



Evolution of UN Environment Programme governing bodies

4 April 2019

The following table presents the chronology and evolution of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) governing bodies since the establishment of UNEP in 1972 through General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII). The table highlights key points from relevant UNEP governing bodies decisions and General Assembly resolutions that have implications for the development of UNEP governing bodies. The table shows, for example, that the discussion about endowing universal membership in the UNEP Governing Council dates back to as early as 1998 (taking 14 years of intergovernmental negotiations to establish universal membership at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012). It also demonstrates how the efforts to enhance international environmental governance, and later, institutional framework for sustainable development, have been intertwined with discussions surrounding UNEP governing structures, whose effectiveness and efficiency are deemed critical to delivering on the mandate of UNEP as the leading global environmental authority.

Year	Key decisions related to the governance of the UN Environment Programme
1972: 15 December 27 th session of the General Assembly	<u>GA resolution 2997</u> Institutional and financial arrangements for international environmental cooperation The General Assembly (GA) establishes the Governing Council (GC) of UNEP, composed of 58 members elected by GA for 3-year terms.
1973: 12-22 June 1 st session of GC Geneva	Decides that GC should hold 1 regular session annually for 2 weeks in Nairobi during the period February/March.
1974: 11-22 March 2 nd session of GC Nairobi	<u>Decision 19(II)</u> Rules of procedure Adopts the rules of procedure for the conduct of GC business of GC.
1975: 17 April-2 May 3 rd session of GC Nairobi	<u>Decision 45(III)</u> Establishment of permanent missions to UNEP - Requests Governments to establish permanent missions to UNEP. <u>Decision 46(III)</u> Relationships with non-governmental organizations - Requests the Executive Director to develop working relationships with non-governmental organizations.
1976: 30 March-14 April 4 th session of GC Nairobi	No major decision taken related to UNEP governing bodies.
1977: 9-25 May 5 th session of GC Nairobi	<u>Decision 104(V)</u> Informal consultations with Governments Decides to hold informal consultations with Governments between consecutive GC sessions, once for 1 day prior to the opening of GC

	session in Nairobi and once for at least 3 days at a date and place to be determined by GC.
--	---

1978: 9-25 May 6 th session of GC Nairobi	<u>Decision 6/1</u> Programme policy and implementation • Requests the Executive Director to study the question of the periodicity and duration of GC sessions and to report the study results to the informal consultations.
1979: 18 April-4 May 7 th session of GC Nairobi	<u>Decision 7/1</u> Programme policy and implementation • Decides to continue convening its annual sessions until 1983 and to re-examine this subject in 1982. • Further decides to limit the duration of its sessions to 10 working days.
1980: 16-29 April 8 th session of GC Nairobi	<u>Decision 8/1</u> Programme policy and implementation • Decides to hold a session of special character in 1982 to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the UN Conference on the Human Environment. <u>Decision 8/2</u> GC of UNEP in 1982 – session of a special character • Recommends to GA to adopt a resolution conferring GC membership to all UN Member States for the special session. <u>Decision 8/19</u> Arabic as an official and working language of GC of UNEP • Recommends to GA to favorably consider the financial implications to the regular budget of the introduction of Arabic as an official language of GC.
1981: 13-26 May 9 th session of GC Nairobi	<u>Decision 9/2</u> Session of a special character of GC in 1982 • Recommends to GA to adopt a resolution deciding to hold a special GC session in Nairobi in May 1982.
1982: 10-18 May Special session of GC 1982: 20-31 May 10 th session of GC Nairobi	<u>Special session resolution 1</u> The environment in 1982: retrospect and prospect • “Considers that the institutional arrangements for international co-operation in the field of the environment – GC, the secretariat, the co-ordination process within the UN system through the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and the Environment Fund – are, generally speaking, adequate and appropriate.”
1983: 11-24 May 11 th session of GC Nairobi	<u>Decision 11/2</u> Periodicity and duration of Governing Council sessions • Decides to: (a) limit the duration of its sessions to 8 working days; (b) establish a Committee of the Whole at each regular session focusing on either administrative and budgetary questions or programme matters; (c) not convene a Governing Council session in 1986 on an experimental basis; (d) make a decision on the periodicity of its sessions in 1987; (e) discontinue the present system of intersessional informal consultations with Governments; (f) invite permanent representatives to UNEP at Nairobi and/or Government-designated officials to meet with the Executive Director at least 3 times a year;

	(g) recommend to the permanent representatives and/or Government-designated officials that they establish a core group of 18 members that meets more frequently than its parent body to discuss specific items of importance to the Governing Council.
--	---

