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Item 6 of the provisional agenda

**Development of a medium-term strategy for the period 2026-2029 and a draft programme of work and budget for the period 2026-2027**



# Solutions for a healthy, prosperous and resilient people and planet: the United Nations Environment Programme Strategy for 2026–2029

## Summary

1. In decision 6/7, the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) requested the Executive Director, through inclusive and regular consultations with Member States and, as appropriate, relevant major groups and stakeholders to ensure all views are accounted for, to prepare a draft programme of work and budget for 2026–2027 and a draft Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) for 2026–2029. These documents are to be presented for consideration and approval by the Environment Assembly at the seventh session, following established processes set out in paragraph 11 of Governing Council decision 27/2.

2. UNEP's vision for this MTS is a healthy, prosperous and resilient people and planet. The vision builds on the three strategic objectives of the earlier MTS: **Climate Stability** by reducing emissions and enhancing adaptation and resilience; **Living in Harmony with Nature and Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality** by halting and reversing biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, maintaining ecosystem functions and services, and reducing desertification, land degradation and drought; and **A Pollution-Free Planet** by preventing, reducing and controlling exposures to harmful chemicals, waste and pollution. Achieving these strategic objectives will require *inter alia* a transformation of global economies, and a move towards more sustainable and equitable growth and development.

3. The MTS highlights the mission of UNEP as the leading global authority on the environment that has both a universal normative role and a role to support countries as they seek to implement country-level solutions to the multiple environmental crises threatening people and planet. UNEP prioritizes solutions that are trans-disciplinary and that deliver multiple benefits for countries. The MTS is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and supports countries in achieving long term sustainability – drawing on science, standards, technology and capacity building, while enhancing synergies with

Multilateral Environmental Agreements, including those administered by UNEP.

4. The MTS focuses on key action pathways. Enhancing sustainable consumption and production patterns by incorporating circularity and increasing the use of science and data to inform country-led solutions. Promoting strengthened environmental governance, institutional capacity and accountability to meet international commitments at all levels. Advancing the implementation of environmental rule of law and rights-based approaches. Encouraging the use of sectoral and integrated solutions that are country-relevant, country-led and sensitive to national contexts. Generating and re-directing finance to environmentally sustainable development. Promoting strengthened capacity for digital solutions and improving governance for inclusive, anticipatory and impactful use of AI for sustainable growth. All these pathways are focused on inclusive actions that incorporate the views and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, women, youth and other groups.

5. The MTS strengthens UNEP's previous strategy for 2022-2025, by aiming to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda through actions that back the environmental dimension of sustainable development. The implementation of the MTS will leverage the United Nations development system, aligning with the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for development of the United Nations System (A/RES/79/226), the Repositioning of the United Nations Development System (A/RES/72/279), UN 2.0 and the UN80 Initiative. This is expected to result in more coordinated, rapid and mutually supportive environmental solutions for healthy, prosperous and resilient people and planet.

6. The Programme of Work and budget (to be added as add.1) sets out the results framework for the biennium 2026–2027 across seven subprogrammes.

7. Member States reviewed the roadmap for the preparation of the MTS and Programme of Work and budget at the eleventh meeting of the Annual Subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives on 8-12 July 2024.

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## Abbreviations

| | |
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| CBD | Convention on Biological Diversity |
| GEF | Global Environment Facility |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| IPBES | Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change |
| IRP | International Resource Panel |
| LLDC | Land-locked Developing Country |
| LDC | Least-Developed Country |
| MTS | Medium-Term Strategy |
| Rio+20 | United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development |
| SIDS | Small Island Developing State |
| MEA | Multilateral Environmental Agreement |
| POW | Programme of Work |
| UNCCD | United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification |
| UNCED | United Nations Conference on Environment and Development |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNEP | United Nations Environment Programme |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| WHO | World Health Organization |
| WMO | World Meteorological Organization |

# I. Background: UNEP's environmental leadership role

**1. UNEP is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda.** Built on the edifice of science- and data-driven policy, UNEP has, since 1972, built a reputation as a trusted organization that produces high-quality science and associated guidance for understanding and responding to environmental challenges. Accordingly, UNEP is widely recognized as playing a key role in alerting the world to environmental challenges, while working with countries to support policies and actions that mitigate these challenges. UNEP's 2026-2029 Medium Term Strategy (MTS) focuses on UNEP's normative role and on supporting country action that demonstrates and promotes coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development. [1,2]

> "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, 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…"
>
> Source: *The Future we Want*, paragraph 88, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 27 July 2012.

**2. Science and environmental governance are the foundations of UNEP's work.** Solutions and decision-making processes supported by UNEP rely on state-of-the-art, robust science underpinned by quality data. UNEP will continue to provide credible science and learning insights to inform decision-making as the world approaches the deadline for Agenda 2030. Given the urgent timeline, UNEP will accelerate collaboration with partners, catalyse systemic interventions that engage financial and economic actors and leverage the power of digital technologies.

**3. UNEP supports countries to meet their environmental commitments.** UNEP is committed to delivering promises made to Member States in 2012 at Rio+20 and in its outcome document, 'The Future We Want'.[3] As such, the MTS reinforces UNEP's forward-looking vision for planetary and national sustainability, stability, security and intergenerational equity. It speaks to the central role of UNEP in supporting countries to deliver their environmental goals and commitments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Land Degradation Neutrality commitments and the Global Framework on Chemicals.

**4. Country relevant science-based solutions are the backbone of UNEP's work.** To address the three interconnected environmental crises of climate change; biodiversity loss, desertification, land degradation and drought; and pollution and waste, the MTS accelerates UNEP's solutions-oriented policies and action. UNEP is committed to tackling these crises through transformative multi-stakeholder actions that target the root causes and drivers of these crises and responds to their effects, while ensuring lasting and credible impact.

