ukraine, which began when the preparations for the Stockholm conference should go into high gear exacerbated all problems. This was also a war which an extremely authoritarian regime

³¹ <https://www.altinget.se/miljo/artikel/hur-man-inte-lyfter-en-miljokonferens?fbclid=IwAR3FNG0tQazBFJILrN756rc64wybjlY4g-D48KBp08IABLBaWwWlt2O9Wyaw>

fought against democracy, freedom, the rule of law, free speech and freedom of expression, justice and liberty for all. The war against Ukraine had also cast long and dark shadows over the process.

Still civil society had made a strong presence during the Stockholm conference. Even though they were not always targeting what may be termed as core nature based issues, youth in particular came up with several strong messages. There were several events where civil society had taken the lead in discussions and presented evidence based arguments that proved that ending fossil fuel subsidies would be a great contribution to reduce the risk of global warming. Perhaps the most memorable moment in this context was when Vanessa Nakate from the Rise Up Movement in Uganda, called for an honest acknowledgment that leaders, presented with best available science, had denied and delayed action and risked handing young people a “broken world.” She used her time well and called for an agreement to the ‘loss and damages’ concept which would be negotiated in the upcoming climate COP in Egypt in November of 2022. One of the decision-makers she challenged well was the US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, John Kerry. Their ensuing exchange of ideas and opinions showed the UN at its best – providing at a high level meeting, a productive opportunity where civil society for a few minutes could meet on an almost equal basis a high level decision maker representing the strongest country in the world. The Earth Negotiations Bulletin, ENB, reporting from the conference (see below) called this dialogue a “meeting-of-minds” “over greenwashing and the need for genuine climate action by leading industrial-

ized countries. It reflected a strong theme that emerged throughout the meeting: the importance of intergenerational equity and the need to engage genuinely and deeply with young people in shaping the future they will soon inherit. “Do not hand us a “broken world,” Nakate told delegates. No one disagreed. As one moderator noted, citing the poet David Whyte, “a conversation is listened into existence more than it is spoken.”³²

The youth gathered in Stockholm and organised their own Youth Assembly. Their declaration is presented in this report in Section 6. A knowledgeable Swedish youth group calling themselves the young scientists reported critically and well from the conference. They and a host of other participants referred to the Leadership Dialogues, debates and side events as representing water-shed moments. The documents produced in connection with the conference provided high quality information about the environment and were all valuable. One was referred to a number of times, the scientific report written by the Stockholm Environment Institute called “Stockholm+50: Unlocking a better future.”³³ According to the young scientists it is a must read. The institute collaborating with the youth also published another report called “Charting a youth vision for a just and sustainable future”³⁴. Their conclusion – this had been a seriously important conference.³⁵

Frank Biermann is a research professor of Global Sustainability Governance with the Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. Founder of the Earth System Governance network, he is also an internation-

32 <https://enb.iisd.org/stockholm50-summary>

33 <https://www.sei.org/publications/stockholm50-unlocking-better-future/>

34 <https://www.sei.org/publications/charting-a-youth-vision/>

35 <https://ungaforskare.se/2022/06/06/sammanfattning-fran-stockholm50/>



Stockholm+50, Youth Assembly © UNEP / Duncan Moore

ally leading scholar of global institutions and organizations in the sustainability domain. He filed his own report on Stockholm+50. Referring to the conference as a lacklustre performance, he called his report “The End of Sustainability Summitry – Reflections on ‘Stockholm+50’”³⁶ Bierman writes critically of the organisational set-up and also repeats a few of the earlier critical comments to preparation and outcome. He writes “This year’s conference in Stockholm, however, can’t be compared to .. earlier summits. ‘Stockholm+50’ was no major summit; officially it was not even a ‘conference’ but an international ‘meeting’, with the wordy title ‘A Healthy Planet for the Prosperity of All – Our Responsibility, Our Opportunity’. No significant decisions were taken, and none were

planned. No new agreements, no new action programmes, no new principles, no major institutional reforms emerged as key outcomes.”

He found the event extremely low-key and wrote that “not much happened. The spacious plenary hall remained largely empty, with many government seats often vacant. A bit livelier were the side events and associated events where international organizations, civil society groups and others presented their work or engaged in roundtables. But also here, the surprise factor remained limited.”

Perhaps, he muses in conclusion, that “The time of general mega-summits seems to be over - at least for now. Eventually, of course, this

36 <https://www.frankbiermann.org/post/the-end-of-sustainability-summitry-reflections-on-stockholm-50>

might change again: once governments realize that only drastic transformations and economic restructuring can stem global heating and other interrelated crises.” And this he rightly shows, was part of the discussion during the two Stockholm days. A decade ago, economists and political leaders would have laughed at those who dared to speak about other economic measurements than the GDP and suggested systems like circular economy. This time it was seriously debated in the leadership dialogues. The UN Secretary General Guterres also brought this issue up in his speech at the opening of the conference.

The Secretary General of the UN, Antonio Guterres made an emphatic plea to the participants – and they listened: “Rescue us from our environmental ‘mess’”, the UN chief urged the Stockholm summit. His speech was a clarification call to the leaders of the world to take the environmental urgency seriously. And he continued: “Global wellbeing is at risk – and it’s in large part because we haven’t kept our promises on the environment.” Although there have been successes in protecting the planet since 1972, including rescuing the ozone layer, Mr. Guterres warned that “Earth’s natural systems cannot keep up with our demands”. The most prescient comments he made was about the GDP as a measure for economic performance. “Part of the solution lies in dispensing with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a gauge of countries’ economic clout”, the Secretary-General continued, describing it as an accounting system “that reward(s) pollution and waste”. Stressing that nations have already cooperated to protect the planet on many fronts, Mr. Guterres noted that “the final touches are expected to be added to a new global biodiversity framework to reverse nature loss by 2030.”³⁷

The most extensive reporting, rife with analysis was – as always at UN conferences on environmentally related issues – provided by the IISD reporting service the Earth Negotiations Bulletin.³⁸ As always, the Earth Negotiations Bulletin, the ENB covers a UN conference on environmental issues by providing daily reports and at the end of the conference, an analysis which makes efforts at balancing pros and cons.

ENB writes that “the Leadership Dialogues, along with the statements in plenary, yielded interesting insights and conversations both on the past 50 years and action needed going forward.” The report brings out positive highlights and states that “Many delegates left the meeting feeling that the organizers had skilfully struck a balance between keeping faith with the “children of the 1972 Stockholm Conference,” namely the institutions and treaties created since 1972, and shaping new conversations for an upcoming series of multilateral environmental agreement meetings and summitry in the near future.” ENB notes that “even in the more conventional plenary sessions of pre-written ministerial speeches, many governments appeared open to listening to each other’s views in a constructive exchange. One or two set aside their pre-prepared remarks to talk more frankly to the moment.” Not a bad accomplishment by the conference.

One element which almost all comments and report mentions, was the repeated assurance from delegates that multilateralism is more important than ever. ENB also refers to the plethora of issues that were mentioned in plenaries by Heads of State and ministers with an environmental portfolio. These issues eventually found their way into the final report from the two day event. Writes ENB: “Heads of State

37 <https://www.stockholm50.global/news-and-stories/rescue-us-our-environmental-mess-un-chief-urges-stockholm-summit>

38 <https://enb.iisd.org/stockholm50-summary>

and Government, ministers and other senior officials delivered statements over the two-day meeting, both in person and through pre-recorded messages. Key topics that emerged included: progress since 1972; the challenge of the triple planetary crisis; the need for political will and for countries to honour their existing commitments; the importance of multilateralism and stakeholder engagement; economic issues; the importance of financial and technological assistance for developing countries; the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; legal issues; war and conflict, including the Russian invasion of Ukraine; and national and regional actions.”³⁹

One aspect which did not enter into any report was the quiet demonstration by civil society against the Russian delegate. A couple of times when he spoke, civil society got up from their seats, turned their back against him, and sat down only after he finished. A small, but visible demonstration conveying the obvious disgust against Russian authoritarian politics which propagates suppression.

In its comprehensive report, ENB refers to an interesting and recurring theme, also mentioned frequently in other reports that “the trajectory of the world’s multilateral environmental negotiations ... is too siloed and dislocated from the real drivers of crises that are to be found in the sacred canopy of neo-liberal capitalism and the “holy grail” of economic growth”.⁴⁰

Another recurring theme in the debates was “the idea of a triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss was universally recognized and discussed in depth.

Because of some well-chosen global thought leaders, there were also the beginnings of a deeper analysis of the underlying drivers of the crisis in the realms of corporate accountability, and a just transition underpinned by a right to a healthy, clean and sustainable environment. This, they said, should be the first point of departure for all decisions that impact nature.”⁴¹

Not everything was ‘great’. ENB refers to the Stockholm+50 conference as a “fika-pause”. The concept is describing a cultural Swedish phenomenon, which is actually a small break where a cup of coffee and a bun, often a cinnamon bun, are enjoyed with colleagues or friends. The break has penetrated the Swedish common culture and has become a well understood and cherished concept in the Swedish vernacular. The fika-paus is enjoyed in almost all workplaces in Sweden. People at work gather informally around the coffee pot and exchange ideas, engage in constructive or idle talk. The break is relaxed, allows for positive communication, perhaps even reflections over difficult issues, it functions as relation builder and as being conducive to solving problems if problems there are. Above all, it is informal in nature and non-committal. And that is perhaps the gist of the Stockholm+50? If that be the case, we must ask an extremely important question, which also involves elements of criticism about the Stockholm+50 meeting – with the urgency the world faces, in all aspects, can we afford to take a two day pause?

ENB offers no conclusion, instead the reports present the reader with a set of questions about the conference. “Was it constructive

39 ibid

40 ibid

41 ibid

conversation or idle chatter? Clearly, this fika conference yielded some interesting dialogue and gave rise to a relatively ambitious set of actionable recommendations. So far, so good." Perhaps ENB infers, the world needed "Pausing to move forward? Will the Stockholm+50 "pause" yield the results needed for our planet? Or will it be remembered as little more than a nostalgic moment that will be overwhelmed by the weight of the 1972 Stockholm Conference's struggle to bring something new into the world? Only time will tell."⁴²

2022 was an important and positive year for the environment, for environmental awareness and its policies

Just before Christmas 2022, I met my delegate friend, this time in Geneva. We had again attended a conference and as always, the theme had been environmental issues. And as often was the case, we managed to find time for a relaxed moment to have coffee. Perhaps we had time for a 'fika-moment'? My delegate friend looked at me and said – "you never really answered my question back in June about what you thought of the Stockholm+50 conference. You have had half a year to formulate your answer. I am curious and listening" he said with a smile.

I had already formulated my answer in my thoughts and said "it was not a success, but it was not a failure either. It was not insignificant because it became one of several events focusing on the urgency to safeguard the environ-

ment and thus contributed to making the year 2022 a remarkable year for the environment."

Even a civil society person can be diplomatic and evasive in an answer" my delegate friend said with a smile, "but you must have more substance to your answer. Please elucidate me."

And over a coffee or two, I summarised my conclusions to a process which began during 2017 and ended in December 2022 with COP 15 on biodiversity, and where the Stockholm+50 process had been my focus for all these years.

Why was 2022 such an important year for the environment and for nature? Several hugely important decisions were made by the global community to protect and safeguard the environment.

The fifth UN Environment Assembly adopted in March 14 resolutions⁴³ of which three will have wide ranging consequences. One was on bringing nature into sustainable development. The resolution was called 'Nature based solutions for supporting sustainable development.' Another resolution was about establishing the high level science panel on Chemicals; a third was a resolution called "End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument." This particular issue has been dealt with in some detail elsewhere in this report⁴⁴ but it marks a decade long struggle against strong private sector interests and fighting against lack of substantive understanding of the issue. The first meeting to develop the legal-

⁴² ibid

⁴³ <https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea-5.2/proceedings-report-ministerial-declaration-resolutions-and-decisions-unea-5.2>

⁴⁴ See Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, Section 2: A short history of UNEP's 50 years of accomplishments



UNEA 5.2 Reactions of Plastic Resolution. 2022 © UNEP / Duncan Moore

ly binding convention took place in Uruguay in November.⁴⁵

Negotiations at the Climate Cop in Egypt did also manage to agree to at least one hugely important decision, and with only that agreement, many observers are willing to call the outcomes of COP 27 a success. For years developing countries and civil society have fought for the principle of Loss and Damages. This COP finally agreed to the principle and has begun to see how this will play out in practical politics.⁴⁶

A third conference that touched deeply on the environment was the long awaited COP 15 on biodiversity. The big environment organisations all participated, and they have all written serious analyses about what took place, in what was decided and what was not decid-

ed. Suffice it here to excerpt from the Earth Negotiations Bulletin and their coverage and summary analysis⁴⁷.

“ - The world is losing biodiversity, the variety of all life on earth, at an alarming rate. Ecosystems, from forests and deserts to freshwater and oceans, are in steep decline. One million plant and animal species are threatened with extinction. Genetic diversity is disappearing. The planet’s life-support systems are at stake. Underpinning human wellbeing and livelihoods, biodiversity is the source of essential resources and ecosystem functions that sustain human life, including food production, purification of air and water, and climate stabilization. The 2022 UN Biodiversity Conference aimed to take strong action to reverse this trend. In the words of UN Secretary-General António

45 <https://www.unep.org/events/conference/inter-governmental-negotiating-committee-meeting-inc-1> see also the ENB report: <https://enb.iisd.org/plastic-pollution-marine-environment-negotiating-committee-inc1-28Nov2022>

46 <https://enb.iisd.org/sharm-el-sheikh-climate-change-conference-cop27>

47 <https://enb.iisd.org/un-biodiversity-conference-oewg5-cbd-cop15-05Dec2022>

Guterres, it had the “urgent task of making peace with nature.”

