United Nations Environment Programme
9 March 2026

Committee of Permanent Representatives
Subcommittee meeting
Nairobi, 19 March 2026
10:00 – 12:00 (GMT+3)
Hybrid meeting
Conference Room 4 (in person)
and Microsoft Teams (online)

Agenda item 2: Briefing on the Office of Science (OOS) and Uplifting Science at UNEP.

This background document has been developed by the Secretariat of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to brief the Committee on the newly established Office of Science.

The note highlights the uplift of science in UNEP to ensure that UNEP delivers clear, integrated science that drives action and shapes policy on interconnected environmental challenges, with a strong focus on solutions and impact. Following the presentation, the Committee is invited to take note of the briefing and engage in an exchange of views with Committee members and the Secretariat.

I. Introduction

1. UNEP is strengthening the role of science at UNEP to promote (i) climate stability, by reducing emissions and enhancing adaptation and resilience; (ii) living in harmony with nature: land, ocean and freshwater; and achieving land degradation neutrality, with actions to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, to address desertification, land degradation and drought, and to conserve and restore terrestrial, marine and freshwater ecosystems; and (iii) promoting a pollution-free planet, by reducing pollution and enhancing environmental quality and health for people and planet.
2. The vision for the Office of Science (OOS) is to strengthen UNEP's scientific capacity, credibility and impact by advancing robust, interdisciplinary data, information, knowledge and evidence, and effective science–policy interfaces, ensuring that UNEP's science serves Member States and stakeholders best in informing their policies, decisions and actions for people and planet.

II. Key Goal: Keeping the world environment under review and delivering science to inform policies and actions. This will be achieved by:

4. The provision of credible, robust scientific advice, environmental data analysis and intelligence for the organisation to support SPIs, Member States and stakeholders.
5. Facilitating and supporting the application of high-quality data, analytics and intelligence across activities and disciplines.
6. Undertake scientific assessments, foresight and horizon scanning on emerging issues, and collect and synthesize evidence for science-based impact.
7. Support initiatives on early warning for all, including technical and scientific advice on preparedness, prevention and response initiatives:
8. Promoting and strengthening the evidence base and capability of UNEP's science function.
9. Continue to work through science partnerships and networks: build, maintain and strengthen science partnerships and networks to enhance organizational goals, capacity and capability in the field of science.

III. Structure and Activities in the Office of Science

10. Apart from advancing implementation of the Science-Policy Sub-Programme in UNEP and providing administrative support to the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) and the GEF's Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), activities in the Office of Science will focus on three main fields organized in sections: (a) Science Strategy and Operations, (b) Data Analytics, Statistics and Intelligence, and (c) Evidence and Synthesis.

(i) Science Strategy and Operations Section

11. Key functions of the Science Strategy and Operations Section include: support the coordination of the office including managing finance, budget and human resources; setting of strategy for the Office of Science and UNEP as a whole; managing the publications system, quality processes, peer review, and support the development of high quality communications assets; maintaining partnerships with experts and specialists; review of quality-assurance processes and set guidance on key issues for UNEP deliverables;
12. Maintain relationships with collaborating centers and other science bodies and through the UN Country Teams; strengthen global science engagement through dialogues with science panels on global assessments , enhance engagement with developing country institutions on a wider range of environmental related disciplines, and manage training initiatives and communities of practice as well as facilitating science-based fellowships and mentoring and engage with a broad network of scientific organizations further bolstering UNEPs scientific endeavors. It also oversees the development and implementation of knowledge management and science strategies
13. **Key activities in 2026 in Science Strategy and Operations**
    - Science Strategy – Under development
    - Knowledge Management Strategy – Close to finalization

- Establishing office administration/HR management, reporting and finance systems
- Finalize the design and development of the Science Communication online Training course on UNEP's WeLearn platform.
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(ii) Evidence and Synthesis Section

14. The Evidence and Synthesis Section undertake reviews, assessments, analysis and synthesis of data and literature with the aim to provide expert knowledge on priority and emerging topics; Supports and develops global science-based indicators and impact metrics; and provides high level technical and specialist support to UNEP, the UN system and member states.