**5. UNEP will leverage the collective UN system to deliver environmental and sustainable development goals in the Decade of Action for Sustainable Development.** The MTS positions UNEP to strengthen the collective United Nations' and country responses to environmental degradation and climate change. UNEP will accelerate and implement country-relevant solutions while harnessing system-wide approaches. The MTS reinforces UNEP's commitment to impact, efficiency and accountability, recognizing that staff are the organization's greatest asset, and that inclusive leadership and robust systems are fundamental to UNEP's success.

**6. Multistakeholder consultations informed the preparation of the 2026-2029 MTS and Programme of Work and Budget for 2026–2027.** Critical to informing these documents were sessions at the 167th to 170th Meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives; informal dialogues with Member States; engagement with MEA Secretariats, Major Groups and Stakeholders, including the private sector and children and youth; UNEP internal workshops; and additional consultations with strategic partners, including other UN entities.

## II. Situation analysis

*Challenges*

7. **The environment continues to deteriorate.** Greenhouse gas emissions and associated climate instability, biodiversity loss, desertification, land degradation, drought and water scarcity, pollution and waste are harming planetary, human and economic health. The drivers of these crises are interrelated and reinforcing, affecting the most vulnerable amid widening inequality. These environmental crises are occurring against a backdrop of rapid social and technological change, increased environmentally induced migration and conflict, geopolitical instability, misinformation and decreasing trust in institutions. However, positive developments suggest that, with the right ambition and action, the world can overcome these crises.

8. **The climate is becoming increasingly unstable.** In 2023, concentrations of methane, $CO_2$ and $N_2O$ reached their highest levels in 800,000 years.[4] The past ten years broke records, with an average of 1.34-1.41°C above pre-industrial temperatures.[5] Glaciers are in retreat, sea ice is melting faster and ocean acidification continues.[6] The frequency and intensity of extreme weather is increasing – claiming lives, damaging property and causing forced migration.[7] The estimated adaptation costs for developing countries range from US$215-387 billion per year, but finance has been slow to materialise.[8]

**9. The economic cost of desertification, land degradation, drought and declines in nature and ecosystem services is on the rise**. Up to 40% of the planet's land is degraded[9], threatening roughly half of global GDP (US$44 trillion)[10]; an additional estimated four football fields of productive lands are lost every second.[11] Desertification, land degradation and drought cost the global economy US$878 billion every year,[12] affecting an estimated 213 million people, mostly in developing countries.[13] Freshwater species are being lost at a faster rate than those on land, with an estimated 24% of freshwater species at risk of extinction.[14,15] Rising temperatures threaten coral reefs, 70-90% of which are expected to die with 1.5°C of temperature rise.[16] Tropical primary forest loss persists. Fires are one of the biggest drivers of tree cover loss outside the tropics.[17] Biomass harvesting in agriculture and forestry accounts for 90% of land-based biodiversity loss and water stress,[18] requiring a rethink of approaches in a world with a growing population.

**10. An estimated nine million people die each year from pollution, predominantly air pollution**.[19] Nearly 90% of people living in urban areas are exposed to air pollution levels that exceed global guidelines[20]. Air pollution is one of the main environmental risk factors of non-communicable diseases[21] and air pollution-related healthcare expenses and lost productivity costs trillions of dollars globally each year.[22] Municipal solid waste is projected to rise from 2.1 billion tonnes in 2023 to 3.8 billion tonnes in 2050[23], underscoring the urgent need for waste prevention and circularity. Electronic waste is growing five times faster than recycling efforts.[24] Poor waste disposal practices cost an estimated US$361 billion annually.[25] Antimicrobial resistance is mounting because of increasing releases to the environment from agriculture, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, healthcare and municipal wastewater.[26]

**11. Increasing indebtedness is imperilling countries' ability to take environmental action.** As fiscal resources are increasingly constrained by debt, banks and markets will need to demonstrate greater willingness to take on investment risk in developing countries that are most affected by climate instability, land and water degradation, biodiversity loss and pollution.[27] Debts and the cost of debt servicing has been putting pressure on countries. In 2023, 54 developing countries allocated at least 10% of government revenue to interest payments.[28] These challenges compound the insecurity of countries, and inequity within and amongst them, and can reduce the ability of countries to focus on environmental action.

**12. Technological advances are straining the environment.** Growing demand for energy and resources from increased electrification, energy transitions, digitalization and use of frontier technologies is placing pressure on the environment and on communities. The computing power required for AI is projected to increase over a million times over the next few years.[29] As metals and minerals are critical to this transformation and to the clean energy transition, rare earth element demand is expected to grow fourfold by 2040.[30]

*Cause for optimism*

**13. Multilateral solutions are leading to positive environmental outcomes.** The operationalization of the Paris Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Land Degradation Neutrality commitments and the Global Framework on Chemicals provide momentum for addressing the three planetary environmental crisis. The Paris Agreement temperature goal provides the framework for country ambition on emissions reduction while the Global Goal on Adaptation target framework, currently under negotiation, will spur country ambition on adaptation. The Land Degradation Neutrality targets of the UNCCD provide the framing for restoring degraded land through initiatives such as the Great Green Wall. The recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment has empowered people to demand action to address environmental challenges. Controlling ozone-depleting substances under the Montreal Protocol has allowed the ozone layer to slowly heal. Since the Stockholm Convention took effect, concentrations of key persistent organic pollutants have declined in the environment and in people. Negotiations on an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution are ongoing.

**14. Within the mandate of promoting "the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the UN system"[31], UNEP will continue to leverage greater coherence, coordination and efficiency across the UN system**. Accordingly, UNEP builds on well-established business models for inter-agency coordination and works through the Resident Coordinator system at the country level, and through the Environmental Management Group at the system-wide level. Mission critical inter-agency platforms – such as One Health, UN-REDD, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and many others – are being scaled up and drive not only sector-specific impact but, as the Secretary General said [to UNGA 12/5/25] '…a more nimble and coordinated UN system fit to face the challenges of today and the next decade.'

