



UNITED NATIONS

ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP

EMG

28th Senior Officials Meeting of the United Nations Environment Management Group

EMGSOM.28_5

Senior Segment, 3 November 2022
14.00 – 15.30 CET
Online

Distribution: EMG members

Strategic directions for the EMG: addressing the international environmental agenda and sustainability management in the UN system

Note by the Chair

Introduction

1. Under agenda item 3, Senior Officials will consider for adoption the recommendations from the technical segment of the meeting on actions related to the 2022-2023 EMG work plan. The proposed actions are presented in document EMGSOM.28_3c, and include cooperation on biodiversity, sustainable infrastructure, pollution, environmental rights, and UN sustainability.
2. Building on the outcome of agenda item 3, under agenda item 4 Senior Officials are invited to consider the overall strategic directions for the work of the EMG.
3. In preparation for this discussion, Senior Officials are invited to consider a draft strategic narrative for the EMG 2023-2030 (see [EMGSOM.28 INF 1](#)), as well as a proposal for implementing the UN Sustainability Strategy 2020-2030 (see [EMGSOM.28 INF 2](#)).
4. The following three key questions and ideas are proposed to stimulate and guide the Senior Officials' discussion. Senior Officials may also consider the findings of the EMG reports to the Stockholm+50 International Meeting and the recommendations from the related roundtable of EMG Heads of Agencies International Meeting provided in Annex I.

1. SYSTEM WIDE COHERENCE AND FUTURE READINESS OF THE EMG

Key question 1:

How could the EMG become more future ready to address emerging global trends that will impact international environmental governance? What are the opportunities and challenges?

5. The world faces a complex set of interlinked challenges that threaten human health, prosperity, and peace, the global environmental commons, as well as the timely achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These challenges include:
 - The triple planetary crisis consisting of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution
 - Deepening inequality
 - Increased poverty
 - The food and energy crisis
 - Forced migration
 - The peace and security crisis
 - Institutional siloes hampering integrated policymaking and implementation
6. These challenges speak to the need for global solidarity through enhanced multilateralism, with the United Nations system at its core. As underlined by the UN Secretary-General's 2021 report "Our Common Agenda", the economic security, social welfare, and political stability of countries, as well as the human rights of peoples, are intricately bound up with the health of ecosystems on land and sea, and that these challenges should be addressed together.
7. In this context, the EMG should look at the emerging trends in the global economic, environmental, and social fields that may have either adverse or positive effects on the effectiveness of international environmental governance arrangements. The EMG can explore ways in which the UN system can work together to mitigate adverse effects and capitalize on opportunities for further and coherent environmental action while being reflective of intergenerational equity, gender, and human rights imperatives.

2. STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPLEMENT SDGS

Key question 2:

How can the EMG strengthen partnerships to enhance the implementation of environmental SDGs and environmental dimensions of the SDGs?

8. Successful implementation of the 17 SDGs can only be realized with strong global partnerships and means of implementation built upon a shared vision placing people and the planet at the centre. Strong international cooperation is needed now more than ever to ensure that countries have the means to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and build back better.
9. In this context, the EMG can contribute to global partnerships on environmental SDGs and environmental dimensions of the SDGs through initiatives and activities that enable EMG members to discuss and cooperate on challenges and opportunities in areas such as global economic policy, environmental and climate science and actions, international trade and finance policies and technology and innovations. The EMG can facilitate strengthened cooperation and the sharing and mobilizing of knowledge, technology, and financial resources from multiple sources, to unlock opportunities for change and innovation across the UN system and its specialized agencies.
10. Methodological approaches for this work could include enhanced UN system-wide networking and supporting and enabling enhanced discussion by various stakeholders of interlinked policy areas and thereby contribute more effectively to multilateral environmental governance policy setting and implementation. This would enable the UN system to support the coherent, integrated, and effective management of the global environmental commons as a key element in the achievement of the SDGs.
11. To make its contribution more effective and tangible in response to country needs, the EMG can engage more actively with the private sector, youth as well as other interagency mechanisms such as the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO), the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP), UN Water, UN Energy and UN Oceans.

3. SUPPORTING UN SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP

Key question 3:

How can the UN continue to build on its gains and be a leading example in integrating environmental and social sustainability considerations across its work? What are the opportunities and challenges?