“ - The 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was all about compromise as it adopted a hard-fought, well-balanced new Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). The GBF provides the background itself: approximately 25% of species in assessed animal and plant groups are threatened, and the global rate of species extinction is at least tens to hundreds of times higher than over the past 10 million years. Apart from the food and fibre it provides, biodiversity contributes to the overall well-being of people through economic opportunities and leisure activities. The main drivers of the unprecedented biodiversity loss are changes in land and sea use, direct exploitation of organisms, climate change, pollution, and invasive alien species. The magnitude of the challenge of biodiversity loss suggests that only transformational change can bend the curve. Transformative thinking is necessary at a whole-of-society level, with all economic activities in need of reassessment through a biodiversity lens. Facilitating this transformative process was the key task of the 2022 UN Biodiversity Conference, which in the end adopted numerous decisions under the Convention and its Protocols. The meeting encountered high expectations from civil society and broad attention from the media. “The world is watching you,” delegates were reminded throughout the two-week meeting. With the GBF, parties delivered the expected renewed roadmap to 2030, a milestone towards the vision of living in harmony with nature by 2050.

“ - Overall, the adoption of the hard-fought GBF package made this COP a success. The GBF was received as a well-balanced compromise bringing the world a step closer to living in harmony with nature. The GBF is an inclusive, comprehensive, fairly SMART, and rather ambitious new plan. Whether it has the potential to transform biodiversity governance, halt and reverse the current trends of biodiversity loss, and help humanity make peace with nature, only time will tell.”

Perhaps the crowning event with the ultimate decision on and for the environment in 2022, was the agreement in July of the UN members states in the UN General Assembly⁴⁸ to recognise the universal human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. The decision echoed Principle 1 of the Stockholm Declaration agreed to 50 years earlier. The difference was that now this had become a human right. Professor Daniel Magraw and Research Fellow, Ms. Li Lin deal with this issue in their Legacy Paper in Section 4 of this report.⁴⁹ They write; “The universal recognition of The Right to a Healthy Environment transformed the pantheon of human rights by adding for the first time an environmental right, thus filling a gaping hole occasioned by the fact that environmental consciousness was virtually non-existent at the time the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the General Assembly in 1948.”

I will allow these two eminent authors to sum up the issue here in much the same way they have introduced it in their paper (Section 4, Legacy Paper 1):

48 UNGA Resolution A/RES/76/300 (July 28, 2022), adopted by a vote of 161-0-8. 117 countries co-sponsored the resolution.

49 Legacy Paper 1 “The Web of Life and Rights: The 1972 Stockholm Conference’s Legacy regarding Environmental Rights, Human Rights and Environmental Justice.”



COP 15 sign. Montreal, Canada. 2022 © UNEP / Duncan Moore



COP 15 Closing Plenary. Montreal, Canada. 2022 © UNEP / Duncan Moore

“At a different level, The Right to a Healthy Environment (R2HE) constitutes a springboard for resetting humans’ relationship with nature, away from a hierarchical, anthropocentric view, because R2HE cannot be respected unless nature is also respected and protected. Many commentators and activists have highlighted the need for this, as do many of the essays in part II, below (see the complete Legacy Paper, Section 4 of this report).

In addition, R2HE provides an essential component of environmental justice. Indeed, as discussed below (see the paper), R2HE is the (often unspoken) assumption of R2HE. R2HE provides a normative basis for the Precautionary Principle (from the Rio Principles, 1992, my comment) and for concept of *in dubio pro natura*: if there is uncertainty or doubt about a course of action, decide so as to avoid or minimize the possibility of violating R2HE.

Finally, R2HE provides a framework for seamlessly approaching the question of how to respect the rights of future generations. A common criticism of intergenerational rights is that we cannot know what future generations will need or want, and thus it is impossible to protect their interests. R2HE provides an answer: we know that individuals in the future will want and need a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and that they will have the human right to it. By protecting this right in existing generations on an ongoing basis – as people are born – the process of protecting future generations becomes seamless and adaptable to changing environmental threats and conditions.

As is thus evident, the significance of the Right to a Healthy Environment is both fundamental and expansive.”

I ended my overview of the environmental year 2022. I could see that my delegate friend agreed with my assessment. “You know”, I said “when we began preparing for UNEA 5 and sub-

sequently Stockholm+50 back in 2019, observers, environmentalists and UNEP spoke about 2020 as the super-year for nature. Well, it did not happen. Instead, we got a global pandemic of unknown proportions caused most probably by people having mishandled the environment for decades. But the sum total of all the key environmental events in 2022, UNEA 5 in February-March, UNEP@50 in March, Stockholm+50 in June, the first conference to develop the convention to ban plastics in early November, COP 27 on climate in Egypt in November-December, COP 15 on Biodiversity in December and not to forget the GA meeting in July on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment - this has been a big year in our efforts to safeguard the environment. These environment conferences have all given significant contributions to make 2022 a remarkable year. And in that context, I think Stockholm+50 made a difference.”

My delegate friend concurred. And he added – “and as you have told me that Maurice Strong used to say that it is not only what happens in a conference that is important, but also what happens afterwards in implementing what we have discussed, negotiated and agreed to.”

And here we are – we know about all the problems, we have the necessary knowledge, we have sufficient solutions, we have the money we need, and we can implement all the solutions beginning right now. Judging by all statements made in Stockholm+50 as well as the other conferences mentioned above, we even have the political will to act –

So, what are we waiting for?



Amina J. Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General, Flanked by Canada's Minister of Environment and Climate Change, **Mr. Steven Guilbeault**, and China's Minister of Ecology and Environment, and President of COP 15, **Mr. Huang Runqiu** at the **COP 15** Opening High Level Segment. Montreal, Canada. 2022
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UNEP@50 High level opening ceremony © UNEP / Duncan Moore

**Section Eight:
Who contributed
to this document?
Acknowledgements,
pictures and bios.**



Acknowledgements

When the idea of this commemorative report was conceived, we had no presupposed notion of how many would be interested in contributing, or how much we had to motivate and persuade possible contributors. The positive response from all people we contacted was overwhelming. Not only did they respond immediately, but they were willing to contribute above and beyond what we asked them to do. Those who took on the responsibility for crafting the articles in this anthological report contacted in turn their network of people working on and for the environment (including human health). In all, 113 people have been directly involved in researching, writing and contributing to the text in this document, which numbers around 900 pages. In addition to the written articles, we have summarised the outcomes from the nearly 60 regional and national meetings which were carried out in preparing for the Stockholm+50 conference. Added to this, several hundred participated in the ten webinars we organised, thereby contributing their ideas and experience. Thus, thousands of people have actually been involved in producing the content of this report. Hence, we do not call the People's Environment Narrative a report, we refer to it as a compendium of information, knowledge and experiences covering fifty years of work with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and civil society to safeguard the environment. What is also unique about this report, is that it is seen from the point of view of civil society and its many stakeholders.

This compendium speaks to the commitment that people have in the ongoing work to safeguard the environment. But it also speaks to the belief that people have in collaborating across borders and to do so through the multilateral, intergovernmental system. This in turn speaks to the support of UNEP, in strengthening the organisation and supporting and believing in the multilateral system.

We try to honour all the major contributors in this section. The contributors are listed according to their different contributions in the PEN. As input was contributed on a voluntary basis, we pay tribute to them by giving each person a small bio and a picture. We also give each section a small introductory text to contextualise the work of the authors. Their bios also reveal their impressive knowledge and backgrounds.

We owe all contributors a sincere thanks and look forward to working with them and others in our mutual efforts to create a world of well-being for all on a planet governed by sound, fair and just environmental policies and actions.

The Stockholm+50 team from Stakeholder Forum and the Norwegian Forum for Development and Environment

The two organisations responsible for this initiative are Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future (SF) and the Norwegian Forum for Development and Environment. The two organisations are global networks of civil society and non-state stakeholders. SF is a truly global one, the Norwegian Forum with a majority of members from Norway and Europe but with strong connections also to the Global South is also working globally. Persons from these two organisations constituted the Stockholm+50 Team which drove every element including the entire process behind the report.

These are the people:

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes was the initiator and convener of the project and this compendium. He had the original idea for the project, developed it in collaboration with UNEP, negotiated the contract and identified the key elements of the report. He also wrote many of the articles presented in the report and was the senior editor of the report. Jan-Gustav also presented the report to the official plenary session at the Stockholm+50 conference in the Swedish capital in June 2022 and gave a series of webinars on its content.

Isis Alvarez was the Chief Programme officer of the project, and also its co-editor. Isis became the permanent person to drive the project forward with Jan-Gustav and took over after Leida Rijnhout (see below) left the project in April 2022 to take on a new assignment. Isis pushed the project on a daily basis, took on the job of collecting all the outcomes from the preparatory processes and synthesised them.

Ingrid Rostad represented the Norwegian Forum for Development and Environment as well as being the key contact point to the Major Groups system at UNEP. As the Co-Facilitator in the Major Groups and Facilitating Committee, representing the NGO Major Group, Ingrid negotiated and facilitated all policy contacts with the major groups and as a bridge builder also participated actively in the Stockholm+50 process as well as in the Stockholm+50 Conference itself.

Leida Rijnhout was the first Chief Programme Officer of the project and worked effectively to get the project going. She managed contacts with UNEP and made sure we were involved in the regional conferences that UNEP organised for stakeholders in connection with the preparatory process leading up to the Stockholm+50 Conference. She also organised the input from non-state stakeholders to the only preparatory meeting in the process held at the UN Headquarters in New York end of April 2022.

Charles Nouhan, who is the Chair of the Board of Stakeholder Forum, worked as the key administrative officer of the project. Making sure we were on track with the logistical expectations, Charles filed reports, managed all the Stockholm+50 webinars and made sure we had an active and qualitative connection with our global network. Charles also administrated the podcasts with our webmaster, Cass Hebron (see below).

Cass Hebron did the communication work for the project. With a good knowledge basis in issues related to environmental issues, she steered our coms outreach, developed and made our podcasts, established our designated website “Towards Stockholm+50” and made sure it was populated on a steady basis with relevant information about the Stockholm+50 process including our own material.

María Andrea Miranda Serna joined our team towards the end of the production cycle as responsible for the overall layout of the PEN. As such she was given the daunting task of making all the contributions into a readable and sought after product. With a fine eye for details, she crafted the layout, and showed us extraordinary patience when drafts were late, deadlines were consistently changed, and the end product seemed shrouded in a haze.



Jan-Gustav Strandenaes began working with the UN on environment, development and governance when he worked as an intern and volunteer for the official secretariat at the UN Conference on the Human Environment in 1972. A first UN assignment brought him to Latin America, and this was the beginning of a life-long journey working with civil society for the UN. With an academic background in modern history, English and American Literature and a degree in Development and Environment issues, he has taught and written about the UN for more than five decades, worked with the UN Commission for Sustainable Development for 15 years, worked as NGO liaison officer at the UN HQ in New York, and with an assignment from UNDESA helped coordinate civil society's input into the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Jan-Gustav also worked as a diplomat for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway, at embassies in

Botswana and Uganda, was for 15 years the director of a Norwegian aid/environment-NGO with projects in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. He has worked 6 years in Africa, has extensive stakeholder experience through 50 years of work on all continents, speaks several languages, is a seasoned university lecturer, has guest-lectured all over the world on UN issues; has evaluated projects and organisations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, advised governments, chaired UN meetings, facilitated UN processes, translated and authored books and numerous articles on governance, the environment, and sustainable development. He once crossed the Kalahari Desert in an old Land-Rover and when he is not travelling the world fighting for the environment and rights-based approaches, he writes and comments on environment, sustainable development, good governance and democracy issues from his home outside Oslo, Norway.



Isis Alvarez is a Colombian biologist & MSc in Environment and Resource Management, with over 15 years' experience in the NGO sector, globally.

Her work has focused on ecosystem conservation and community-based management, with a special look at gender issues. Isis, a former Senior Gender Advisor and Unsustainable Livestock Campaign Coordinator at the Global Forest Coalition, served as Chief Programme Officer for the 'Towards Stockholm+50' project at Stakeholder Forum, and has been an active representative of civil society through the United Nations Civil Society Mechanism in the different environment-related policy processes. She served as co-facilitator of the Women's Major Group at UNEP as well as the Women's Major Group-SDGs during the post-2015 process, and has been active member at Women & Gender Constituency in the UNFCCC and the women's caucus of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).



Ingrid Rostad is a senior policy adviser in the Norwegian Forum for Development and Environment (ForUM Norway), a network of more than 50 Norwegian NGOs working with climate, biodiversity, sustainable development, human rights, responsible business, and financing for development. She holds an MA in political science from the University of Oslo, specialising in democratic institutions and participation and a bachelor in comparative politics from the University of Bergen.

In the past, Ingrid has worked with human rights defenders and responsible business. She has held elected positions in several NGOs, on all levels from local chapters to boards. She has experience from several international processes, both as an activist and coordinator. In ForUM Norway she is responsible for coordinating the work on nature and meaningful participation for civil society.



