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**Multilateral Environmental Cooperation to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation and pollution**

**Discussion Document-Not for quotation or citation:** The purpose of this document is to facilitate discussions during the Sixth Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific, 26-29 August 2025. Comments are welcome and should be sent to [unep-apmf@un.org](mailto:unep-apmf@un.org).

## **Multilateral Environmental Cooperations to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation and pollution**

### **Information Note**

1. The Asia-Pacific region is at a critical juncture in addressing the three planetary environmental crises— the crisis of climate change, the crisis of nature, land and biodiversity loss, and the crisis of pollution and waste. As the region accounts for nearly 60%<sup>1</sup> of the global population and almost half of global GDP, effective multilateral environmental cooperation is essential to ensure that regional actions contribute to meeting global goals, including those under the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).
2. UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy 2026–2029, currently under development, highlights the importance of inclusive, regionally-informed multilateralism to advance environmental sustainability. Regional and subregional mechanisms can serve as key platforms to align national actions with global environmental commitments.
3. New and evolving multilateral processes, including the development of a global agreement on plastic pollution by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) and the establishment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution (ISP-CWP)— present unique opportunities for Asia-Pacific countries to influence and shape global responses based on regional realities.
4. Asia is warming faster than the global average – warming in 1991–2022 was almost double that of the warming trend in the 1961–1990 period. While the region is highly vulnerable and impacted sectors and regions vary, the mega deltas, low-lying coasts and floodplains are highly vulnerable. According to global warming projections, a global average temperature increase of more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels would exacerbate the impacts already observed in the region. For example, melting glaciers are resulting in instability in water resource supplies. It has been projected that by 2050 the glacier mass in the Everest region will shrink by 39–52 per cent<sup>2</sup>. Rising temperatures, ocean acidification and sea level rise (SLR) have brought negative effects to the services and the livelihoods of people are among the most at risk.
5. Extreme weather events, sea level rise, and glacial melt—as seen during 2023–2024 across Asia and the Pacific—have underscored the urgent need for enhanced regional cooperation on climate resilience, loss and damage, and early warning systems. The UN Secretary-General's Early Warnings for All initiative, in partnership with WMO and UNDRR, is being piloted in several Asia-Pacific countries and provides a framework for regional alignment. The Asia Pacific Adaptation Network (APAN) mobilizes climate change adaptation knowledge and fosters discussion on critical adaptation issues such as Global Goal on Adaptation and Loss and Damages.
6. The loss of biodiversity, ecosystems and ecosystem services in Asia and the Pacific continues at an alarming rate. Over 63% of the region's GDP—around USD 19.5 trillion<sup>3</sup>—is at risk due to nature loss. Member states in Asia and the Pacific region, supported by regional and sub-regional bodies such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) have been working towards scaling-up their efforts towards sustainable management of biodiversity and biological resources, ecosystem restoration and the

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<sup>1</sup> [Statistics in Asia and the Pacific: The lives behind the numbers | ESCAP](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/976841622778070962/pdf/Glaciers-of-the-Himalayas-Climate-Change-Black-Carbon-and-Regional-Resilience.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [How to address Asia Pacific's rising biodiversity crisis | World Economic Forum](#)

application of nature-based solutions aligning with the goals of the GBF and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

7. Air pollution remains one of the deadliest environmental health risks in the region. According to WHO, 99% of the global population breathes air that exceeds its guideline limits<sup>4</sup>, with South and Southeast Asia among the region's most severely affected by high levels of air pollution. Despite the lack of a global air quality treaty, regional cooperation through platforms like the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia (EANET), the Asia-Pacific Clean Air Partnership (APCAP) and the ESCAP Regional Action Programme on Air Pollution (RAPAP) is growing in prominence. ASEAN member states are implementing a new Roadmap on the ASEAN Cooperation towards Transboundary Haze Pollution Control with Means of Implementation 2023-2030<sup>5</sup> and South Asia partners such as SACEP and ICIMOD are facilitating support for air quality action in the sub-region, including for the Indo Gangetic Plain and Himalayan Foothills.
8. Digital and financial innovations emerge as critical enablers of multilateral action. Initiatives such as UNEP's Global Environmental Data Strategy (GEDS)<sup>6</sup> and regional green finance taxonomies<sup>7</sup> are helping to harmonize data ecosystems and unlock sustainable finance. UNEP FI's 2025 Asia-Pacific Sustainable Finance Roundtable<sup>8</sup> reaffirmed private sector commitment to align portfolios with science-based targets.
9. The role of communities including Indigenous People, youth, women and others, in conservation and climate resilience contributes to the achievement of global and regional environmental commitments. Collaborative initiatives—such as the ongoing Lima Adaptation Knowledge Initiative<sup>9</sup> in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (UNFCCC–UNEP, with ICIMOD) and the 2024 International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) guidance<sup>10</sup> supported by UNEP on integrating coral reefs into national biodiversity strategies—are helping embed traditional knowledge into environmental policies in biodiversity hotspots.
10. A gender- and youth-responsive approach to multilateral environmental cooperation is essential. Regional youth declarations, such as the 2024 Asia-Pacific Youth Call to Action<sup>11</sup> on Climate and Nature, call for greater inclusion of youth in national delegations and decision-making processes.
11. Plastic pollution has been a serious and threatening issue in Asia and the Pacific. In response, UNEP has tackled various aspects of the plastic value chain, including pollution monitoring, promoting eco-designs, encouraging extended producer responsibility, and supporting reusable and returnable systems, through initiatives like CounterMEASURE, SEA circular, and the Mekong-Pacific Project.
12. At this dialogue, Ministers, MEA secretariats, stakeholders, and regional organizations will share perspectives on enhancing multilateral environmental cooperation, including through finance, technology, and capacity building at national, subregional, and regional levels.