**15. UN inter-agency efforts, including through the One Health approach, have seen important advances**. There is a growing recognition of the environmental dimensions of global health threats, including the emergence of zoonoses and antimicrobial resistance (AMR), and exposure to harmful chemicals, heavy metals and highly hazardous pesticides. There is also broader recognition of air and water pollution, climate change as a health burden and the reliance of human health on healthy ecosystems and biodiversity. Recent developments include the Political Declaration at the 2024 UN General Assembly High Level Meeting on AMR, which highlighted the imperative of tackling this challenge from the perspective of health, agriculture and the environment.

**16. Environmental solutions deliver for society and economy**. By placing sustainability at the heart of economic, financial and regulatory frameworks, environmental assets, financial assets and social assets can be maximised simultaneously. Investment in the low-carbon energy transition worldwide grew 11% to a record US$2.1 trillion in 2024.[32] Renewable power generation from wind and solar is now cheaper[33] [34] than the cost of power from fossil fuel-based electricity generation in most parts of the world.[35] Declining costs of renewables and other distributed energy technologies like energy storage can now enable truly local, decentralized energy systems, which can connect nearby renewable sources, waste heat, waste and storage with local demand for electricity, heating, cooling and mobility in an integrated way, reducing the need for major energy infrastructure investments. All this while creating jobs and opportunities and underpinning economic growth.

**17. Investments in natural systems that sustain humanity are critical.** Over half of global GDP depends on nature, with some estimates indicating the value of ecosystem services at approximately US$125-140 trillion per year.[36] Yet investments in Nature-based Solutions are only around US$200 billion per year, while finance flows to activities that harm nature are estimated at almost US$7 trillion.[37] To address this imbalance and meet global targets on climate, nature and land, flows to Nature-based Solutions must reach US$542 billion per year by 2030 and US$737 billion by 2050.[38] Climate finance increased by 30% from 2021 to reach $115.9 billion in 2022, with 60% of the total allocated to mitigation. Total adaptation finance rose to $32.4 billion from $10.1 billion in 2016.[39] While still inadequate, 2023 witnessed an

increase in these flows.[40] Additionally, the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage (established in 2024) marked an important milestone.

**18. Increased interest and focus on circular approaches.** Resource use has more than doubled over the past 50 years in developed countries, driven by infrastructure development and the shift of resource-intensive industries. It is intensifying in others.[41] Circular approaches built on sustainable consumption and production have been shown to build prosperous and healthy economies while generating jobs. These approaches promote continual reduction of unnecessary single and short-lived products, and reuse, refurbishment and recycling of products and materials. This conserves resources, reduces waste and lowers greenhouse gas emissions. Over 70 countries have already implemented circular economy policies, with tens of millions of associated new jobs predicted by 2030.[42]

**19. Technological advances are providing solutions.** Actions to enhance electrification, the energy transition, digitalization and frontier technologies are transforming economies and societies while creating jobs. Best practices that prevent further environmental degradation and support communities are emerging, such as renewable energy technologies, smart grid systems, precision agriculture, innovative product design, bioeconomy solutions, advanced waste management and digital solutions for resource efficiency.[43]

**20. The challenges and solutions are clear.** Responding to multiple crises requires integrated solutions. Political will and financial resources must be in synch to match these solutions and to customize them for country circumstances, while being system-wide, trans-disciplinary and focused on impact, equity, efficiency and accountability. UNEP acknowledges and highlights both the challenges and the solutions required, globally and nationally.

## III. Lessons learned – A continuous learning journey

**21. UNEP supports direct country action through its portfolio of US$2.65 billion (as of 15 April 2025).[44]** UNEP's core mission translates science-based advice, capacity building and technology transfer into country-level action support. UNEP's policy and operational portfolios provide important lessons for the 2026-2029 MTS. Internal learning, knowledge sharing and evaluations show the need for agility, flexible implementation, timely delivery, better alignment between core and extra-budgetary programmes, and strategic and stronger partnerships. Evaluations have also shown the need for stronger results frameworks, an integrated implementation architecture and responsive country operations through strengthened and sustainable engagement with Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams.[45]

**22. The 2026-2029 MTS is informed by these lessons**. While many recommendations are predicated on sufficient and stable financial resources, UNEP continues to become more effective, agile and operationally relevant, while continuing to deliver its global environmental norm-setting mandate and state of the art science and guidance to countries when requested. During this period, UNEP will specifically enhance its work through:

a) **Strengthened accountability and operational efficiency, while ensuring financial sustainability**. UNEP's Delivery Model Policy, launched in September 2022[46], focuses on establishing clearer responsibilities between UNEP's Regional Offices and Divisions, thus enhancing accountability and performance. UNEP is committed to advancing this model to effectively respond to the evolving needs of countries. UNEP is committed to realizing strong and client-responsive operational efficiency that ensures cost savings, without compromising impact or fiduciary oversight requirements. In this context, in response to UN80, UNEP's Executive Director has led a functional review to streamline UNEP's procedures and structures to achieve efficiencies, including merging the Early Warning and Assessment Division with the Chief Scientist's Office to focus on data, applied science and analytics. UNEP will also continue to focus on staff well-being and learning, as well as on streamlining internal structures and processes.

b) **Prioritizing impact and efficiency globally and nationally**. UNEP will continue to be selective in programmes and projects, focusing on areas where it has a clear mandate and comparative advantage to deliver the greatest impact and as requested by Member

States. UNEP will continue to address critical environmental challenges while contributing to sustainable economic growth and reducing poverty[47], fighting inequality[48], including gender inequality[49], and achieving the SDGs. UNEP will scale up meaningful youth engagement by supporting green job creation and actively promoting youth participation in environmental decision-making process.