Leida Rijnhout is Dutch and a social anthropologist by training. She has more than 30 years of experience in International Cooperation and Sustainable Development. For a decade, she facilitated and coordinated the active participation of the international NGO community in UN processes in the field of sustainable development and the environment. As such, she was also heavily involved in the Johannesburg (2002) and Rio+20 (2012) Sustainable Development Summits, including all preparatory meetings. She was one of the negotiators in the creation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and here too, together with her colleague from the international organisation CIVICUS, she coordinated the global NGO input. In addition, good governance for sustainability is one of her expertise fields, and she coordinated civil society also on the Res 73/333 and Stockholm+50.

She was also NGO focal point for UNEP's 10-Year Framework of Programmes (10YFP) on sustainable production and consumption and was for many years the NGO representative at OECD environmental meetings. She is the founder of the European network SDG Watch Europe.

Before moving to Sustainable Development, she worked for 15 years in the development cooperation sector, with a focus on rural development in Bolivia. She was responsible for the implementation and evaluation of several agricultural programmes, and for the implementation of local credit systems and local food processing.

In 2000, she was appointed executive director of the Flemish Platform for Sustainable Development (VODO), where she worked for 9 years with her team on innovative and effective instruments to integrate Sustainable Development into the daily practice of various civil society sectors. In 2009, she accepted the task of Executive Director of the international NGO network ANPED (Northern Alliance for Sustainability), which merged with EEB (European Environmental Bureau) in 2013 and became their Global Policies and Sustainability unit. From September 2016 to 2018 she coordinated the Resource Justice and Sustainability programme at Friends of the Earth Europe. After three years as a freelancer, she is currently the Chief Executive of the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO).

On the academic side, she coordinated for many years an international research group on ecological debt and global ecological justice. And is in the Steering Group of Future Earths working group on Systemic Sustainable Consumption and Production. She has always combined academic research, activist approach, field work and policy advocacy. She is the author of several articles and book chapters on sustainable development and justice, and Board Member of the Club of Rome EU Chapter. She speaks Dutch, English and Spanish.



Charles Nouhan based in the New York City Metropolitan area of the US, is Chairman of Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future and its Representative to the United Nations in New York. He supports SF's work with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and Member States to realize the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

A decades-long sustainability practitioner, Charles divides his time between advancing governance for sustainable development, promoting stakeholder engagement in intergovernmental processes, and advancing renewable energy technologies and sustainable waste management practices. Charles had overall responsibility for the TS+50 initiative at SF, ensuring that all project and financial objectives were met.



Cass J. Hebron is a climate communications consultant, digital advocacy workshop lead, and facilitator & speaker, on climate justice and sustainability projects and campaigns for purpose-driven organisations. Her work includes copywriting, content management and communications strategy development. Clients include Friends of the Earth Europe, Stakeholder Forum for UNEP, World Federation for Animals, BBC, European Coalition for Corporate Justice, Fair Trade Advocacy Office and Sustain Your Style. She also provides workshops on effective activism, digital advocacy and climate communications; Cass has previously spoken for TEDx, the Imagination Club, and CreativeMornings Global. She was an invited participant to Future News Worldwide Conference 2022 & Media Fellow for the Berlin Energy Transition Dialogue 2022.



María Andrea Miranda Serna is an illustrator, graphic designer and visual artist based in Paris, France. Illustration and drawing are for her the centre of her practice, depicting and diving both into the minutiae of everyday life and emotions. Her practice has expanded to include graphic and editorial design, revolving around cultural events (art and design exhibitions, concerts, readings, performances) and publications. She has worked and collaborated with institutions such as the Czech Cultural Centre, the Museum of Modern Art of Paris, FICEP (the Forum of Foreign Cultural Institutes in Paris), Sorbonne University, the school of Beaux-Arts in Paris, the French Institute, the Embassy of the Czech Republic in France and Paris Museums. She was awarded with the prestigious Colombian Award *Lápiz de Acero* for the design of a series of mechanical toys created by *Dduoo*, a multidisciplinary studio she co-founded in 2015.



The UN Environment Programme (UNEP)

Approaching an institution with an idea, is always easy. Getting a positive response, however, may be a greater challenge than at first anticipated. Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future, SF, has always been welcome at UNEP, and has worked with UNEP since SF was founded more than 30 years ago. We would like to believe that our collaboration has benefitted both institutions. Despite several years of collaboration through a wide number of projects, we know that we have had to prepare a well thought through proposal every time we have approached UNEP with a project idea. It always helped to know that the personnel at UNEP would welcome constructive ideas, and this has always been the case at the UNEP's office dealing with major groups, civil society and other stakeholders.



Alexander Juras with his staff at the civil society unit in Gigiri. Alexander to the far right, **Isaia** to the far left in the picture and **Lateita Zobel** is number three from the right. **Ms Cheung** was on mission when the picture was taken. © UNEP

We owe the people there a great thanks.

When the Stockholm+50 team approached UNEP, with the idea of this report, Alexander Juras, who has been the head of UNEP's civil society unit for several years, responded immediately in a positive way. He believed in the project from the first day and went out on a limb to help negotiate and defend the ideas that we came up with. In fact, this project had never seen the light of day without his and the support from the civil society unit at UNEP.

Having years of experience working with nonstate stakeholders from all over the world, always understanding and respecting their integrity, and providing help and advice based on his vast background of knowledge and experience, Alexander Juras helped guide the project through the maze of formalities at the UN. He brought in his entire team to assist us, and we are truly grateful for their assistance. UNEP has every right to be proud of their civil society unit and their contribution to environmental governance and environmental protection more generally. In addition to Alexander, we worked closely with Aurora Cheung and Isaiah Otieno and especially Laetitia Zobel in the civil society unit. We would like to extend our special thanks to her for her patience and always sustained support. Laetitia Zobel was also our close associate through the preparatory process leading up to the Stockholm Conference in June 2022 as well as providing her direct assistance at the conference.



Laetitia Zobel is a Social Anthropologist and Environmental Programme Officer at UNEP. Laetitia became this project's go-to-person in UNEP and gave us needed support in navigating our ideas with the various interest groups that had a stake in the Stockholm + 50 Process. Her focus at UNEP is on organisation and coordination of the engagement of major groups at the policy level, the intergovernmental level, and on the programmatic level in implemen-

tation of UNEP's work programme. Laetitia has worked several years at UNEP and has a solid understanding of the organisation – which in our mind, is one of the reasons why her assistance and help with this project turned out to be highly efficient.

Laetitia also has an impressive background. Before coming to UNEP, she spent three years at Bureau International Catholique de L'Enfance in Gevena, Switzerland as a project officer. It follows that she is an expert on children rights, has worked with rehabilitation of street-children, informal and early childhood education in post-conflict situations in West-Africa and Mexico. Her current focus is on links between indigenous and local communities and the environment and participatory methods in development. Her interests are wide-ranging but has a focus in work on children's rights as well as community participation and use of local knowledge in environmental management. We cannot thank her enough for all her input, support – and patience with our project.

Section 1 - An introductory background

Commemorating an organisation also means to get involved in its history. This report reflects some of the history of UNEP the way its authors have understood it. Documenting history may lead to finding unsung heroes, people who through their dedication made history without demanding recognition. Wayne Kines was such a person. He worked closely with Maurice Strong large parts of his life. Friends since their teens, they became a forceful team in 1972 working with the UN for the UN Conference on the Human Environment. Wayne was a people-person with a strong commitment to participation and democracy. He worked closely with Barbara Ward and with the support of Maurice Strong he managed to find a way to organise the daily reports from civil society to the official plenary. Posterity owes much to him, as the strong presence of civil society at the Stockholm 1972 conference set a precedent for all later UN conferences.

Hiro Shibuya was a young man in 1972 and played an important role in 1972 as well as in several subsequent UN processes. He worked closely with Wayne Kines and Maurice Strong during the Stockholm days in June in 1972 and made sure the youth had an official presence back in 1972, as well as in several subsequent UN conferences.

Present day UNEP is represented by **Ms. Ligia Noronha**. Having spent a substantial career at the UN and UNEP, she began her role as United Nations Assistant Secretary- General and Head of the New York Office at UNEP on 1 April 2021. Working hard to make sure that the process leading up to the Stockholm 2022 meeting was as inclusive as possible she was also a strong presence for UNEP in Stockholm in June 2022.



Wayne Kines was born in Roblin, Manitoba where he grew up with an extended family and a close-knit rural community who were all much concerned with Canada's World War II efforts and with their profound commitment to creating a better world. This background gave him multiple opportunities to serve human needs through communications projects and strategies at local, regional, national, and global levels. These have included: Director, UN Centre for Economic & Social Information (CESI); Strategist, UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm; Founding Director of Communications, UN Environment Programme (UNEP); Publisher of the 64-page review of the Brundtland Commission Report 'Our Common Future' circulated worldwide to diplomats and journalists; Organizer and Host of the UNESCO World Heritage Media Seminar; Special Advisor,

World Council of Indigenous Peoples; Chair of Canada's Centennial International Development Program; Co-Founder, Canadian Council for International Cooperation; Founder, Westman Media Cooperative; Canadian Delegate, International Exposition on Rural Development; Co-Founder of the Canadian World Press Freedom Committee; and Founding Director

of the Nightingale Initiative for Global Health. Wayne Kines was key to involve civil society in the official plenaries at the Stockholm conference back in 1972. Wayne Kines and Barbara Ward's legacies from the Stockholm conference was that they made sure that civil society was heard and given space at the official UN meeting.



Hironobu Shibuya. His most recent position was the Special Adviser to the Nippon Foundation, the largest philanthropic foundation in Japan, after serving as the Chief Executive Officer of the Save the Children Japan during the time of the 2011 Great Tohoku Earthquake. Previously

he worked in several international organizations, including serving as the senior advisor to the Executive Director of UNICEF, special advisor at the Earth Summit in 1992, and in his earlier assignments with the United Nations included, serving as the director of the UN Information Center and head of the New York Office of the UN University. In between his tenures at the UN, he helped establish the US-Japan Foundation where he was the first Executive Director, and served as the CEO of Dentsu Burson-Marsteller, a joint venture of the world's leading communications agencies. His public services in the past include serving on the boards of World Learning, Helen Keller International, Save the Children/US, the Earth Council, UN Secretary-General's advisory committee on communications, Asia-Pacific Development Center for Disability (APCD) and the advisory board on Private Public Partnerships of JICA, among others.



Ms. Ligia Noronha began her role as United Nations Assistant Secretary- General and Head of the New York Office at UNEP on 1 April 2021. In this role she works in establishing and maintaining critical links with the Permanent Missions of Member States to the United Nations, the United Nations Secretariat, other UN System organizations and entities headquartered in New York, major groups, civil society organizations, academia and the private sector. Through her leadership of the New York Office, she seeks to promote effective integration of the environmental dimension in the UN

System, in the inter-agency mechanisms and in the intergovernmental processes while raising awareness of emerging environmental issues and the outcomes of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

An economist with over 30 years of international experience in the field of sustainable development, Ms. Noronha previously served as Director of UNEP's Economy Division based in Paris and Nairobi, leading UNEP's work on climate mitigation and energy transitions; on inclusive green economies, circularity and sustainable consumption and production, as well as on trade and sustainable finance; on extractives, and the nexus of environment, pollution and health. During her tenure, Ms. Noronha positioned the Economy Division as a cen-

tre for integrated actions in support of the 2030 Agenda.

Prior to joining UNEP, Ms. Noronha worked as Executive Director at The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) in New Delhi; she served as Secretary of the Asian Energy Institute and as Coordinator of the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnerships (REEEP) and worked with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada.

She holds a Master's degree in Economics from the University of Mumbai, as well as a Master's degree in Sea Use Law, Economics and Policy and a Ph.D. from the London School of Economics. Ms. Noronha is married with three children.

Section 2: A contextual and fact-based background to commemorate 50 years of work for the environment.

Tens of thousands of persons outside of governments from the entire world have worked and are working on and for the environment. Several of these have over the years also found their way to UNEP conferences. A majority of these are people who constitute the backbone of civil society and non-state stakeholders working actively to safeguard the environment. Civil society has always initiated issues and processes, added to the official agendas, kept issues alive throughout the years and contributed to several of the success stories that UNEP has accomplished through 50 years of environmental work. This chapter celebrates this partnership. We have selected 15 representative case studies which we present in this section. After having been identified these issues including their processes found their way to UNEP and influenced its agenda in numerous ways. What these case studies prove, is that the successful outcomes which on a formal basis will be attributed to UNEP, would not have happened had it not been for the active involvement of civil society.

After an introduction by **Jan-Gustav Strandenaes**, **Tord Björk** takes the reader back to the 1972 Stockholm conference. Tord was an activist during the hectic June days in 1972, and was a true believer not only in civil society but in people's movements. His narrative is never before published, and with his many also unpublished photos, the early days of UNEP, environmental protection efforts and civil society come alive.

Cyril Ritchie saw the necessity of organising the environment NGOs, saw the potential of a close collaboration with the newly established UN organisation and became a network coordinator. His description of his early days with UNEP gives a much needed insight into these days. **Anantha Krishnan** came to Norway on a scholarship, and brought with him a commitment to internationalism, governance issues and the environment. He became the first full-time employed person within UNEP to work with and for the major groups, stakeholders and civil society.