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<sup>4</sup> [Air pollution](#)

<sup>5</sup> [https://hazeportal.asean.org/media\\_release/media-release-of-17th-asean-ministerial-meeting-on-the-environment-and-18th-meeting-of-the-conference-of-the-parties-to-the-asean-agreement-on-transboundary-haze-pollution/](https://hazeportal.asean.org/media_release/media-release-of-17th-asean-ministerial-meeting-on-the-environment-and-18th-meeting-of-the-conference-of-the-parties-to-the-asean-agreement-on-transboundary-haze-pollution/)

<sup>6</sup> [Global Environmental Data Strategy \(GEDS\) | UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#)

<sup>7</sup> [How are ASEAN Member States approaching sustainable finance taxonomies? New analysis reveals trend towards regional harmonization – United Nations Environment – Finance Initiative](#)

<sup>8</sup> [UNEP FI Regional Roundtable Asia Pacific 2025 – United Nations Environment – Finance Initiative](#)

<sup>9</sup> [1st TECHNICAL MEETING: Lima Adaptation Knowledge Initiative \(LAKI\) in the HKH subregion - ICIMOD](#)

<sup>10</sup> [ICRI Integration Coral Reefs NBSAPs Guidance 2024 FINAL V3.pdf](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Call to Action 2024 - Asia-Pacific Regional Convening Ahead of the Summit of the Future: Young People at the Forefront - APA](#)

13. Key Issues for Discussion under Agenda Item 5:

- a. Strengthening synergies between UNEA mandates and Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) to accelerate implementation of climate, biodiversity, and pollution-related goals in an integrated and coherent manner.
- b. Enhancing science-policy interfaces in the region, including through the upcoming Global Environment Outlook (GEO-7) and newly established Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution (ISP-CWP).
- c. Regional readiness in preparation for a legally binding plastic treaty, including legal, institutional, and financial mechanisms.
- d. Promoting South-South and Triangular Cooperation, with a focus on climate-resilient infrastructure, sustainable agriculture, and ocean-based economies.
- e. Scaling up multilateral cooperation to address regional air quality challenges, including through joint monitoring systems and health-based standards
- f. Unlocking biodiversity and climate finance through regional and innovative financing mechanisms, including blended finance, green bonds, and sustainability-linked instruments.
- g. Empowering Indigenous People, women, local communities, and youth as key actors in multilateral processes and environmental governance.
- h. Leveraging regional forums such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Mekong River Commission (MRC), Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), and South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) to align environmental action with the 2030 Agenda and regional visions. (e.g., ASEAN Community Vision 2045<sup>12</sup>, ICIMOD's Strategy 2030<sup>13</sup>, Pacific 2050 Strategy<sup>14</sup>, SACEP Strategy 2030<sup>15</sup>).
- i. Supporting the development and implementation of national One Health strategies action plans, guided by the Quadripartite One Health Joint Plan of Action and in close alignment with regional and national biodiversity, pollution and climate agendas.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://asean.org/asean-community-vision-2045-resilient-innovative-dynamic-and-people-centred-asean/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.icimod.org/strategy-2030/what-we-will-deliver/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://forumsec.org/2050>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.sacep.org/pdf/Reports-Technical/2019.11.06-SACEP-Strategy-2020-2030.pdf>