

Agenda item 6

Contribution of the regional forums of ministers of the environment and environment authorities to the UNEP Medium-term Strategy and Programme of Work

Annual subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP
Twelfth meeting, Nairobi, Kenya, 1 – 5 September 2025

Context

- The Sixth Session of United Nations Environment Assembly adopted **Resolution 6/3** *on enhancing the role and viability of regional forums of environment ministers and United Nations Environment Programme regional offices in achieving multilateral cooperation in tackling environmental challenges.*
- The Secretariat will present a **summary of the findings of the report on the role of the regional forums, including differences, commonalities, challenges and opportunities for their strengthening.**
- The Committee will be invited to take note of the update from the Secretariat and **provide guidance on further action needed** by the Secretariat and Member States.

Regional Forums supported by UNEP

- UNEP convenes three regional forums as their Secretariat:
 - a. the **African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN)**,
 - b. the **Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific (Asia-Pacific Forum)**, and
 - c. the **Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC Forum)**.
- Each Forum has its different organizational set up and types of outcomes.
- UNEP also supports sessions of the **Arab Forum for the Environment**. A similar structure exists for Europe, **Environment for Europe**, under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

General role of the Regional Forums - Similarities

- Member States under their region-specific structure **consider environmental priorities and opportunities for collaboration.**
- **Adopt decisions on environmental management** specific to their regions and/or contributing to the global environmental agenda, including UNEA and UNEP's MTS and PoW.
- They are also **platforms for Member States to engage partners**, including UN agencies, other intergovernmental organizations, and major groups and stakeholders to share their perspectives on regional and global environmental themes.
- They play a crucial role in **facilitating collaboration among neighboring countries:** sharing information, good practices, case studies, and policies. Project implementation is often also supported through the work of the forums.

Comparison of key characteristics – Some differences

Characteristic	AMCEN	Asia-Pacific Forum	LAC Forum
Establishment	1985	2015	1982
Number of countries	54	41	33
Bureau composition	5 members (1 per subregion)	Chair, 2 Vice Chairs	8 members (2 per subregion)
Working groups	Ad-hoc	Ad-hoc	Continuing
Ordinary sessions to date	20	6	23
Types of outcomes	Ministerial Declaration, Decisions	Summary of the Chair	Ministerial Declaration, Decisions

Some examples of success stories

LAC Forum: Launched a **Common Framework for Sustainable Finance Taxonomies**; created **13 continuing working groups** on environmental issues; **trained 5,000 people** in pollution and waste management; **awarded 100 scholarships** for chemical risk assessment; supported **NDC implementation in 11 countries**; advanced climate transparency; issued **gender integration guidelines**; developed a **regional ecosystem restoration plan**; promoted **Escazú Agreement** adoption.

AMCEN: Advanced the **NEPAD Environment Action Plan**; revitalized the **Nairobi and Abidjan Conventions**; implemented the **African Green Stimulus Program and Africa Environment Outlook**; expanded AGNs, capacity-building and regional knowledge-sharing.

AP Forum: Promoted **renewable energy and sustainable finance**; strengthened disaster resilience via **ecosystem-based adaptation and early warning systems**; **addressed pollution–health linkages** through cross-sectoral action; **enhanced transboundary e-waste and ocean governance** cooperation.

Challenges and opportunities

Challenges

1. Funding constraints for implementation of decisions and support for working groups.
2. Implementation gaps, disconnect often existing between ministerial decisions and their execution on the ground.
3. Limited capacity of Secretariats, as small teams, often without dedicated staff, struggle to discharge Secretariat functions and coordinate activities.
4. Weak linkages with the UNEA planning process.
5. Need for stronger major groups and stakeholders engagement.

Opportunities

1. Strengthen translation of political decisions into concrete actions and impactful projects.
2. Strengthen links to UNEA.
3. Enhance resource mobilization through strategic partnerships.
4. Strengthen dedicated secretariats.
5. Increased engagement of major groups.
6. Strengthen cross-regional collaboration.
7. Hold more regular focal point meetings.

Final conclusions

- Vital platforms for regional environmental governance and cooperation, each making distinct contributions to the environmental dimensions of the SDGs and global agendas.
- These forums provide region-specific perspectives, priorities, and guidance that help UNEP remain responsive to the diverse environmental challenges across different parts of the world including through its MTS and PoW.
- While they face shared challenges, there are clear opportunities to strengthen their impact and sustainability.
- Implementing the recommendations will require political will, sustained funding, and inclusive engagement with all stakeholders.

Thank you



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