Responding to a growing concern with dangerous chemical waste, UNEP's member states agreed on the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal which went into force in 1992. Two more conventions dealing with related issues, the Rotterdam Convention and the Stockholm Convention, went into force in 2004. At least one serious chemical remained unregulated – mercury. **Elenia Lymberidi** and **Michael Bender** both worked to make the Minamata convention on mercury a reality – their story gives us the details. The Rio+20 in 2012 gave UNEP the responsibility to work on consumption and production issues. Still largely unresolved, **Professor Victoria Thoresen** outlines present and future challenges in regard to this issue. The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) is a policy framework to promote chemical safety around the world. It was developed by a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral preparatory committee in 2002. Members of civil society has always been important to SAICM, and **Yuyun Ismawati** and **Sonja Broshe** outlines some of the challenges for civil society of being an integrated partner in an intergovernmental system. **Arthur Dahl** began his career with UNEP shortly after its inception in Stockholm in 1972, where he also participated. Arthur helped develop UNEP's ocean programmes and still works on these issues, as he shows in his article. **Neth Dano** takes us through the dangers and challenges of nanotechnology and geoengineering. Despite an early awareness of these issues by UNEP, she fears we have come much too short in managing the challenges associated with the issues. Environmental Defenders, those brave people fighting with their lives to defend the environment for posterity, are given context and support in **Carmen Capriles'** article. Lead in petrol has damaged human lives for decades. Well proven by science, UNEP administrated the work to get rid of this element in petrol. **Dan Magraw** and **Mingyue Luna Xue** outline this work as one of UNEP's big successes.

The International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling was finalized in 1946, and is one of the first to state the necessity of safeguarding the environment for future generations. The Children and Youth Major Group is one of the 9 Major Groups identified by Agenda 21 and is testament to the focus that the UN tries to give future generations. **Pedro Cunha** and **Cecilia Iglesias** both belonged to this group. Whereas UNEP gave youth an opportunity to work in an intergovernmental context, Cecilia and Pedro show, this was not always easy.

Mark Halle has worked a lifetime to safeguard the environment. As long time Deputy Director of the International Institute for Sustainable Development, IISD, he also worked closely with UNEP. Based in this solid background, he outlines some of the future challenges UNEP now faces. **Richard Black** was for years the journalist covering the environment for BBC. With his multifaceted background he also takes a stab at what he sees as some of the future challenges facing UNEP.

This unique anthological chapter is concluded by **Kehkashan Basu** who at 23, is the founder and chief of a large international NGO working on the environment and disasters. Describing herself as an ecowarrior, she and her many young activists in the Green Hope Foundation take on future challenges with optimism – as her article shows.



Tord Björk grew up with vegetarian parents in Sweden and travelled through Eastern, Southern and Western Europe on bike and later after he had become a student in 1969, took a year off when he hitchhiked to Persia. He was then 17 years old. Tord became active in a Theosophical Youth Group in 1970 and the Powwow Group initiating alternative activities to the Stockholm conference in 1972. He became a board deputy in the local chapter of the Swedish conservation society in 1973 and one of the initiators of the first broad anti-nuclear power networks in Stockholm 1974 and later at national level in 1978. Active at local, national and international levels in several movements as the Nordic Alternative Future campaign, European Youth Forest Action, the first international climate action days 1991-95 and international support for rubber tappers in the Amazonas 1991-96. Tord has been initiating popular participatory activities at most environmental UN conferences and at several EU summits. He was International Coordinator of the European Social Forum in 2008 and for the declaration process at Klimaforum09. Tord is a member of the Council of International Peace Bureau and World Social Forum. He has also been a board and committee member in Friends of the Earth Sweden since the 70s.



Cyril Ritchie has participated in a large number of United Nations World Conferences and Summits, including Food(Rome), HABITAT (Vancouver and Istanbul), Environment and Development (Rio), Women (Nairobi), Nutrition (Rome), Social Development (Copenhagen), Sustainable Development (Johannesburg and Rio), World Summit on the Information Society (Geneva). Ritchie has been engaged in NGO and civil society liaison and advocacy mechanisms with many United Nations agencies and entities, inter alia ECOSOC, ESCAP, HLPF, UNDP, UNDPI/UNDGC, UNEP, UNESCO, UNHCHR, UNHCR, WSIS Forum. Ritchie participates regularly in many annual or recurring UN Commissions and Sessions. Cyril Ritchie's roles in international Civil Society have included: International Secretary, World University Service, Executive Director, International Council of Voluntary Agencies, Director, International Schools Association, President of the World Civil Society Conference, President of the International Civil Society Forum for Democracy, Chair, World Child Strategy, NGO Committee on UNICEF, Chair, Environment Liaison Centre International, President, Union of International Associations. Ritchie has been for six years a Visiting Professor at Kyung Hee University, Seoul. He is a member or advisor, inter alia, of the Academic Council on the UN System, CIVICUS, the International Baby Food Action Network, the Nightingale Initiative on Global Health, the World Future Council. He is currently CoNGO First Vice President 2018-2025. Ritchie is based in Geneva, and has visited 90 countries...





S. Ananthakrishnan, (He/him). Has over 40 years of experience in international development work, including over 15 years with the UN in Nairobi Kenya (UNEP and UN-Habitat) engaged in urban youth empowerment initiatives, policy and research, advocacy, program management as well as development and implementation of projects. Currently Secretary General of Urban Economy Forum, supporting the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals at the City level. Also, board member of The Future in Our Hands, (FIVH) a Norwegian idealistic organization that advocates green consumption and resource justice... Was the Executive Director of the Norwegian Forum For Environment and Development (ForUM), has worked with Norwegian government ministries, Anti-racist Centre, Oslo, and Consumer Council Contributed to addressing

energy poverty issues among the internally displaced and conflict-affected populations in the North East of Nigeria with the introduction of a clean cooking stove initiative led by a Nigerian NGO, ICEED. Undertook assignments for the World Bank in Nigeria, working on the implementation of the Multisectoral Crisis Recovery Project (MCRP) to support peacebuilding and reconstruction in the Boko Haram insurgency-affected areas in the country. In 2016. Was part of the team of UN-Habitat in conducting a Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment, a joint UN/EU/World Bank/ Nigerian Government initiative in the Northeast of Nigeria. Other relevant work includes a consultancy assignment for the Norwegian Government on studying the impact of urbanization on women's empowerment, a strategy document for UNIDO on youth employment and entrepreneurship. A position paper was developed by him for UN-Habitat on Urban Basic Services. He has also conducted housing market studies in Myanmar, Mozambique, and Tanzania.

He has strong African and Caribbean connections in addition to Scandinavia and the UK. Holds Master's Degrees in civil engineering (IIT) and Social Studies (Bradford) and a postgraduate qualification in International Management. Has written several articles and papers.



Elena Lymberidi-Settimo, is the Policy Manager for the 'Zero Mercury Campaign' at the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), and since 2005, the co-founder and international co-coordinator of the Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG), an international coalition of more than 110 NGOs from over 55 countries. Elena has over twenty years' experience, working at EU and global levels, assisting governments enact numerous mercury reduction policies, including adoption of mercury export and product bans as well as supporting the development and implementation of the Minamata Convention.

Elena has been attending the UNEP Governing Council (2005-2009), and all relevant meetings (2009-2016) which led to the adoption of the Minamata Convention, as well as the Conference of the Parties since its entry into force in 2017. The EEB was commissioned by UNEP to assist with NGO participation at UN meetings and in the implementation of the Convention on several occasions. Elena has also been co-leading the mercury work under the FAO (2014-2017)

and UNEP (2020-2024) agreements for the African Caribbean and Pacific EC Programme of the European Commission. She co-leads the ZMWG Skin Lightening Cream Campaign and is a member of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership Advisory Group. Elena has a degree in Chemistry (University of Athens, Greece), an M.Sc. in Business Strategy and Environmental Management (University of Bradford, UK) and an MBA (Solvay/Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium).



Michael Bender is the director of the Mercury Policy Project and co-coordinator of the Zero Mercury Working Group. Mr. Bender has over thirty years of experience working on policies and programs to reduce mercury exposure.

Around 2000, Mr. Bender was asked by UNEP to engage civil society in global mercury issues and helped coordinate NGO input into UNEP's 2002 Global Mercury Assessment report.

From 2003-2009, he attended UNEP Governing Council meetings and has presented at numerous UN meetings.

From 2009-2013, Mr. Bender attended meetings of Intergovernmental Negotiation Committee and, after the Minamata Convention was ratified, attended Conferences of the Parties. In 2012, MPP was commissioned by UNEP to conduct a study on phasing down dental amalgam. In 2014-2017, MPP assisted a UN FAO project to mercury reduction activities in four African countries. Currently, MPP co-leads the ZMWG Skin Lightening Campaign and is a member of the UNEP Global Mercury Partnership Advisory Group. MPP is also assisting a UN mercury reduction project in three Caribbean countries and providing input into a new GEF project to eliminate mercury in skin lighteners.

Mr. Bender has an M.S. from Antioch New England.



Sara Brosché is Science Advisor at the International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN), which she joined in 2012. She has a MSc in Chemistry and a PhD in Environmental Science.

In her role as Science Advisor she works on wide range of issues related to chemical safety. This includes SAICM and its emerging policy issues and issues of concern, the Stockholm Convention and its POPs Review Committee,

and the Basel Convention. She is also manager of IPEN's Global Lead Paint Elimination Campaign, which aims to end the manufacture,

import, export, sale and use of lead-containing paints and similar surface coatings worldwide.



Yuyun Ismawati has more than 25 years of experience in environmental health and actively involved in the negotiation process and advocacy of chemicals and wastes conventions.

In 2000 she co-founded BaliFokus, which was later rebranded as the Nexus for Health, Environment, and Development Foundation. At the national and global level, she also involved as steering committee members in various NGO networks such as IPEN, WECF, BAN and BFFP.

Yuyun holds an Environmental Engineering bachelor's degree from Bandung Institute of Technology, Indonesia and an MSc in Environmental Change and Management from the University of Oxford. She had published various reports and papers on chemicals and wastes.

Yuyun received a Goldman Environmental Prize in 2009 for her works on pollution and wastes.



Dr. Arthur Lyon Dahl is President of the International Environment Forum, and a retired Deputy Assistant Executive Director of UNEP, where he was Deputy Director of Oceans and Coastal Areas in Nairobi, and Coordinator of the UN System-wide Earthwatch in Geneva. An environmental scientist specializing on coral reefs, he spent

many years in the South Pacific organising the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). As a lifelong Bahá'í, his international civil society engagement includes representing the Baha'i International Community at the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, participating in the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002), the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 in 2012), the Stockholm+50 International Meeting in 2022, and UN Climate Change Conferences COP15 (Copenhagen 2009) and COP21 (Paris 2015). He co-authored *"Global Governance and the Emergence of Global Institutions for the 21st Century,"* and *"Towards a Global Environment Agency: Effective Governance for Shared Ecological Risks,"* and wrote other books including *"The ECO Principle: Ecology and Economics in Symbiosis,"* and *"In Pursuit of Hope: A Guide for the Seeker"*.



Elenita "Neth" Daño is Asia Director and Coordinator of the Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC Group) based in southern Philippines. ETC Group is an international civil society organization that monitors the impacts of new and emerging

technologies on marginalized communities, tracks corporate concentration and governance in food and agriculture, and investigates erosion of biodiversity. Neth earned her bachelor's degree in Development Studies and graduate degree in Community Development from the University of the Philippines. She has represented environmental non-governmental organizations in the Advisory Board to the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) of the UNFCCC, and in global environmental governance discussions at UN Environment. She was appointed for a two-year term (2016-2017) by the UN Secretary-General in the 10-Member Group that supports the UN Technology Facilitation Mechanism. She is a member of the Gender Advisory Board (GAB) of the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD).



Victoria W. Thoresen is a professor, educator and researcher and has specialized in curriculum development, global education, consumer education, and education for sustainable development. She has written articles and textbooks for teacher training and has functioned as an international educational consultant around the world. As leader of

PERL, The Partnership for Education and Research about Responsible Living, (a network of 140 universities in 50 countries) and as founder and director of The Collaborative Learning Centre for Sustainable Development, Thoresen has worked closely with UNEP, UNESCO and other international agencies concerned with sustainable development particularly in connection with the 10-Year Framework of Programmes (now known as the One Planet Program) about Sustainable Consumption and Production's program on Sustainable Lifestyles and Education; as well as having been a key partner with the U.N. Decade on Education for Sustainable Development and the Global Action Plan for Education for Sustainable Development. Thoresen was appointed UNESCO Chair for Education for Sustainable Lifestyles in 2014 and has been an invited speaker at numerous international conferences.



Carmen Capriles is a feminist and environmental activist, organizer and advocate, she lives in La Paz, Bolivia, she has founded and directed

the volunteer organization Reacción Climática for over 10 year with the aim to raise awareness about environmental problems, like the melting of the glaciers of the Andean Mountains and the impact of climate change on vulnerable population, promoting the conservation of Biodiversity, the importance of Protected Areas and recently exploring the impacts of chemicals in women like pesticides in agriculture or mercury from mining. She advocates for women's rights and gender equality in processes like UNFCCC, CBD, HLPF, UNEA, and a promoter of the Escazu Agreement for the LAC region. She concluded her studies as Agricultural Engineer or the University of San Andres (Bolivia), and she specialized on Sustainable Rural Development in EICA (Egypt).



Cecilia Iglesias has a degree in Environmental Sciences and followed her education with a major in International Relations focused on Economy, Development and International Cooperation. She worked as an environmental consultant for the private sector, government agencies, civil society organizations and UN programs. She was a University faculty member teaching environmental education, sustainable development and ecology. For the past 12 years she's been working for the Matanza Riachuelo River Basin Authority (ACUMAR) in Argentina.