c) **Deeper collaboration and coordination across the UN System as demand for UNEP's advice and services rises**. Increasing demand for UNEP's services and advice underscores UNEP's unique role in supporting the UN development system in becoming climate- and environment-responsive in strategies, programmes, operations and transitions. In the 2026-29 MTS, UNEP will endeavour to reinforce its role within the UN system, working closely with other UN entities to scale-up environmental outcomes in support of country priorities and to ensure that environment and climate considerations are integrated into development pathways. UNEP will strengthen the coordination role of the Environment Management Group to promote system-wide coherence and effectiveness on the environment; and further promote cross-agency cooperation with initiatives such as UN-REDD or partnerships such as the UNEP-convened Climate and Clean Air Coalition that also ensure joint delivery. Supporting MEAs will continue to be a focus: UNEP will ensure that decisions taken under MEAs are, to the extent feasible, integrated into policies, programmes and processes at all levels, including Regional Environmental Fora and the High-Level Political Forum. UNEP will demonstrate leadership in implementing the UN Common Approach to Biodiversity[50], the UN Common Approach to Pollution[51] and the Strategy for Sustainability Management in the UN system 2020-2030. Furthermore, UNEP will support UN-wide coordinated environmental action at global, regional and national levels, in support of countries and in alignment with national plans, priorities and frameworks. Additionally, as part of UN Country Teams, and in collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinators system, UNEP will increase efforts to mainstream environmental outcomes into UN country level planning and programming and galvanize joint UN country-level action in support of countries' efforts to deliver environmental result.

d) **Ensuring that UNEP is agile and future-fit**. UNEP is rapidly strengthening the organization's strategic foresight capabilities to seek greater agility across the subprogrammes. By institutionalizing advanced foresight, including horizon scanning, scenario planning, and early warning systems, UNEP is building a robust, organization-wide approach to anticipate, assess and proactively address emerging environmental risks and opportunities. During 2026-29, UNEP will support partners to better anticipate and prepare for future environmental challenges. UNEP will actively leverage scientific research and technological innovations such as AI and digitalization into planning and advisory work.

# IV. UNEP Vision for 2026-2029 and beyond

**23. UNEP's vision is to ensure a healthy, prosperous and resilient people and planet.** UNEP's mission is to realise this vision by supporting solutions to achieve the three strategic objectives of the MTS: Climate Stability; Living in Harmony with Nature and Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality; and A Pollution-Free Planet. UNEP will support delivery through finance, partnerships, technology and capacity building to address the underlying causes of unsustainable consumption and production that underpin the three environmental planetary crises.

**24. Key to UNEP's mandate is keeping the environment under review and supporting national and international environmental policy.[52]** By leveraging science, strengthening environmental governance, and encouraging global cooperation, UNEP aims to tackle emerging environmental challenges and support coordinated, impactful action. UNEP's three thematic subprogrammes will drive the MTS vision, while the two foundational and two enabling subprogrammes will, respectively, deliver the vision – through science, finance and economic instruments, environmental governance, and digital tools and platforms to enhance

international cooperation, strengthen capacity-building and share good practices. Innovative solutions for people and planet will be identified through working strategically with the private sector and engaging with youth, women and girls, as well as Indigenous Peoples and marginalized groups, to build trust and continued participation.

## A. Strategic objectives for delivering solutions

**25. UNEP will pursue the vision by developing responses and deploying solutions through three interconnected strategic objectives:**

**(a)** to achieve **Climate Stability** by reducing emissions and enhancing adaptation and resilience;

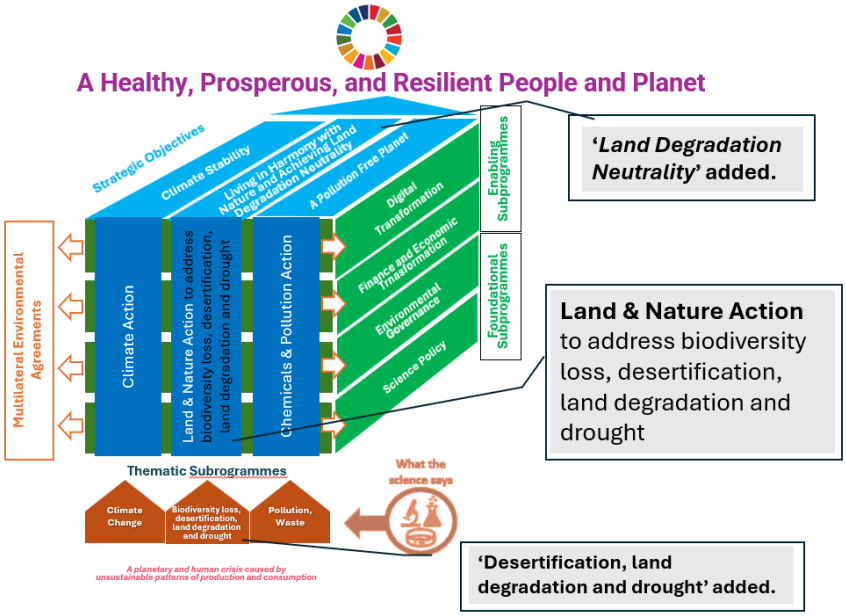
**(b)** to live in **Harmony with Nature and Achieve Land Degradation Neutrality** by halting and reversing biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation; maintaining ecosystem functions and services; and reducing desertification, land degradation and drought;

**(c)** to achieve **A Pollution-Free Planet** by reducing pollution and enhancing environmental quality and health for people and planet.

**26. These three strategic objectives will guide UNEP's subprogrammes and project portfolios; shape partnerships, direct resource mobilization; and align financial and human resource allocations, reporting and results.** Special attention will be paid to how the three objectives reinforce one another. Examples include bioeconomy, regenerative agriculture and agro-ecology, reduction of methane emissions, integrated environment and health policies and circular economy approaches.

**27. Innovative solutions will be identified through working strategically with governments, Major Groups, business and industry, children and youth, women and girls, Indigenous Peoples, marginalized groups, private sector and local communities**. UNEP's partnerships with other UN agencies and MEA Secretariats will also become more intentional and targeted.

**28. UNEP's resource mobilization efforts and allocation of financial and human resources will be aligned to its subprogrammes by linking them to expected results**. Financial flows into UNEP and results will be closely monitored, with updates provided to Member States to ensure transparency.