15. **Key activities in 2026 in Evidence and Synthesis include**
    - Post-GEO-7: Outreach; Data into WESR; Consultations on UNEP's future global assessment.
    - Frontiers 2026-2027 Report: Issue on Emerging Issues of Concern
    - Issue Notes: Biodegradability, Plastics and Health, among others.
    - Capacity Building: Science Communication Training; Science Seminars; Community of Practice on Behavioural Sciences
    - Representation and Networks: e.g., Arctic/Polar Issues; Research for Life
    - Environmental Policy Tracker: Online tracking platform for monitoring information on environmental policy instruments

(iii) Data Analytics, Statistics, and Intelligence Section

16. Facilitate the management of bodies such as Global Environment Facility's Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (GEF STAP), Facilitate collation of global environmental monitoring system (GEMS) of priority environmental parameters such as air, freshwater, groundwater, oceans, soil quality, pollution; Promote the statistical analysis of environmental parameters and factors influencing environmental outcomes as well as providing an integrating function interpreting results for significance and attribution of factors to outcomes thereby supporting the evidence base and in application of appropriate tools and methods and identifying and monitoring emerging issues and environmental trends. Coordinate the monitoring and reporting of the 25 SDG Indicators under UNEP Custodianship and aid in the setting of standards for the quality of environmental data, information, targets and indicators and establishing 'weight of evidence' approaches. Lead in advancing foresight and intelligence in UNEP.

17. **Key activities in 2026 in the Data Analytics, Statistics, and Intelligence Section**

    The key activities of DASI Section is as follow:
    - Support the development of the impact measurement methodology (common metadata sheets)
    - Develop Level 2 water quality indicators and methodologies using Earth Observation, biological indicators and microplastics.
    - Develop the online training courses for Economy-Wide Material Flow Accounts and integrate on UNEP's WeLearn platform.
    - Support countries in the development of pilot list of core gender-sensitive climate change statistics and indicatorsand discuss with national statisticalinstitutes for their further inclusion in the Global Set of Climate Change Statistics and Indicators.
    - Support countries in the calculation of their water, land, material, carbon and energy footprints and the reporting on SDG Indicators 8.4.1-12.2.1 Material Footprint by organizing two regional webinars on the Global Footprint Tool
    - Conduct three inception workshops (Sierra Leone, Seychelles, Zambia) to monitor and take action to improve water quality (inland and marine) using traditional and local knowledge.
    - Launch the prototype of Future Tends and Signals dashboard and conduct regional workshops in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean together with UN Country Team (UNCT) representatives
    - Launch the Environmental Policy Tracker (EPT) for Air Quality prototype
    - Development and launch of the Istanbul Environment Centre (digital platform) delivering actionable insights and data-driven analysis to support the objectives of Zero Waste Foundation and Türkiye's national Zero Waste Programme.
    - Continued work on horizon scanning and Foresight to embed functions in UNEP. Provide technical support for monitoring water quality, e-waste and plastics. Data compilation and reporting

- Consolidate and quality-assure UNEP's submission on data and storylines on environmental SDG indicators under its custodianship in preparation of the Secretary General Progress Report on the implementation of 2030 Agenda, the SDG Report 2026 and SG report on Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS)
- Carry data collection from countries for the following SDG indicators: 6.3.2, 8.4.1-12.2.1, 8.4.2-12.2.2, 12.4.2,12.5.1, 14.1.1 and 14.2.1.

IV. Relationship to UNEP's Programme of Work

18. Under the 2026–2029 Medium Term Strategy)MTS) and the Programme of Work and Budget (POW) for the 2026–2027[1], the Office of Science activities in this area falls within the Science Policy Sub-Programme focusing on: (a) enhancing the capacity of governments and non-government actors to access, generate and utilize quality environmental data and analyses, supporting a robust science-policy interface. b) The goal is to keep the environment under review, generate science-based environmental knowledge, identify emerging issues and develop science-based policy globally, regionally and nationally, including for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

V. Next steps

19. In the coming months, and subject to the availability of adequate resources, the Office of Science will continue efforts to strengthen and uplift UNEP's science function.

20. The CPR Subcommittee may wish to:

    (i) Join in the Secretariat's efforts to enhance the science in UNEP by submitting a list of experts as well as institutions that UNEP can engage in related to science matters.

    (ii) Actively support the Secretariat seeking to uplift science, thus help maintain credibility as the global environmental authority through the provision of data where relevant, encouraging evidence-based approaches and ensuring UNEP's strategies are grounded in the latest scientific findings.

[1] https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea7/medium-term-strategy