Pedro Cunha is an economist, entrepreneur, global ecocitizen and activist.

The last 10 years have been dedicated to including "children and young people" in decision-making processes, promoting dialogue and cooperation between civil society, governments and intergovernmental organizations at the United Nations agencies and programmes. Works and art activities performed in more than 20 countries.

Pedro is the cofounder of LACEMOS (Latin America and the Caribbean Engagement Mechanism) and The VivaHoje/Live Today Initiative.

More infos at: www.pedrocunhaeco.co



Mark Halle grew up in Geneva, Switzerland, took his first degree from Tufts University in the US and a post-graduate degree in history from the University of Cambridge. Following two years with the Diplomatic Secretariat of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) he has devoted his entire career to environment and sustainable development, beginning with five years in the United Nations Environment Programme's Policy Planning Division. He then spent four years in WWF-International's Conservation Division, with responsibility for building its programmes in China and as conservation advisor to HRH The Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh. There followed fourteen years at IUCN, first in the Conservation for Development Centre (integrated into IUCN as the Field Operations Division), then as Director of Development and, finally,

as Director of Policy and Partnerships. He left IUCN to establish the International Institute for Sustainable Development (Europe) which he directed until retirement in 2016 and where he remains a Senior Fellow.

Mark was a Senior Advisor to the UNEP Inquiry into the Design of a Sustainable Financial System for the four years of its mandate, taking special responsibility for developing countries. He helped establish and is Senior Advisor to the international network of Financial Centres for Sustainability (FC4S), where he led on development of the FC4S programme for Africa and the emerging programme on biodiversity finance. He is also a Principal of the Finance for Biodiversity initiative (F4B) and is presently establishing a global centre for nature finance in Geneva. He is a co-founder of Better Nature, a partnership that focuses on narrative development.

Mark is Chairman of the Board of TRAFFIC International, the world's leading wildlife trade organization. He sits on the board of Sustainable Finance Geneva. Mark writes and lectures on the subject of sustainable development. He is a founder of the Geneva 2030 Ecosystem, a platform for dialogue and cooperation about the challenge of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.



Richard Black is a freelance consultant on energy and climate change based in Berlin. Richard's background is in journalism and broadcasting, having joined BBC World Service in 1985 initially as a sound engineer, then producer. As a BBC science and environment correspondent for over a decade he covered issues including climate science and politics, biodiversity, pollution, space research and pandemics, while field assignments included reporting on carbon capture and storage, nuclear power, amphibian conservation, whaling, forestry, aquaculture and earthquake prediction. He regularly

covered global summits such as climate and biodiversity COPs and Rio+20. After leaving the BBC Richard was Director of Communications for the Global Ocean Commission prior to setting up the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit, a London-based thinktank focussing on climate change and the net zero transition. In 2018 he wrote 'Denied: The Rise and Fall of Climate Contrarianism', the only book about the UK's climate contrarian elite, its influence and

its retreat. Richard is now a Senior Associate at ECIU focussing on the international agenda, including the Net Zero Tracker, and an Honorary Research Fellow at the Grantham Institute at Imperial College London. He works on many other projects with academia and the non-profit sector, and frequently contributes to UK broadcast programmes and news media, including taking part in the BBC's 'Climate Change: The Facts' presented by Sir David Attenborough



Kehkashan Basu, M.S.M. is an iconic global influencer, educator, environmentalist, champion of women and children's rights, TEDx speaker, Climate Reality Mentor, author, musician, peace and sustainability campaigner. She is the recipient of Canada's Meritorious Service Medal and the only Canadian to win the International Children's Peace Prize. A Forbes 30 Under 30 and the first-ever Winner of the Voices Youth Gorbachev-Schultz Legacy Award for her work on nuclear disarmament, Kehkashan is the youngest Councillor of World Future Council and Co-Chair of its Peace and Disarmament Commission, a United Nations Human Rights Champion, a National Geographic Young Explorer, a UN Habitat Young City Champion,

a UNCCD Land Hero, the Regional Organizing Partner for North America for the NGO Major Group and one of Canada's Top25 Women of Influence. She is also the former Global Coordinator of the UNEP Major Group for Children and Youth. Kehkashan is the Founder-President of global social innovation enterprise Green Hope Foundation, that works at a grass-roots level in 28 countries, empowering over 500,000 young people and women, especially those from vulnerable communities, in the sustainable development process through education. She has spoken at over 500 United Nations and other global fora. She is the youngest Trustee of the Parliament of the World's Religions, Co-Lead of UN Women Generation Equality Forum's Action Coalition on Feminist Action for Climate Justice and a member of the World Humanitarian Forum Youth Council. She is the recipient of several awards that include the World Literacy Award for Significant Contribution to Literacy by a Young Person, Canada's Global Energy Show Emerging Leader Award and the Pax Christi Toronto Teacher of Peace Award. She continues to work tirelessly to amplify the voices of young people, women and girls in decision-making processes. She is currently an MBA Candidate at the Cornell University SC Johnson Graduate School of Management.





Mingyue Luna Xue is an intern at the UN Environment Programme and a 2022 graduate of Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). Her research interests include environment, climate change and gender equality and she is working on multiple articles and projects. She intends to explore topics related to biodiversity and recycling.

Section 3 - Civil Society Organisations and other stakeholder recommendations – focussing on what needs to be improved.

This section was produced by **Isis Alvarez** and **Jan-Gustav Strandenaes**

Section 4 - The Legacy Chapters

We identified five issues or themes that have been an integral part of UNEP since its inception in 1972. We named these the Legacy Themes. Then we engaged 5 top experts within their respective fields and asked them to research and write an exclusive paper on these themes. The response was indeed overwhelming. Not only did each of them immediately accept the challenge we gave them, they also engaged their impressive global networks to contribute.

Human Rights and Environmental Justice **Professor Mr. Daniel Magraw** and Research Fellow, **Ms. Li Lin** describe in fascinating detail how these rights came to be recognized – including the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment -- and what environmental rights are, what they encompass and what they can inspire us to think about. Their chapter is called “The Web of Life and Rights: The 1972 Stockholm Conference’s Legacy regarding Environmental Rights, Human Rights and Environmental Justice”. A detailed, innovative, well-crafted and well researched chapter, Dan and Li have also involved their impressive global network. Fifty-three additional scholars have contributed to the amazing content, and each of these global environment scholars are presented here with their own bios and pictures.

There is an amazing number of global conventions to help steer our global efforts to collaborate and solve issues. The number of environmental rules, regulations and laws have proliferated since the establishment of UNEP. We asked **John E. Scanlon**, Chair, Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime to write the second of the five Legacy Chapters, called “Connecting the dots –

making a forceful canon of the Rio Conventions and the MEAs". He in turn contacted two of his colleagues to work with him, **Ms. Audrey Collins** and **Ms. Alice Pasqualato**.

Nothing is complete in life without an education. Literacy for all has always been a goal for the UN. Disseminating information and subsequently teaching and educating people about the environment is a necessity. The third Legacy Chapter deals with this. "Fifty Years of Education and Learning for the Environment and Sustainability" is written by three persons: **Dr. Thomas Macintyre**, **Professor Daniella Tilbury** and **Professor Arjen Wals**.

The 1972 Stockholm conference gave birth to environmental diplomacy. The UN family offers a global network through which diplomacy is carried out, a system called multilateralism. Challenged today by critical voices, we asked a strong team to deliver the fourth Legacy Chapter. The title of the chapter is "Reimagining Environmental Multilateralism", and is written by author, **Professor Maria Ivanova**, PhD student **Olga Skaredina**, and UN Deputy Director **Carmen Arias**. As is the case with Dan Magraw's chapter, a list of bios of the thirteen others who contributed text is also attached to Maria Ivanova's chapter.

The fifth Legacy Chapter is about another important legacy issue that has been with UNEP since its inception – science. Throughout UNEP's fifty years of existence, the organization has published a large number of scientifically based reports. This speaks to the credibility of the organization. And yet, has everything been covered? These and other critical questions are asked in the chapter on science called: "Science and the environment – What now?" **Professor Raymond Saner** and **Professor Lichia Yiu** have written this thoughtful chapter.



Daniel Magraw is an international lawyer with experience in international law, institutions, processes, and dispute settlement, particularly relating to environmental protection, human rights, environmental justice and climate change. He is Professorial Lecturer and Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Institute at

Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and President Emeritus of the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL). He teaches international environmental law and policy at SAIS, as well as human rights and climate change at the University of Miami School of Law. He has worked in local and national governments, nongovernmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, business, and academia, in the U.S. and abroad.

Magraw has served as a consultant to the United Nations regarding environment and human rights and on the U.S. National Academies of Sciences committees on genetically engineered crops and on biologic confinement of genetically engineered organisms. He is on the boards of directors/trustees of Lightbridge Corporation (a publicly traded nuclear energy company) and the Universal Rights Group

(a human rights think tank in Geneva, of which he is a co-founder) and is co-chair of Human Rights Watch's Advisory Committee on Environment and Human Rights.

Magraw served as an appointee in four U.S. Administrations regarding international environmental matters, trade and genetic engineering, and on many delegations to international negotiations and other meetings. He worked as an economist and business consultant in South India as a Peace Corps Volunteer from 1968-1972.

Magraw was Chair of the ABA Section of International Law and has served in other leadership capacities in the ABA and other professional organizations. He has authored many books and articles, taught and lectured widely, and won local, national and international awards. He was Counsel for India in the Kishenganga Arbitration over water in Kashmir brought by Pakistan under the Indus Waters Treaty.



Li Lin is a Research Fellow with the International Justice Initiative at the Foreign Policy Institute

at Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). Li recently graduated from SAIS with a concentration in Energy, Resource, and Environment and a specialization in Infrastructure Finance. She has a passion in sustainability and empowering the underprivileged with access to reliable clean energy.

Before SAIS, Li studied English Literature at Shanghai International Studies University in Shanghai, China. She is currently pursuing a career in healthcare administration and hopes her paths in sustainability, energy justice and healthcare will converge in the future.



John E. Scanlon AO is a seasoned leader in the fields of environment, governance and sustainable development, with a unique range of experience gained across multiple continents, disciplines and organisations. He has served in senior positions in the private sector, with government, international organisations, the United Nations, and not-for-profit organizations, and as chair or member of many boards and initiatives. This includes working the Environment Protection Authority (Sydney), Murray Darling Basin Commission (Canberra), Department of Environment, Heritage and Aboriginal Affairs

(Adelaide), World Commission on Dams (Cape Town), International Union for Conservation of Nature (Bonn), UN Environment Programme (Nairobi) and Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Geneva). His current roles include serving as Chair of the Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime, CEO of the Elephant Protection Initiative Foundation, Chair of the UK Illegal Wildlife

Trade Challenge Fund, and Trustee of the Royal Botanical Gardens Kew. He holds a Bachelor of Laws and Master of Laws (Environmental). In 2019, John was awarded the prestigious Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for distinguished service to wildlife conservation and protection through roles with international organizations.



Aubrey Collins JD LLM is a young professional working in the environmental and wildlife policy space. She graduated from Queen Mary University of London's Environmental LLM program and received the class of 2020-21

Environmental Law Award. She further received a distinction for her dissertation conducting a critical analysis of the possible protocol on the illicit trafficking of wildlife under UNTOC. Her past work includes internships with the United Nations Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals and a variety of international organizations including IFAW and Global Rights Compliance. She currently works as an independent consultant for Legal Atlas contributing to a wide variety of wildlife projects focused on zoonotic disease, illicit trade, and marine protected areas. Having a great respect for John Scanlon and his work with international environmental law, Aubrey is honoured to have the opportunity to assist him in writing this legacy paper in honour of Stockholm+50.



Alice Pasqualato works as a Policy Officer at the Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime, which she joined in early 2021. She holds a degree in law from the University of Padua, where she graduated cum laude with a thesis on the EU Environmental Crime Directive. She is the co-author of a number of publications on the topic of wildlife trade in collaboration with Legal Atlas, such as "To and Through the Gulf: IWT Routes and Legal Environment".



Maria Ivanova is Professor of Public Policy and Director of the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs at Northeastern University. The author of *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* (MIT Press 2021), she focuses on international environmental institutions, environmental sustainability, and the science-policy interface.

Professor Ivanova is one of 66 inaugural Foundation Fellows of the International

Science Council, a member of the Technical Advisory Group to the Global Commission on Science Missions for Sustainability co-chaired by Helen Clark and Irina Bokova, and an Andrew Carnegie Fellow. She is also a member of the Joint Scientific Committee of the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) and a member of the Executive Science Organizing Committee for the WCRP Open Science Conference (to take place in October 2023 in Rwanda), and an Ambassador for Transparency International.

Among her recent leadership appointments, Professor Ivanova co-chaired the drafting process for the official letter from scientists and scholars of the world to global leaders at the Stockholm+50 Conference, calling for urgent policy action for a sustainable planet. She also served on the Rwandan delegation to the UN Environment Assembly negotiating the resolution on a global treaty on plastics.



Olga Skaredina is a Ph.D. student in Public Policy at Northeastern University and a member of the Executive Council for the 2022 UNA-

USA Intergenerational Model UN, where she serves as a Research Analyst for the United Nations Environment Programme Committee.

Olga holds a strong interest in global environmental governance and the role of civil society, particularly children and youth, in the inter-governmental processes of the United Nations, which made her actively engaged in research on youth advocacy and youth empowerment. As Olga focuses her dissertation on children and youth participation in the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, she attended the Stockholm+50 Conference and the 2022 Bonn Climate Change Conference as a youth representative.