12. With the endorsement of the Strategy for Sustainability Management in the UN System, 2020–2030 by the EMG Senior Officials and Chief Executives Board in 2019 (Part I) and 2021 (Part II), the UN adopted the vision to be a leader in integrating environmental and social sustainability considerations across its work in a systematic and coherent way. Efforts are underway now to implement the Strategy through a proposed governance model provided in the document [EMGSOM.28 INF 2](#).
13. The pieces are in place for the UN to become bolder in improving its sustainability and communicating it clearly to Member States and other stakeholders. Senior Officials have an opportunity to express their high-level political intentions to implement the Strategy for Sustainability Management within their institutions and possibilities for joint action. They can exchange their inspiring experiences and practices on the journey towards UN leadership in sustainability management.

Annex I: Recommendations of the EMG reports to Stockholm+50 and opportunities to implement them

In 2022, in advance of the 50th anniversary of the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, the EMG prepared two documents which served as its contribution to the process. The reports “[Delivering on the vision of the 1972 Stockholm Declaration and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)” and “[The Impact of the Stockholm Conference on the UN System: Reflections of 50 Years of Environmental Action](#)” set out suggested areas of focus and accelerated action. These recommendations correspond with many of the 12 areas of action set forth in Our Common Agenda (reference in parenthesis), which also correspond with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

The UN system should:

1. Address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution jointly with countries and other stakeholders to jointly. (2)
2. Measure and manage the impact of growth on nature through improved metrics and decoupling economic development from its destructive footprint. (9)
3. Focus on impact at scale and better responses to Member States’ needs through coordinated UN actions, going beyond individual entity mandates. (8 and 10)
4. Raise awareness about the global nature of environmental problems. (10)
5. Use science, technology, and data effectively and make them accessible. (7)

At Stockholm+50, the EMG convened a roundtable discussion with 16 Heads of UN Agencies and MEAs, who shared their views on opportunities and priorities for accelerating delivery of the environmental dimension of the SDGs. Key messages from the roundtable, with reference to Our Common Agenda in parentheses, include:

1. The human right to a healthy environment represents a new opportunity for implementation of international environmental commitments and responding to the triple planetary crisis. (1 and 2)
2. Multilateral environmental agreements' (MEA) national focal points need to coordinate among themselves and with focal points for other UN agencies at the country level. (2, 8 and 10)
3. The environmental agenda is inter-related, requiring breaking down silos, reinvigorating multilateralism, and enhancing partnerships. (2, 8, 9 and 10)
4. The UN system needs to better engage with the private sector. (10)

Looking ahead there are several major intergovernmental processes where the EMG and its members can have a coordinated impact and implement some of the recommendations from the EMG’s contributions to Stockholm+50, “Our Common Agenda,” and the EMG Strategic Framework. The Senior Officials Meeting may want to consider embarking on joint contributions to some of these meetings to enhance the presence and actions of the UN wide system. These events are listed in chronological order in conjunction with the three elements of the triple planetary crisis.

Climate change

1. Montreal Protocol MOP 34: 31 October – 4 November 2022, Montreal, Canada.
2. UNFCCC COP27: 6-18 November 2022, Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt

3. IPCC approval session for the Sixth Assessment Synthesis Report: 13-17 March 2023 (Interlaken, Switzerland)
4. UNFCCC COP28: 6-17 November 2023, UAE

Biodiversity

1. Ramsar Convention COP 14: 5-13 November 2022, Geneva, Switzerland
2. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) COP 19: 14-25 November 2022, Panama City, Panama
3. UN Biodiversity Conference: 7-19 December 2022 (with negotiations on the post-2020 GBF from 3-5 December), Montreal, Canada

Pollution

1. Open-ended Working Group on a Science-Policy Panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution. Organizational session: 6 October 2022, Nairobi, Kenya. Substantive sessions will begin in 2023 (dates TBC)
2. Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. First session: 28 November – 2 December 2022, Punta del Este, Uruguay (continuing in 2023)
3. Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions COPs: 1-12 May 2023, Geneva, Switzerland
4. 5th meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM5) and the adoption of a new strategic approach for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020: 25-29 September 2023, Bonn, Germany)

Other

1. UN Conference of the Least Developed Countries: 5-9 March, Doha, Qatar
2. UN 2023 Water Conference—formally known as the 2023 Conference for the Midterm Comprehensive Review of Implementation of the UN Decade for Action on Water and Sanitation (2018-2028), co-hosted by Tajikistan and the Netherlands: 22-24 March 2023, UNHQ
3. High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the midterm review of the implementation of the Sendai Framework: 18-19 May 2023, UNHQ
4. UN Habitat Assembly: 5-9 June 2023, Nairobi
5. High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: 10-20 July 2023, UNHQ
6. SDG Summit – September 2023: UNHQ
7. Prep meeting for the Summit of the Future: September 2023, UNHQ (The Summit is in September 2024)
8. The 4th international conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States including regional preparatory meetings