## Strategic Objective 1: Climate Stability

**29. An accelerated global response towards climate stability aligned with the Paris Agreement and the recommendations of the Global Stocktake[53] can prompt resilience and sustainable development opportunities for all**. Paying particular attention to high emitting sectors; vulnerable countries, such as those affected by disasters and conflicts[54]; LDCs; SIDS and LLDCs will be key.

**30. Under this strategic objective, UNEP seeks to 1) reduce GHG emissions, and 2) enhance resilience and adaptation to impacts of climate change.** These impacts will be achieved through partnerships and integrated approaches on science, governance, finance and sectoral solutions towards closing the mitigation and adaptation gaps. Large-scale implementation also calls for strengthening collaboration with entities such as the Global Environment Facility, the Green Climate Fund and the UNEP-hosted Climate Technology Centre and Network, and for commitment across the wider UN system – including with UN Country Teams, linking climate action to the development, humanitarian and security agendas.

## Strategic Objective 2: Living in Harmony with Nature and Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality

**31. This strategic objective aims to strengthen ecosystem stability and resilience through advancing sustainable biodiversity and land management practices, improved management of natural and productive ecosystems, and ecosystem restoration**. UNEP will promote sustainable management of nature, land, water and ocean by mainstreaming nature-positive policies and actions across sectors and systems, promoting green accounting and valuation of natural capital, and aligning financial systems with environmental goals.

**31. The two medium-term impacts of this objective are: 1) enhanced ecosystems stability to enhance resilience and adaptation of people and ecosystems, and 2) the effective integration of sustainable management of biodiversity, land, water and oceans across sectors and systems.** These impacts will be achieved by strengthening coherence across policy, legal and regulatory frameworks; scaling up nature-based and innovative solutions; addressing desertification, land degradation and drought; and promoting a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to address interrelated nature conservation and development challenges. Particular attention to high-risk areas such as coastal zones, low-lying islands, areas prone to sand and dust storms, and disaster and conflict affected regions will be crucial. These efforts will include developing supportive policies and institutional frameworks, facilitating access to financial resources and building capacity to strengthen transparency, accountability and governance systems – all to deliver on biodiversity, land, ocean and water-related multilateral commitments. Indigenous People, who are the stewards of large tracts of land and biodiversity, will be critical partners to control and guide activities in their territories.

## Strategic Objective 3: A Pollution-Free Planet

**32. This strategic objective aims to reduce pollution and enhance environmental quality and health for people and planet**. Countries will be assisted in identifying and addressing major polluting sectors and sources that contribute to pollution and its impacts. Efforts will be made to inform and engage all sectors of society.

**33. The medium-term impact of this strategic objective is reduced exposure of people and planet to harmful chemicals and pollution**. Key activities will include strengthening legal, policy and regulatory frameworks; improving access to science and pollution data; and promoting sustainable consumption and production, technologies and solutions that reduce risk and increase preparedness to address pollution, including in disaster and conflict situations. Coordinated action across the UN and scientific bodies will include a sound science-policy basis, capacity building, technical support and creating market incentives for cleaner and circular alternatives and low-pollution solutions, while strengthening capacities for sound management of chemicals and waste, pollution prevention and control, and supporting implementation and scaling up of effective action.

## B. Achieving impact through complementarities and synergies: UNEP's Thematic Subprogrammes

**34. UNEP's three thematic subprogrammes will drive the MTS's vision through developing responses and solutions to achieve the interlinked strategic objectives**. The two foundational and two enabling subprogrammes will deliver the vision through science, environmental governance, finance and economic instruments, and digital tools and platforms.

**35. All seven subprogrammes will work in an integrated, transdisciplinary fashion to deliver results**. Key principles will be to reduce poverty and inequality, increase the efficient use of natural resources, reduce tensions and conflicts, uphold the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, empower women and deliver benefits for everyone – all of which are crucial to sustainable development. Scientific data, analysed and used by these subprogrammes, will be gender/sex disaggregated, as relevant and possible.

### i. Thematic Subprogramme: Climate Action

**36. Low-carbon and resource-efficient economic activities for emissions reduction.** UNEP will support countries to take advantage of opportunities presented by low-carbon, resource-efficient economic activities. UNEP will focus on high-impact sectors, identified by the latest scientific evidence, and promote solutions ranging from energy-efficient technologies to reducing material use. Emphasis will be placed on integrating proven and innovative technologies, including digital technologies, into sectoral, national and sub-national policies and decisions. In addition, UNEP will support countries to address growing cooling needs and reduce short-lived climate pollutants, such as methane and other non-$CO_2$ emissions. This includes reducing hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) through the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, which has huge potential for slowing global warming. Furthermore, UNEP will advise countries on scalable solutions to achieve their Nationally Determined Contributions and other commitments under the Paris Agreement. UNEP will create a conducive environment for these transitions by raising awareness and fostering societal uptake and behaviour change for low-carbon solutions across sectors and different levels of governance, including local level, which can generate new business opportunities, new skills and jobs.

**37. Access to technology and financial resources for improved mitigation.** UNEP will support countries' access to technology and efforts to secure finances to implement transformative sectoral solutions and initiatives. UNEP will support the leveraging of finance, including vertical funds, to assist in the adoption of clean and digital technologies and business models that support mitigation and low-carbon pathways in private and public investments and long-term planning across sectors. Leveraging the organization's diverse partnerships and multi-stakeholder platforms, UNEP will accelerate advising on public policies, fiscal incentives and consumer and product information tools that underpin the macroeconomic case for emissions reduction, halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation, and enhancing forest carbon stocks.

**38. Adaptation support using Nature-based Solutions and innovative technologies to promote resilience.** With climate impacts intensifying, UNEP's work on adaptation and resilience will aim at (i) future proofing development choices and investments, particularly in urban settings and for critically vulnerable socio-economic sectors and countries; (ii) upscaling the deployment of Nature-based Solutions and ecosystem-based adaptation in a way that is financially viable; and (iii) enabling access to finance, supporting the deployment of financial instruments and mechanisms and engaging with financial institutions to safeguard socio-economic fabrics and ecosystem functions in the long run. Adaptation solutions to extreme heat, sea-level rise, glacier melt, floods and droughts will be tested, deployed and scaled up – in a transboundary manner where needed.