Carmen Arias is Deputy Director for the United Nations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Peru and a graduate of the Global Master of Arts Program 2021 from the Fletcher School at Tufts University. She has a strong legal and diplomatic background, with more than 15 years of building consensus and fostering agreements across cultures and stakeholders. Key achievements are in climate justice, gender equality, and human rights.



Dr. Thomas Macintyre is an independent researcher in the field of education and sustainability, specialising in transformative and participatory learning. Following his doctoral research into community-based learning in sustainability initiatives in Colombia, South

America, Thomas has worked as a UNESCO research fellow and consultant on UNESCO projects around themes of sustainability, climate change and education. Thomas has published widely in the field of education and sustainability, with a particular focus on exploring 'transgressive' forms of learning which critically address (un)sustainable norms and worldviews, while proposing alternative visions and practices in education. As project leader at the Colombian Foundation 'Mentes en Transición', Thomas works actively on practical regeneration projects in the areas of agroecology, food sovereignty, eco-tourism, and local sustainable development. Thomas lives and works on his agroecological farm 'Los Tres Monos' in the coffee region of Colombia, and is committed to bringing about more just, enjoyable and regenerative futures.



Arjen Wals is a Professor of Transformative Learning for Socio-Ecological Sustainability at Wageningen University where he also holds the UNESCO Chair of Social Learning and Sustainable Development. Furthermore, he is a Guest Professor at the Norwegian University for the Life Sciences (NMBU) and the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. He holds an Honorary Doctorate from Gothenburg University in Sweden.

His work focusses on enabling, supporting and assessing ecologies of learning that foster sus-

tainable living by inviting more relational, ethical and critical ways of knowing and being. Much of the research Wals engages in focusses on the development of Whole School Approaches to sustainability and the decolonization of education.



Professor Daniella Tilbury is an educator, policy expert and changemaker in sustainable development credited with having developed the initial frameworks for higher education in this field. She has acted as an advisor to national agencies in Europe, Latin America and Oceania as well as travelled extensively in Africa and Asia to evaluate the investment and impact of education for sustainability policies and programmes.

He writes a regular blog that signals developments in the emerging field of sustainability education: www.transformativelearning.nl

Before becoming Gibraltar's first Commissioner for Sustainable Development and Future Generations in 2018, she was the inaugural Vice-Chancellor and CEO of the University of Gibraltar. Previously, she held academic research positions in Australia, UK and Hong Kong. Her work has been recognised with over 27 competitive grants and 18 awards.

During 1995-2019 she chaired several UN Committees and was commissioned by UNESCO to develop think pieces, expert reviews, policy advice, frameworks and sector evaluations. Daniella is currently the UK government's representative on the UN Economic Commission for Europe on matters relating to ESD and Chaired its Presidency event on education at CoP26. She is a formal adviser to the EC on matters relating to learning for sustainability. Daniella was recently recognised with an Hon. Fellowship by the University of Cambridge, St Catharine's College and a Doctor Honoris Causa by the University of Girona for her contributions to change for sustainability.



Professor Raymond Saner is Titular professor at Basle University (Economics & Management Department) and has taught at Sciences Po, Paris (Trade & Development of Low Income Development Countries) and at Lüneberg University (Environmental Negotiations).

He is reviewer and partner of research projects and co-founder of CSEND, a Geneva based NGRDO with ECOSOC accreditation and consultative status. He is involved with the 2030 Agenda since 2013, was Moderator at the Second HLPF meeting under the auspices of ECOSOC,

Author of a chapter on science-policy interface for the GSDR Report 2015, Member of the drafting committee of Chapter 6 on LDCs, SIDS and LLDCs and member of the UNECE PPP Bureau 2019-2021.

He co-chairs the academic network of the OECD Guidelines on Business and Human Rights, is member of the UN Task Force on Solidarity and Social Enterprises and expert in CSR quality

standards. Professor Saner holds a Ph.D. in psychology from UGS University Ohio, a Master in Education from Lesley University, Cambridge USA, and a License in Economics and Trade from Basle University.

He has studied Sociology at the University of Freiburg i.Br in Germany and is author of 15 books, 35 book chapters and 45 referred journal articles.

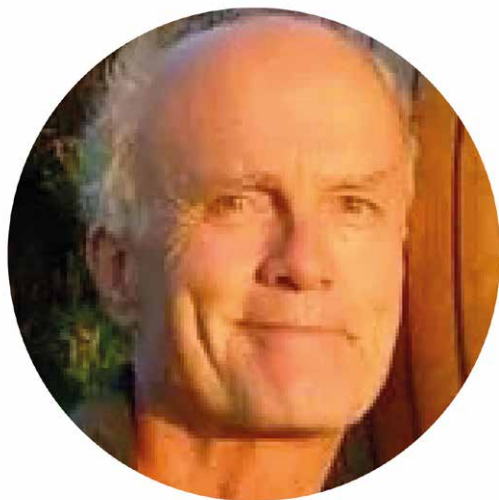


Professor Lichia Saner-Yiu is president and co-founder of the Centre for Socio-Economic Development (CSEND)- a 30-year-old NGO based in Geneva and accredited by ECOSOC in special consultative status. She is an expert in Organisational Development & Institutional Learning and is active in policy debates, strategic analysis and designing of public administrative reforms. She teaches at different universities in Japan, Italy and

Switzerland on management and leadership, human resource development (micro and macro) and the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs including: Author of academic publications on the SDGs (city, education, poverty, data and monitoring, and institutional capacity building), Co-convener and presenter for the SD Learning Module on Monitoring and Review at the 2015 HLPF; Reviewer of the 2015 Global Sustainable Development Report, Contributor to Regional SDG Consultation Meetings and Director of CSEND's Summer School on Global Leadership & SDG since 2015. Prof. Saner-Yiu was a Post-Doctoral Fellow at Columbia University, New York, 1983-1984 and has an Ed.D. in Organisational Psychology from Indiana University, USA. She has published books and more than 80 articles in academic journals. Her newest book co-authored with Raymond Saner, Roland Bardy and Arthur Ruben is titled "Public Goods, Sustainable development and the Contributions of Business" (2021).



Author Description / *The Web of Life and Rights: The 1972 Stockholm Conference's Legacy regarding Environmental Rights, Human Rights and Environmental Justice* by Daniel Magraw & Li Lin



Peter Adams is an environmental artist whose site-specific Peace Garden, Gaia Evolution Walk, sculptures and benches in Tasmania have for 30 years explored the equality of all living creatures, kinship and harmony within the web of life. His sculptures are in collections in major museums around the world.



S. James Anaya is a University Distinguished Professor and former Dean of the University of Colorado School of Law. He has written extensively on international human rights and the rights of Indigenous peoples, and has litigated major cases on Indigenous rights in international and domestic tribunals. From 2008 to 2014, Professor Anaya served as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.



David Azoulay is a French attorney who studied public international law in France and Spain before specializing in environmental law. He comes to CIEL from Friends of the Earth Europe, where he coordinated their chemical and nanotechnologies campaign after working for several years as an associate in the Paris office of Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer. David now leads CIEL's Environmental health program, fighting to improve the regulation of toxic chemicals around the world. David also co-leads CIEL's plastic work, examining the environmental health aspects of it and coordinating civil society's engagement on the road

to a new treaty to stop plastic pollution. He also supervises our work at EU level to ensure that the health impacts of plastics throughout its life cycle are adequately considered in EU policy, and in particular in the design of the EU circular economy strategy, and EU

EDC strategy. David also leads CIEL's effort advocating for a precautionary approach to the development of nanotechnologies in the EU and at global level. He is also a member of the Steering Committee of IPEN, the International Pollutants Elimination Network.



Dinah Bear served for 25 years as General Counsel and Deputy General Counsel for both Democratic and Republican administrations at the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), the environmental agency in the Executive Office of the President. CEQ has responsibility for developing and coordinating the implementation of environmental policy within the executive branch and overseeing the implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act, the U.S. environmental assessment process.



Dr. David R. Boyd is the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment (2018-2024) and a professor of law, policy, and sustainability at the University of British Columbia. He has written ten books and 100+ reports and articles on environmental law and policy, human rights, and constitutional law.



Dr. Edith Brown Weiss is University Professor and Francis Cabell Brown Professor of International Law Emerita at Georgetown University. She is past President of the American Society of International Law, Chairperson of the World Bank Inspection Panel, and member of Boards of Directors for international organizations. In 2017, she delivered the General Course on Public International Law at The Hague Academy of International Law.



Carl Bruch is the Director of International Programs at the Environmental Law Institute (ELI) and the founding President of the Environmental Peacebuilding Association

(EnPAx). His work focuses on environmental peacebuilding (especially after conflict), environmental governance, adaptation, and environmental emergencies. He has helped dozens of countries—including many conflict-affected countries—throughout Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe strengthen their environmental laws, institutions, and practices. He has edited more than ten books and authored more than 80 journal articles, book chapters, and reports. He is an adjunct professor at American University School of International Service. He holds a JD from the Northwestern School of Environmental Law of Lewis & Clark College, an MA in physics from the University of Texas-Austin, and a BS in physics (with additional majors in mathematics and anthropology) from Michigan State University.



Dr. Bruce A. Byers is an ecologist, independent consultant, and writer. His career has fo-

cused on understanding and improving the long-term resilience of social-ecological systems (i.e., healing the human-nature relationship), and especially the role of biological diversity and functioning ecosystems in that resilience. Bruce has worked in more than 40 countries around the world, and in 35 UNESCO-designated biosphere reserves. His book *The View from Cascade Head: Lessons for the Biosphere from the Oregon Coast* (Oregon State University Press, 2020) profiled the Cascade Head Biosphere Reserve. He is currently working on a book about California's two UNESCO biosphere reserves, the Golden Gate and Channel Islands Biosphere Reserves.



Dafne Carletti is a graduate of the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). Dafne is a research and communication officer working in the fields of peacebuilding and international relations, with a focus on the Mediterranean region. She is passionate about social movements and transnational advocacy networks in the digital era and has completed a second masters degree in cyber security and geopolitical analysis.



Alicia Cate is an advocacy professional leveraging decades of expertise to advise private sector, public sector, and civil society clients on U.S. domestic and international environmental law and policy, thereby fulfilling her passion for protecting this beautiful blue planet and all of its inhabitants.



Becca Cecil-Wright is the Executive Director and co-founder of EnviroFest International, an organisation setting up environmental film and impact festivals in the global south. An award-winning documentary filmmaker and environmental educator, Becca's focus lies in using entertainment to engage citizens and societies with the environmental and climate agenda.



Dr. Sweta Chakraborty is a climate behavioral scientist who is regularly interviewed on major, international news media outlets like CNN, the BBC, MSNBC, etc. Sweta is the US President for We Don't Have Time, the world's largest social media and communications company for accelerating climate solutions. She is a partner at Pioneer Public Affairs and is on the steering committee of the Global Commons Alliance. She is an Independent Director at Lightbridge Corp. where she chairs their ESG committee and is on several advisory boards like the New York Academy of Sciences and Climate Power. She is a book author from her time as a post-doc at Oxford University. She is a TEDx, SXSW, and globally recognized keynote speaker and consultant for several Fortune 100 companies.



Andrew Chang is a Managing Director at [Activate.org](https://activate.org), an entrepreneurial fellowship program that empowers scientists to reinvent the world by bringing their research to market.



Leila Chennoufi is Board Chair and co-founder of EnviroFest International (EFI), an organization setting up environmental film and impact festivals in the Global South. An international environmental and sustainability professional for the past 30 years, Leila has experienced first-hand, time and again, the disconnect between environmental knowledge and the world's citizens. She is determined to help close that gap.



Duygu Çiçek has been working at the World Bank, Environment & International Law Practice Group since November 2018. She provides legal and policy advice on environmental, social, and international law issues pertaining to World Bank projects and legal support to the World Bank's climate change agenda. She also serves as a member of the International Law and Sea Level Rise Committee of the International Law Association, where she contributes to the Committee's mandate on international law issues prompted by the mid- and longer-term impacts of sea level rise. Previously, she worked with Advocates Abroad, the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights at the Council of Europe.



Neth Daño is a member of the Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC Group), an international civil society organization that conducts research and shares information on the impacts of emerging technologies on society, particularly on the vulnerable and marginalized populations.



Charles di Leva is former World Bank Chief Counsel, Environmental and International Law and Chief Officer, Environmental and Social Standards. Currently, he is Partner at Sustainability Frameworks LLP, and Adjunct Professor at George Washington University School of Law.



Jan Eliasson is an internationally well-known Swedish and UN diplomat. He was the Deputy Secretary-General of the UN from 1 July 2012 to 31 December 2016. He was elected President of the United Nations General Assembly, for its sixtieth session 2005-2006. During this session, i.a the Peace Building Commission (PBC) and the Human Rights Commission (HRC) were created. Eliasson was State Secretary for Foreign Affairs from 1994 to 2000 and Minister for Foreign Affairs in 2006. Earlier he served as Sweden's Permanent Representative to the

UN (1988-92) and Ambassador to the United States 2000-2005.

He has honorary degrees from i.a Uppsala and Göteborg universities and from American University.

Jan Eliasson has been mediator in the Iran/Iraq, the Nagorno-Karabakh and the Darfur Sudan conflicts. He has been engaged as UN Emergency Relief Co-Ordinator (ERC) in Somalia, Burma/Myanmar, Mozambique and the Balkans. He has a strong engagement related to water issues, and was the first Chair of the Board of WaterAid, Sweden.

Jan Eliasson was in March 2017 awarded the medal Illis Quorum by the Swedish Government honouring his distinguished career internationally and as representative of Sweden and the United Nations. The Swedish Government in June 2017 appointed Ambassador Jan Eliasson as Chair of the SIPRI Governing Board. His term ended in June 1, 2022.

Eliasson is married to Kerstin, former State Secretary for Higher Education and Research. They have three grown children and nine grandchildren.



Nina Luzzatto Gardner, is the director of Strategy International, a corporate sustainability advisory firm she founded to work with investors and companies on ESG issues. She has been teaching Corporate Sustainability, Business and Human rights as an Adjunct Professor at Johns Hopkins SAIS since 2013. She is a graduate of Harvard and Columbia Law School.



Dr. Leland Glenna is a Professor of Rural Sociology and Science, Technology & Society at the Pennsylvania State University. His teaching and research interests focus on the social, ethical, and environmental impacts of scientific and technological innovations in agriculture and food.



Dr. Halshka Graczyk is a safety and health professional, currently Technical Specialist on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) at the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva, Switzerland. In this role, Halshka manages and coordinates a number of technical

OSH areas, including the portfolio on chemical hazards; prevention of major industrial accidents; and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in the world of work. Halshka brings together a multidisciplinary academic and professional background from her work in academia, private OSH institutes, government, and international organizations. This experience has allowed her to apply her public health and occupational safety and health training into the development of evidence-based international and national policies, programmes and strategies. Halshka holds a Bachelors in Public Health and Masters of Science in Public Health from the Johns Hopkins University; and a Doctorate (PhD) with a specialization in occupational safety and health, focused on the evaluation of novel and emerging OSH risks and hazards, from the University of Lausanne, Switzerland.



Seth Grae is CEO of Lightbridge Corp. He is a member of the Civil Nuclear Trade Advisory Committee to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce and is a member of the Nuclear

Energy Institute's board of directors. He leads Lightbridge's efforts to develop and deploy advanced nuclear reactor fuel that will result in more electricity being provided from existing and new reactors, as well as enhanced safety and proliferation resistance, to allow nuclear power to compete and grow internationally as a non-emitting source of base load electricity. Lightbridge also advises governments of countries seeking to start nuclear power programs from feasibility studies through procurement and operations. Lightbridge's first major international engagement was to develop the strategic plan—the Roadmap for Success—for commercial nuclear energy for the United Arab Emirates.



Lacye Groening is a Junior Technical Officer on occupational safety and health at the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Geneva, Switzerland.



John H. Knox is the Henry C. Lauerman Professor of International Law at Wake Forest University. From 2012 to 2018, he served as the first UN Independent Expert, then the first Special Rapporteur, on the human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.



Peter Lallas is Advisor and Conflict Resolution Commissioner at the Secretariat of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Previously he was Executive Secretary of the World Bank Inspection Panel, a Visiting Expert at the UN FAO, and Director of International Environmental Law at the U.S. EPA. He's also spent time seeking to learn about these fields in other settings, as part of a life-long passion. Views expressed are in a personal capacity.



John Lee is a meteorologist and an attorney whose work focuses on environmental and insurance matters. He has published numerous articles and other short-form work on climate change and related insurance topics. He has spoken at various national conferences on environmental and legal topics, primarily involving climate change issues. Currently he teaches climate change courses as an Adjunct Professor at Loyola University in Chicago.

John has been extensively involved in international human rights legal work since receiving his law degree. He has litigated cases before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. He has been a member of Human Rights Watch's Chicago Committee since 2017.



Dr. Jannie Lilja, is Director of Studies, Peace and Development Research, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute|SIPRI.



Dr. Jan Low is currently a principal scientist with the International Potato Center (CIP), based in their regional office for Africa in Nairobi, Kenya. During the past decade, she managed the Sweetpotato Action for Security and Health in Africa (SASHA) research project and co-led the Sweetpotato for Profit and Health

Initiative (SPHI). The SPHI was a multi-partner, multi-donor initiative that reached 6.3 million African households in 15 target countries with improved varieties of sweetpotato, promoting their diversified use. Dr. Low obtained her doctorate in agricultural economics at Cornell University, minoring in nutrition. Having worked over 25 years in sub-Saharan Africa, she has focused with her team at CIP on developing and promoting biofortified orange-fleshed sweetpotato to combat vitamin A deficiency. Dr. Low also served as President of the African Potato Association (APA) from 2011-2013. In 2016, along with two CIP sweetpotato breeders (Maria Andrade and Robert Mwanga) and Howarth Bouis of HarvestPlus, Dr. Low was awarded the World Food Prize for her work on biofortification.



Annette Magnusson is Co-Founder of Climate Change Counsel, a think-and-do-tank with a mission to mobilize the law and lawyers for climate action. Annette's focus is leadership, innovation and policy advocacy. She works with cli-

ents primarily in matters relating to systematic change, through research and trainings, and is engaged in high-level dialogues with management to foster change.

Annette is the immediate past Secretary General of the Arbitration Institute of the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce (2010-2021) with more than 20 years' experience of international law, including from global law firms. She is founder of the crowdsourcing initiative Stockholm Treaty Lab, which seeks to use international law to promote green investments, a frequent speaker on arbitration and climate change and has been listed as a Global Leader in Who's Who Legal, and "a thought leader and global star" by Global Arbitration Review.



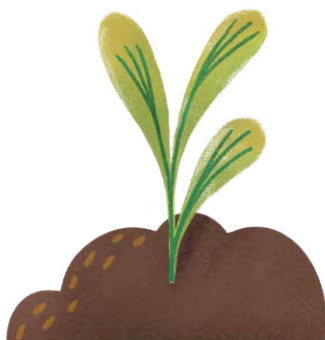


Dr. Kendra Magraw specializes in international dispute settlement (particularly investment, commercial and sports arbitration), as well public international law issues such as environmental, human rights, economic and international sports law. She has worked in varying capacities in private practice, international organizations and dispute settlement bodies and has published widely.



Dr. Carol Mallory-Smith is a Professor Emeritus of Weed Science at Oregon State University in the Department of Crop and Soil Science. She received a BS in Plant Protection in 1986 and a PhD in Plant Science in 1990 from the University of Idaho. She began her career at Oregon State University in 1994 where she had responsibilities for teaching and research in agronomic crops. Mallory-Smith's main ar-

reas of research were gene flow and hybridization between crops and weeds, herbicide resistance, weed management in agronomic crops, and weed biology. She advised more 40 graduate students and hosted visiting scholars from every continent. She has coauthored more than 150 journal articles and 10 book chapters. Mallory-Smith visited Argentina as a Fulbright Scholar. She served on the National Academy of Science's National Research Council Committee that authored *Genetically Engineered Crops: Experiences and Prospects*. Mallory-Smith is a Fellow of the Western Society of Weed Science and the Weed Science Society of America, served as President and Treasurer of the Weed Science Society of America and Secretary-Treasurer for the International Weed Science Society. She received the Alumni Achievement Award from the University of Idaho's College of Agriculture, the Western Society of Weed Science and Weed Science Society of America Awards for Outstanding Weed Scientist, and the Western Society of Weed Science Presidential Award of Merit.





Dr. Siobhán McInerney-Lankford is Senior Counsel at the World Bank Legal Vice-Presidency where she advises on human rights, international law and environmental and social policy. She has published widely on international human rights law and is an Adjunct Professor at American University - Washington College of Law.



Steve Mirmina is currently teaching Space Law at Georgetown, UCONN, and Vanderbilt Law Schools. He has spoken widely and published numerous articles in the field of space law. Outside of his teaching, he practices law in the International Law Division of NASA Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Professor of Global Environmental Law, Strathclyde University Law School, UK; and Director of the One Ocean Hub (a programme of collaborative research promoting fair and inclusive decision-making for a healthy ocean).



Carroll Muffett is President of the Center for International Environmental Law, a nonprofit organization that uses the power of law to protect the environment, promote human rights and ensure a just and sustainable society. Carroll is a member of IUCN's Commission on Environmental Law, a trustee of the Climate Accountability Institute, and serves on the Steering Committee for the Fossil Fuel NonProliferation Treaty.



Dr. James W. Nickel is Professor of Philosophy and Law Emeritus at the University of Miami. He is the author of *Making Sense of Human Rights* (2006) and of many articles in philosophy and law.



Åsa Norrman is an experienced leader, strategic thinker and international lawyer within the broad field of environment and sustainability. Åsa started her own consultancy in 2019 after nearly 20 years as Director in the Government offices of Sweden. The lyrics were composed at the Conference on Wilderness and Large Natural Habitat Areas 2009 during the Czech EU Presidency.



Susan Okie, MD, is a former Washington Post medical reporter and science editor, a physician, and a poet. Her poems have appeared in various literary journals and a chapbook, *Let You Fly*, was published in 2018. She teaches small group classes on patient-interviewing and ethics at Georgetown University School of Medicine.



Vania Olmos is a Mexican conservation biologist; MSc in Agroecology & Organic Agriculture. Vania has field experience with rural communities and on-the-ground nature conservation NGOs, and with international environmental organizations. She believes in the power of youth to create change and leads and collaborates with multiple youth networks at the global, regional and local levels.



Dr. Marcos A Orellana is the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Toxics and Human Rights. He currently directs the Global Toxics and Human Rights Project at the American University Washington College of Law. Professor Orellana has lectured in various law schools, including George Washington, Melbourne, Pretoria, Geneva, and Guadalajara. His practice as legal advisor has encompassed work with United Nations agencies, governments, and non-governmental organizations. He has intervened in cases before several international courts and tribunals. Professor Orellana has extensive experience working with civil society and indigenous peoples around the world on issues concerning global environmental justice. He also represented the eight-nation Independent Association of Latin America and the Caribbean in the negotiations of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.



Dr. Sergio Puig is the Evo DeConcini Professor of Law at the University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law, and Co-Editor in Chief of the *Journal of International Economic Law*. Sergio is the author of *At the Margins of Globalization: Indigenous Peoples and International Economic Law* and many articles and book chapters.

Silvia Ribeiro is a member of the Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC Group), an international civil society organization that conducts research and shares information on the impacts of emerging technologies on society, particularly on the vulnerable and marginalized populations.



Nicholas A. Robinson is Kerlin Professor Emeritus at the Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University, and Executive Governor of the International Council of Environmental Law. He was Legal Advisor for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and chaired its World Commission on Environmental Law for eight years.



Dr. Merlin Sheldrake is a biologist and author of the award-winning best-seller, *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds, and Shape Our Futures*. Merlin is a research associate of the Vrije University Amsterdam, and works with the Society for the Protection of Underground Networks and the Fungi Foundation.



Samia Shell is a young Black American environmental justice and human rights advocate from the Washington D.C./Accokeek area, now residing in New York City/Lenapehoking. Ms. Shell uses pronouns she/her/hers. She is a second-year law student at St. John's University School of Law, where she is a Ron Brown

Scholar and Staff Member of the New York International Law Review. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science and concentration in French from St. John's University, from which she graduated summa cum laude. Ms. Shell serves as a Policy/Media Advisor to the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Vanuatu to the United Nations. There, she assists with the campaign to petition the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion on climate change. She is particularly interested in climate change, environmental justice, the energy transition, Indigenous sovereignty, and agriculture. Her work is propelled by a liberation ethic for both people and the planet. She envisions a regenerative, just, kind, intergenerational, equitable, and cooperative future for us all. She loves trying new cuisines, and is also an international fashion model.



Miriam Siemes works for the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Nairobi, Kenya. Previously, she worked for the University of Bonn and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). She was also a non-resident fellow at the International Justice Initiative, where she conducted research for Professor Daniel B. Magraw on issues of international environmental law.

As a Fulbright Scholar, she received a M.A. from Johns Hopkins SAIS. She represented SAIS at the 2020 Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition. Her team qualified for the international rounds as the Regional Runner-up of the Mid-Atlantic Rounds. Ms.

Siemes earned her bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts and Science from the University College Maastricht and spent her semester abroad at Singapore Management University, for which she received the Duo-Singapore Exchange Fellowship Award in 2017.



Hari Srinivas is a global environmental policy expert who spent more than 20 years in the UN System, first at the UN University in Tokyo, and later at the UN Environment Programme in Osaka. He is coordinator of the Global Development Research Center, a policy think-tank in Kobe, Japan.



Sara Lehman Svensson is a former youth advisor to UNEP who grew up close to nature in Sweden. She has worked on global, national and local levels to include marginalized groups in environmental decision-making.

After graduating from the University of Gothenburg, Sara moved to Suriname in 2013, contributing to the protection of the Amazon

rainforest through the national REDD+ programme. After six years, she returned to her native Sweden with a wife from a tribal community in Suriname.

In Sweden, Sara has coordinated inclusive processes resulting in politically adopted climate change strategies in three local municipalities. She now works to implement those strategies, mobilizing local inhabitants of all ages and genders, politicians, municipality staff, civil society, academia, farmers and the business sector to all play their part.

Sara inspires active hope by bringing change-makers and future leaders together in circles to explore climate change from an existential perspective. Active in the International Shamanic Community and the Swedish Ecopsychology Association Lodyn, she attended Stockholm+50 with the Green Hope Foundation delegation.