**39. A range of instruments will be deployed to enable decisions and policies that entail trade-offs and win-wins.** Initiatives that combine knowledge and scientific products, and advisory and policy expertise for joint mitigation and adaptation outcomes will be taken forward. Subsectors such as passive cooling, waste management approaches and forward-looking ecosystem restoration will be areas of focus. The default approach will be through dedicated country and city level programmes, given the local nature of adaptation impacts.

Regional, transboundary and multi-country initiatives will aim to leverage impact by combining forces with the private sector and ensuring the security of key supply chains of climate vulnerable commodities. Partnerships, multilevel governance, multi-stakeholder platforms and financial instruments will be deployed to address the multi-faceted challenges and sectors required for meaningful adaptation outcomes and capacities.

**40. Measuring progress towards mitigation and adaptation.** Based on country demand and supported by the Science-Policy, Environmental Law and Governance and Digital Transformation subprogrammes, UNEP will provide the best science and policy practices to guide countries and non-state actors in assessing progress and evaluating the need for enhanced action and financial support. Providing reliable, accessible, state-of-the-art information that reduces uncertainty and risk in decision-making will remain UNEP's core offer. Through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the International Resource Panel, UNEP's flagship reports (e.g., Gap Reports), and the portfolios on transparency and early warning, UNEP will deploy the latest climate change metrics and sectoral knowledge. Remote sensing and artificial intelligence will increasingly provide data insight for better decision-making. Synergies will be pursued with global and regional MEAs to facilitate digitalization, coordination and complementarity across transparency and reporting obligations.

### ii. Thematic subprogramme: Land and Nature Action

**41. Enhancing the stability and resilience of ecosystems.** UNEP will focus on addressing the drivers of biodiversity loss by strengthening the management and restoration of critical natural and productive ecosystems in pursuit of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. UNEP will also focus on achieving Land Degradation Neutrality through measures to reduce desertification, land degradation and drought, and enhance land restoration. This includes supporting Indigenous Peoples in managing their lands and natural resources, working with local communities promoting Nature-based Solutions for disaster risk reduction, and broad engagement at all levels. These efforts will contribute to building ecological resilience and support the implementation of CBD and UNCCD objectives and other biodiversity-related MEAs.

**42. Strengthening transboundary and international cooperation to ensure more harmonized ecosystem management across national borders.** Mechanisms such as the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans and support to SIDS and MEAs will play a central role in this effort.

**43. Effective integration of sustainable management of biodiversity, land, water and ocean across sectors and systems**. UNEP will address interrelated nature conservation and development challenges through systemic approaches across sectors and systems. This includes the adoption of nature-aligned policies, legislation and strategies across sectors; supporting the valuation of ecosystem services and natural capital, emphasizing their return on investment and the costs of inaction; assisting countries in adopting green and true-cost accounting approaches that reflect the full economic value of natural resource use, ensuring informed decision-making across society; and promoting integrated, cross-sectoral solutions and behaviour change initiatives that deliver multiple benefits for food security, health, economies, ecosystems and people, while minimizing potential trade-offs.

**44. Aligning public and private sector finance flows with the goals of MEAs and national and regional strategies**. This work will include engaging the financial sector and policymakers in improving financial decision-making, assessing nature-related risks and promoting transparency. By supporting catalytic finance mechanisms at global, national and subnational level, business incubation and nature-aligned practices, UNEP will help create an enabling environment for sustainable investment.

**45. Strengthening transparency, accountability and governance to deliver biodiversity, land, water and ocean related commitments**. This includes enhancing the monitoring and reporting capacity of countries and strengthening coherence to support progress towards implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the UNCCD Strategic Framework 2018–2030 and aspiration to Land Degradation Neutrality, Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2026-2029 and the Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction agreement, subject to entry into force; and supporting the rights and benefits of

Indigenous Peoples, local communities and marginalized groups, including youth, through a rights-based approach to nature. Additionally, UNEP will improve policy and institutional frameworks by enabling countries to access public and private financial resources for MEA implementation.

### iii. Thematic subprogramme: Chemicals and Pollution Action

**46. Scaling up circular, zero-waste and pollution-free sectors and value chains.** UNEP will work with governments, the private sector and stakeholders to support key sectors and value chains to reduce pollution footprints. Countries will be enabled to develop tailored solutions to address key sources of pollution and move towards circularity and sustainable consumption and production approaches, including responsible mining. Such solutions will work to minimize waste generation and reduce releases of pollutants to air, soil and water, while reducing exposures to harmful chemicals across the life-cycle. These efforts will help reduce in-country and transboundary pollution and impacts on climate, land and nature, demonstrating that industry and governments can be competitive while environmental and health risks are reduced.

**47. Reducing pollution and promoting circularity in the manufacturing sector.** Emphasis will be placed on the value chains of plastics, textiles, building materials and electronics. UNEP will support the reduction of air, water, marine and soil pollution, and other environmental footprints of products, through promoting circularity and sustainable consumption and production approaches, green and sustainable chemistry, and safer and innovative alternatives at every stage of the life-cycle. This work will demonstrate the link between pollution reduction and circularity while creating jobs and added business value.

**48. Promoting a circular economy in the mining sector**. Working with governments, industry and stakeholders including from civil society, UNEP will focus on minerals and metals to reduce pollution and environmental impacts across their life-cycle. UNEP will support policy development, provide technical guidance and foster partnerships to improve sustainability across supply chains. UNEP will tailor support to national contexts, targeted to different economies and their challenges. Promoting a circular approach in this sector will promote responsible and environmentally sound material sourcing while driving resource efficiency, job creation and investment. These efforts will contribute to implementing the recommendations of the UN Secretary-General Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals[55].

**49. Reducing pollution in the agri-food sector**. UNEP will focus on economically viable solutions to pesticides, food-systems' effluents, excess nutrients (chiefly nitrogen and phosphorus), methane emissions, air pollution, plastic pollution and pollution contributing to antimicrobial resistance, in collaboration with relevant UN agencies and organizations, through the One Health approach and engagement in the Food Systems Coordination Hub.