Dr. Attila Tanzi is full Professor of International Law, University of Bologna; Chairman, Implementation Committee, 1992 UNECE Transboundary Waters Convention; and President, Italian Branch of the International Law Association.



Christina Voigt is Professor, University of Oslo; Co-Chair, Paris Agreement Implementation and Compliance Committee (PAICC); Chair, IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL); Coordinator, PluriCourts, Center of Excellence, University of Oslo.









Walter Weiss MD MPH is a Tropical Disease researcher and a climate activist. He is a graduate of Harvard Medical School, and the Bloomberg School of Public Health. He lives in Bethesda Maryland USA.



Dr. Terry Young is a consultant specializing in water quality and ecological indicators; former Chair of the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Francisco Bay Region; former Chair of the Ecological Processes and Effects Committee for the US Environmental Protection Agency's Science Advisory Board.

Annex I. UNEP at 50 Dialogue Series / Reimagining Environmental Multilateralism

Photo	Topic	Date	Speaker	Title	Link
	Towards the Next 50	May 7, 2021	Inger Andersen	Executive Director of UNEP	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mp5ynMHouYo&t=275s
	Environment as Foundation for Development	June 3, 2021	Achim Steiner	Administrator of UNDP and former Executive Director of UNEP	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIRF2MzAnhM&t=17s
	Activism from the Outside	September 29, 2021	Wanjira Mathai	Vice President & Regional Director for Africa at the World Resources Institute	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulz9sooXb78&t=3s
	Ramsar at 50	October 18, 2021	Martha Rojas Urrego	Secretary-General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-RKrtSCmBzQ
	Reflections from a Former Insider	December 2, 2021	John E. Scanlon	Chief Executive Officer of the Elephant Protection Initiative	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sg-JI14B54yQ
	Convening the Conventions	February 2, 2022	Elizabeth Mrema	Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zz-VTRcmHHIM
			Ibrahim Thiaw	Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification	

Photo	Topic	Date	Speaker	Title	Link
	Insights from Member States I	April 26, 2022	Dr. Rebecca Gaudiosi	Negotiator of the United States	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQxdSVPxQXw
			Dr. Franz Perrez	Head of the Directorate of International Law, Federal Office of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland	
	Insights from Member States II	May 11, 2022	Juliet Kabera	Director General of the Rwanda Environment Management Authority	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouHrABb24xE
			Joshua Wycliffe	Permanent Secretary of Waterways and Environment of Fiji	
			Manuel Pulgar-Vidal	Former Minister of Environment of Peru	
			Andrea Guerrero-Garcia	Lead Climate Negotiator for Colombia	

Section 5 – Outcomes from UNEP and Stockholm + 50

Even though the report has a focus on civil society, the report would have been incomplete, had it not included elements from the official conference. This section is about that theme. Isis Alvarez edited and synthesised the recommendations from the official conferences, the preparatory processes and the Stockholm outcome. In addition, we had contributions from UNEP, a paper written by **Andrew Schmidt** from the UNEP Paris Office.



Andrew Schmidt is currently Knowledge Management Specialist at One Planet Network – UNEP. Andrew is a knowledge management professional with nearly a decade of experience in international organisations focusing on sustainability - specifically our consumption and production habits, and how to build a network around those issues.

Section 6 – Civil society and concerns for the future

Whereas section 2 dealt largely with a historic overview, this section has a focus on present and future challenges. Civil society and non-state stakeholders used the occasion that the Stockholm+50 conference offered to focus on issues that in some ways fell off the agenda. We invited a few key contributors to present views on these issues. During the run-up to Stockholm+50 in 2022, the NGO “Common Home of Humanity” organised a two day conference in 2021 named Stockholm+49. The conference was initiated by **Paulo Magalhães** with input from civil society from all over the world. The outcome declaration from the conference that was presented to the official conference is contained in this section. In addition, we have other articles.

A two day event in connection with the Stockholm+50 conference dealt with Ecocide. **Sue Miller** presents the issue in more detail. Introduced by Olof Palme to UNEP, the late Prime Minister of Sweden and host to the 1972 Stockholm Conference, Sue identifies Ecocide as a necessary but still a contentious issue. No conference on the environment or sustainable development these days is complete without a discussion on the climate. **Alex Rafalowicz**s, outlines the necessity to always integrate climate and global warming in our deliberations. Almost every faith-based community today has a commitment to environmental issues. The Bahai Society held a two day conference on environmentally related issues prior to the Stockholm+50 conference. **Daniell Perell**

gives details of what took place. Since 1975 and the first UN Conference on Women which took place in Mexico, women and gender issues have been recognised by the international community. Women is one of the 9 Major Groups and **Sascha Gabizon** has played an important part in its work. She outlines challenges that still needs attention.



Sue Miller is Head of Global Networks at Stop Ecocide International, working with teams and groups across the world to make ecocide the fifth crime against peace at the International Criminal Court. A former lawyer, legal communications director and vegan entrepreneur, Sue has worked with and served on the boards of a number of charities and non-profit organisations.



Alex Rafalowicz Maya is the Director of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative. He has worked as a policy analyst, campaigner, organiser and strategist for climate justice for 15 years including with the Global Campaign to Demand Climate Justice, the Climate Action Network, and 350.Org.



Daniel Perell joined the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office as a Representative in 2011. His areas of work include social and sustainable development, global citizenship, human rights, the role of religion in society, and defense of the Baha'i Community. He is formerly a Global Organizing Partner of the NGO Major Group and the Chair of the NGO Committee for Social Development. In 2010, Mr. Perell received a JD from the University of Virginia School of Law and an MA in Law and Diplomacy from the Fletcher School at Tufts University and was admitted to the New York

State Bar Association. Mr. Perell has worked with the International Service for Human Rights

in Geneva, the UN in Aceh, Indonesia and other organizations in the Marshall Islands and Chile.



Sascha Gabizon is Executive Director at WECF International. She is an experienced Executive Director with a demonstrated history of working

in the non-profit sector, covering programs in over 50 countries and multi-annual budgets with funding from large donor organisations. She has been responsible for the global programmes of the WECF International network in partnership with Women2030 partners in Asia, Africa and Latin America and the WECF offices in the EU and Caucasus, also elected facilitator for the global Women's Major Group activities for the UN region of Europe, Central Asia and North America. Holds thematic expertise in gender equality and women's rights, sustainable development, climate, environment and health, chemicals and waste.



Paulo Magalhães is a jurist and researcher at the CIJ - Centre for Legal Research of the Faculty of Law of the University of Porto. He graduated from the Catholic University of Porto, post-graduated at the University of Coimbra, got his PhD in Human Ecology at the New University of Lisbon, and got his post-doctorate at the

Faculty of Law of the University of Porto with work on the legal status of climate.

He is the author of “The Earth Condominium – From the Climate Change to a New Juridic Conception of the Planet”, 2007, and editor of “SOS - Safe Operating Space Treaty: A new approach to manage our use of the Earth System”, 2016. He is the founder and President of Common Home of Humanity and coordinator of the Task Force for the Recognition of Climate as Common Heritage of Humankind. He is Counsellor of CNADS - National Council for Sustainable Development, and one of the members of the Earth Trusteeship Working Group.

He received the Green Vision Inspiration Award in 2022, the Gold Medal of Merit by the city of Porto, and Inspiring Portugal Award in Social Economy in 2022.

Section 7 – What really happened with Stockholm+50 and the 50th anniversary?

The two articles in this section were written by **Leida Rijnhout** and **Jan-Gustav Strandenaes**

Section 8 – Additional contributions

The English language is a versatile one and used today as a universal means of communication. There are even several semi-official versions of the language. This report has been written in English, but a majority of the writers are not native English speakers. Our policy has been to let the various articles reflect as much as possible the original way they have been written. Still, we have tried to check for obvious grammatical mistakes as well as trying to see that what has been written follows an easily understood logic. Thus, we have not had a team of language experts to rewrite the articles so that they all follow a standard structure throughout the report, but we asked a few native English speakers to help read through a few of the central articles and check them against standard English. These people also had to have knowledge of the themes discussed. We thank **Derek Osborn** and **Rosebud Robertson** for their work.

The Stockholm+50 team organised several webinars during the process in producing this compendium. Of particular importance to its content was the May 2022 webinar. Again, we were short on staff, and not any staff, but people who knew the environment, knew how to manage the world of internet as well as could provide quick and well written reports following the input from the breakout-groups we organised during the webinar. With the help of **Professor Daniel Magraw**, we could contact four incredible persons, who obviously will have a future in environmental and multilateral contexts. We thank these four persons, **Ms. Miriam Siemes**, **Ms. Dafne Carletti**, **Ms. Yesenia Alfonso** and **Ms. Siming Zhai** for their willingness to contribute and thus making the outcomes from the webinar a valuable one.

A few final words of sincere gratitude is also extended to five more persons who generously gave of their time to read and comment. **Irena Zubcevic** is an invaluable source of information when it comes to UN formalities and processes. She has a formidable knowledge of the UN after having worked at the UN for years with issues related to sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and in particular the High Level Political Forum, HLPF. Her insights into UN formalities have helped us compose the content in relation to the UN as correctly as possible. She is currently the Director of Stakeholder Forum and has believed in this project from its very beginning. **Arvid Solheim** has offered his critical views and read several of the articles. Having worked all his life with environment and development all over the world, his views on content have been invaluable. **Arve Ofstad** has also read and commented. Arve spent his life as a researcher, UN diplomat and ambassador for Norway, and having spent most of his life working in Africa and Asia, his friendly advice helped focus our aims. **Monica Mee** also provided insights with her background in the world of finance. The last few years she has spent working with disaster relief issues and asked us pertinent questions from that point of view. And lastly,

we owe thanks to **Jeremy 'Jez' Bond**. Jez is the Director of the amazing Park Theatre in London, but also an established writer with a rare and solid understanding and love for his language - English. His willingness to provide advice on sentence structure, grammar, idioms and more has helped greatly to make the language in this compendium more readable than otherwise would have been the case.



Derek Osborn, having served many years as President of Stakeholder Forum, gave expert help with the English and offered editorial advice with elements of the articles presented in the report. Derek has been a driving force at Stakeholder Forum for nearly 20 years. He served 30 years in

the UK Civil Service, was a key person in the UK delegation to the UN Conference on Environment and Development, UNCED, in 1992, which gave the world Agenda 21, was co-chair of the Rio+5 Conference at UN Headquarters in 1997, which assessed the results from UNCED. He also served as Director-General for Environmental Protection within the Department of the Environment until he retired from the Civil Service in 1996. Derek represented the United Kingdom and was Chair of the Management Board of the European Environment Agency (1995-1999) and was on the Board of the Environment Agency for England and Wales (1996-98), having been involved with its planning and creation. He has been a non-executive director of Severn Trent PLC, and chair of Jupiter Global Green Investment Trust. In addition to his work with Stakeholder Forum, Derek continues to share his knowledge and experience as a Board Member of several other prominent environmental organisations.



Rosebud Robertson. My childhood instilled a passion and deep respect for nature. I was lucky to spend time with indigenous communities around the world and learn from their stories,

and also grow up on a working farm in the UK. My early career as an athlete and performance psychologist led to a path in the corporate world; creating and leading campaigns for global luxury brands and strategic projects for the wealthiest 1% for 14 years. Through this I realised how disconnected humans are from each other and with nature, and no longer wanted to indirectly be an influential driving piece of this puzzle. Experiencing first hand during my short-lived life, the devastating loss of beauty in nature, I now give my energy and focus working with individuals, brands and organisations who make a truly positive impact on our planet. As a side hobby I enjoy farming biodynamically, and am a qualified dog behaviourist, animal reiki and trust technique practitioner.



Miriam Siemes works for the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Nairobi, Kenya. Previously, she worked for the University of Bonn and the German Agency for International Cooperation

(GIZ). She was also a non-resident fellow at the International Justice Initiative, where she conducted research for Professor Daniel B. Magraw on issues of international environmental law. As a Fulbright Scholar, she received an M.A. from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies SAIS (2020). She represented SAIS at the 2020 Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition. Her team qualified for the international rounds as the Regional Runner-up of the Mid-Atlantic Rounds. Ms. Siemes earned her B.A. in Liberal Arts and Science with Honors from the University College Maastricht (2018). During her undergraduate studies, she spent a semester abroad at Singapore Management University, for which she received the Duo-Singapore Exchange Fellowship Award in 2017.



Dafne Carletti is a researcher and communication officer working with NGOs in the field of Peace and Security in the Mediterranean region. She combines a background in International Relations with two years of professional experience in communication and research. She graduated in International Affairs from the University of Bologna and completed a Master of Arts at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). Her interests lie in social movements and civil disobedience, specifically in revolutionary processes leading to radical democratic transformations, and the role of digital technologies therein. She speaks Italian, English, and Spanish fluently, good French and an intermediate level of Arabic.





Yesenia Alfonso is a recent J.D./LL.M. graduate from the international arbitration program at the University of Miami School of Law, where her studies were particularly focused on investment arbitration and its role in Latin America. Prior to her studies in Miami, Yesenia completed a Bachelor of Laws at Queen Mary, University of London. She has a background in international relations and public policy, and she is passionate about identifying the pathways that converge between law, politics, and globalization to promote sustainable development.



Siming Zhai graduated from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) with a Master's in International Relations in 2022. She now lives in Shanghai. May peace be with all things.





This publication has been possible thanks to the valuable help of people at Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future and Forum Norway, and the United Nations Environment Programme Civil Society Unit and the Swedish Government financial support

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September 2023