**50. Reducing the pollution footprint of the transport, waste, energy, and buildings and construction sectors**. By supporting efforts for waste reduction, particularly organic waste, and wastewater management, UNEP will also address the mitigation potential this sector represents, particularly in regard to methane and NOx. UNEP will also address the mitigation potential from decentralized, local energy solutions that can integrate multiple sectors, including waste, transport, and buildings and construction, to deliver lower cost, faster and more resilient mitigation.

**51. Access to science and data on pollution and its sources towards management and control frameworks.** To promote the establishment of effective pollution prevention and control and chemical management frameworks, UNEP will support access to credible data to back stronger legal, policy and regulatory frameworks, and effective technologies and solutions. UNEP will help create enabling environments and market incentives to attract investment in low-pollution products and services, while building public awareness and consumer demand. UNEP will strengthen preparedness and response capacities to prevent and manage pollution risks in disaster and conflict situations.

**52. Support to the UNEP-hosted Global Framework on Chemicals, MEAs and other frameworks.** UNEP will support the implementation of the Global Framework on Chemicals to enhance the sound management of chemicals and waste, and will contribute to the objectives

and commitments under the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, the Minamata Convention, and the Montreal Protocol and its Kigali amendment, all of which have UNEP-hosted secretariats.[56] UNEP will also contribute to other relevant MEAs, panels and platforms – including the legally binding instrument on plastic pollution and the science-policy panel on chemicals, waste and pollution, both under negotiation.

**53. Promoting sound management of chemicals and waste and the uptake of solutions to reduce air and source-to-sea pollution.** UNEP will support governments to promote improved air quality and prevent and address land and sea-based pollution, across sectors and systems. In doing so, UNEP will leverage interagency partnerships, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral alliances, including the UNEP-convened Climate and Clean Air Coalition, and intergovernmental cooperation networks. Working with key partners, UNEP will continue to promote and support integrated action on multiple environmental and health benefits, including through a One Health approach to address risks at the environment-plant-animal-human interface, which often disproportionately affect the most vulnerable communities.

## C. Supporting and informing impacts: UNEP's Foundational Subprogrammes

### i. Foundational subprogramme: Science-Policy

**54. Key to UNEP's mandate is keeping the environment under review and supporting national and international environmental policy**. By leveraging science, strengthening environmental governance and encouraging global cooperation, UNEP aims to tackle emerging environmental challenges and drive coordinated, impactful action.

**55. Collecting, analysing and communicating scientific data and evidence**. In fulfilling the mandate to 'keep the world environmental situation under review', UNEP will strengthen activities to collect, analyse, synthesize and communicate scientific data and insights to provide early warning services to Member States with a renewed focus on solutions. UNEP will support Member States' capacity in the collection and use of scientific evidence from multiple disciplines towards the development of policies, decision-making and management actions to protect the environment. Tools such as horizon scanning, strategic foresight and policy-tracking will guide the implementation of the MTS.

**56. Deepening collaboration with Indigenous Peoples on environmental knowledge.** Building on lessons from the IPCC, IPBES, the IRP and the Science-Policy subprogramme, UNEP will enhance collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, local knowledge holders and citizen scientists to democratize data and knowledge. UNEP's Science-Policy Subprogramme serves as a supporting framework for scientific data and its interpretation related to sectors, ecosystems and the development of integrated solutions.

**57. Development and accessibility of reliable, coherent, and harmonized information, and knowledge to support interdisciplinary assessment for policy-making.** UNEP will work to enhance communication and engagement on environmental science across diverse audiences to foster greater understanding, encourage policy and management action, and advance science diplomacy. UNEP will integrate new approaches in how science is generated, analysed, shared and communicated, ensuring it plays a proactive role in shaping action. By building robust knowledge architecture, UNEP aims to position science not only as a diagnostic tool but as a driver of policy coherence, innovation and transformative change across the global environmental agenda. Science-policy and digital services will work closely in developing interactive digital products and contributing to the implementation of the Global Environmental Data Strategy and the enhancement of the World Environment Situation Room.

### ii. Foundational subprogramme: Environmental Law and Governance

**58. Effective environmental governance provides the policy, legal and institutional framework needed to realize global environmental goals and commitments**. This subprogramme supports Member States in developing and implementing effective laws and policies at all levels to achieve internationally agreed environmental commitments and goals, including those under MEAs, in a coherent manner. Similarly, via the Environment Management Group and the Sustainable UN initiative, UNEP coordinates and guides the UN system in the integration of environmental considerations at policy, strategic and programmatic

levels, as well as guiding internal environmental sustainability commitments and reporting.

**59. Fifth Montevideo Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law.** Using the Montevideo Programme as a guide, UNEP will contribute to advancing the environmental rule of law. It will provide technical legal assistance, guidance materials and innovative tools to support Member States as they strengthen institutions and develop and enforce effective environmental policies and laws.

**60. The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.** The UN General Assembly recognized this right, with 164 Member States enshrining it in national constitutions and laws and regional intergovernmental instruments. UNEP will catalyse a whole-of-society approach and support to Member States, civil society, Indigenous Peoples, environmental human rights defenders and local communities by providing awareness, advocacy, tools and technical support, in partnership with relevant stakeholders and rightsholders

**61. Strengthening support to governing bodies and collaboration with MEA Secretariats**. UNEP hosts 15 MEAs, many regional inter-governmental partnerships and science-policy bodies such as IPBES and IPCC (with WMO). While recognizing their independence, UNEP is in an effective position to promote effectiveness, coherence and synergies in their implementation. UNEP will provide legal advice and guidance on questions of international environmental law, procedure and the UN regulatory frameworks, and will support their implementation.

**62. Horizon scanning for emerging issues in environmental law and governance**. Within the mandate, UNEP will develop knowledge products to support Member States to understand, navigate and engage with evolving issues, catalysing experts and creating networks to provide cutting-edge legal perspectives on scientific advancements and developments in environmental law.

## D. Strengthening and scaling impact: UNEP's Enabling Subprogrammes

### i. Enabling subprogramme: Finance and Economic Transformations

**63. Scaling up enabling policies and action for just transitions to circular and resilient economies and societies**. Enabling the three strategic objectives of the MTS requires injecting sustainability into the heart of economic, finance, legal and regulatory frameworks. Based on national and regional priorities and circumstances, UNEP will support the unlocking of public and private finance to drive investment into high-impact sectors.

**64. Accelerating circularity and sustainable consumption and production (SCP) policies and initiatives**. UNEP will support policies and initiatives that contribute to reducing greenhouse gas and pollutant emissions and restoring ecosystem functions and services. For markets to move, the right enabling environment is critical. UNEP will support the reorientation of demand-side drivers through supporting sustainable public procurement, consumer information, digital product information systems and sustainable lifestyles, all informed by life-cycle approaches.

**65. Catalysing private investments for SCP and circularity in high impact sectors.** The private sector is increasingly investing and lending in new and emerging areas that have a sustainability dimension and are aligned to Member States' economic and social priorities, including support to small- and medium-sized enterprises. Private sector actors, especially the banking and insurance sectors, are working with UNEP to take advantage of these opportunities and send the right market signals for this transformation. UNEP will advance global frameworks, collaborate with the broader UN system and support solutions through unlocking capital to achieve net-zero, nature-positive, pollution-free and circular economy outcomes.

**66. Unleashing the power of the public budget and fiscal policies to leverage private sector financing and investment**. UNEP will support interested Member States to use their public budgets and expenditures to leverage private sector investments for long-term sustainability. Public finance is an essential enabler for a resilient and sustainable economy and fiscal policies and reforms can help to realign incentives, repurpose harmful subsidies and redirect these flows to achieve sustainable transformation. UNEP will scale up efforts to

support Member States with science-based knowledge, capacities and technical support for price incentives and tax reforms, among other tools. This can help to redirect and catalyse greater investments in innovative solutions.

**67. Establishing metrics to track both stocks and flows of natural and other forms of capital**. UNEP will support these new metrics to inform economic and financial decisions and guide policymaking. UNEP's work on metrics will help to assess resource use, availability and potential value-add to promote growth in jobs and income, and inform countries about the potential impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification, land degradation and drought, and exposure to chemicals and pollution on human well-being and labour productivity.

### ii. Enabling subprogramme: Digital transformations

**68. Harnessing digital innovation, data ecosystems, and emerging technologies to accelerate the delivery of climate stability, nature and land protection, and a pollution-free planet**. The ambition of this subprogramme is to empower UNEP and Member States to make data and digital infrastructure a backbone of environmental action.

**69. The World Environment Situation Room (WESR) is an interoperable, user-centric platform for accessing and analysing environmental data**. By embedding analytics that link environmental change to economic, health and social outcomes, WESR will support decision-making across all seven subprogrammes, from tracking pollution hotspots to mapping land degradation and modelling consumer information pathways. To underpin this, UNEP and partners will help to implement the Global Environmental Data Strategy to ensure data quality, interoperability and affordability, and robust governance. This will unlock better monitoring of the SDGs, enhance alignment with MEAs, and inform interventions across subprogrammes. This will also ensure UNEP's science-policy work is data-rich, that finance flows are informed by verifiable indicators, and that governance frameworks can monitor environmental compliance and impacts in near real time.

**70. Strengthening digital capacity within the Secretariat and across Member States.** UNEP will expand the Digital Accelerator Lab as a hub for co-developing AI-powered tools and frontier tech applications that are context-appropriate, inclusive and sustainable. These innovations will support scenario planning, early warning systems, Nature-based Solutions and circular economy initiatives. This includes co-creating digital tools with Member States, MEA secretariats, local communities, youth, Indigenous Peoples and private sector innovators; and ensuring that climate action, pollution tracking, and Nature-based Solutions are accessible, locally relevant and impactful. UNEP will also seek to deliver targeted digital capacity-building to Member States, with a focus on SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs. This includes advancing digital literacy for environmental officials, supporting the integration of digital tools into national development plans, and supporting regional capabilities for cross-border environmental action.

**71. Strengthening governance and use of AI tools used for environment**. Recognizing the growing role and risks of emerging technologies, UNEP will strengthen the capacity to assess and shape the governance of AI for environment, while continuing to monitor other emerging technologies such as blockchain, 6G, quantum computing and Extended Reality. Working through multi-stakeholder platforms such as the Coalition for Digital Environmental Sustainability, UNEP will develop sustainability principles and best practices for the responsible deployment of these technologies, to enable solutions without exacerbating environmental harm.

## V. Accelerating transformative change for a healthy, prosperous and resilient people and planet

**72. A clear, cohesive path to achieving the 2030 Agenda**. UNEP's last strategy before the 2030 deadline outlines a solutions pathway to achieve the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and paragraph 88 of "The Future We Want", guided by a long-term vision of planetary sustainability for people, prosperity and peace. Drawing on lessons learned from the previous strategy and programme implementation, UNEP will harness the Decade of Action for Sustainable Development to support Member States in achieving the SDGs, serving

as a catalyst and convener of action, while localizing environmental SDGs.

**73. Support and ambition from Member States is key to UNEP's impact and influence**. Political will and full contributions to the Environment Fund are key to keeping pace with today's challenges. In 2024, 94 Member States contributed to the Environment Fund, the foundation of UNEP's work. In addition, three UNEP Planetary Funds, focused on climate, nature and pollution, are delivering tangible impacts on the ground, demonstrating the power of strategic investment. Additional earmarked funds and partnerships are crucial to expand UNEP's impact and influence and for countries to deliver on their environmental commitments.

[1] A/RES/66/288: The Future we Want
[2] The words Strategy, MTS, Medium Term Strategy are used interchangeably in the document.
[3] A/RES/66/288: The Future we Want
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