1984: 16-29 May 12 th session of GC Nairobi	No major decision taken related to UNEP governing bodies.
1985: 14-24 May 13 th session of GC Nairobi	<u>Decision 13/2</u> Establishment of a Committee of Permanent Representatives - Decides to establish an open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives; the Committee will meet regularly with the Executive Director on the first Wednesday of February, September and December each year and 6 weeks prior to the opening of the 14th session of GC. - Invites Governments that have not accredited a permanent mission to UNEP to designate a focal point to whom information and documentation pertaining to the meetings of the Committee can be conveyed. <u>Decision 13/33</u> Additional sources of funding - Requests the Executive Director to encourage the establishment of national environmental committees for the creation of greater awareness and for fund-raising activities to finance the activities of UNEP.
1987: 8-19 June 14 th session of GC Nairobi	<u>Decision 14/4</u> Periodicity and duration of sessions of the Governing Council - Decides: (a) to recommend to GA to adopt a resolution changing the GC cycle; (b) to limit the duration of GC regular sessions to 10 working days; (c) that the Committee of Permanent Representatives should continue to meet at least 4 times a year with the Executive Director.
1987: 11 December 42 nd session of the General Assembly	<u>GA resolution 42/185</u> Biennial cycle of sessions of GC of UNEP - Decides that: (a) there shall be no regular session of GC in 1988; (b) beginning in 1989, regular sessions of GC shall be held only in odd-numbered years; (c) beginning in 1988, GC shall hold a special one-week session every 6 years.
1988: 14-18 March 1 st special session of GC Nairobi	No major decision taken related to UNEP governing bodies.
1989: 15-26 May 15 th session of GC Nairobi	<u>Decision 15/1</u> Strengthening the role and effectiveness of UNEP - Stresses the need to make GC a more effective and efficient mechanism and decides to restructure the organization of its regular sessions: (a) The first week should be devoted to the work of a committee on the programme and a committee on the Fund, finance and administrative questions; (b) The second week should be devoted to ministerial plenary discussion of major policy issues; - Takes note of the Executive Director's proposal that GC should establish a standing committee that could express at the highest possible level its views to other programmes and organisations in the UN system.

	- Decides, on an experimental basis, to mandate the Bureau of the 15th session to meet with the bureaux of the counterpart organs of the specialized agencies and other organs of the UN to develop more positive and collaborative relationships. - Welcomes the establishment by a number of countries of UNEP national committees and urges all Governments to encourage the establishment of such committees. <u>Decision 15/4</u> Special session of GC in 1990 - Decides to hold a 3-day special session of GC in 1990. <u>Decision 15/12</u> Provision of language facilities for meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives - Decides to provide full language services for meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives as soon as funding for their costs can be provided from the UN regular budget.
1990: 1-3 August 2 nd special session of GC Nairobi	<u>Decision SS.II/1</u> Strengthening the role of UNEP and GC Requests the Executive Director to prepare a report for the 16th session of GC on the future role of UNEP, presenting, inter alia, proposals on further strengthening UNEP and GC.
1991: 20-31 May 16 th session of GC Nairobi	<u>Decision 16/1</u> Strengthening the role of UNEP - Supports the strengthening of UNEP headquarters and decides that future major extensions to the physical or other infrastructure of the Programme be centred principally in Nairobi. <u>Decision 16/3</u> Special session of GC in 1992 - Decides to hold a 3-day special session of GC in 1992. <u>Decision 16/5</u> Rationalization of GC documentation - Requests the Executive Director to rationalize and reduce the documentation produced for GC sessions, and to investigate the possibility of making official documents available electronically. - Requests the Committee of Permanent Representatives to continue to submit draft decisions to GC as early as possible.
1992: 3-5 February 3 rd special session of GC Nairobi	No major decision taken related to UNEP governing bodies.
1992: 22 December 47 th session of the General Assembly	<u>GA resolution 47/190</u> Report of the UN Conference on Environment and Development Endorses the outcome documents of the UN Conference on Environment and Development, the "Rio Declaration on Environment and Development", "Agenda 21" and the "Non-legally Binding Authoritative

	Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests”. • Agenda 21 includes chapter 38 on international institutional arrangements which, among others, notes a “need for an enhanced and strengthened role for UNEP and its GC”.
--	--

1993: 10-21 May 17 th session of GC Nairobi	<u>Decision 17/35</u> Periodicity and duration of sessions of GC - Confirms that the biennial cycle of GC meetings shall be retained. <u>Decision 17/36</u> Provision of language facilities for the Committee of Permanent Representatives - Urges the Executive Director to request the Secretary-General to reconsider his proposal on the financing of interpretation facilities for the Committee of Permanent Representatives, with a view to having the costs borne by the UN regular budget.
1994: 18 June 4 th special session of GC Nairobi	*Special session convened to adopt of Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility. No major decision taken related to UNEP governing bodies.
1995: 15-26 May 18 th session of GC Nairobi	<u>Decision 18/2</u> Review of the governing structures of UNEP Decides to review UNEP governing structures at its 19th session, with a view to taking action to modify and streamline those structures for greater efficiency, effectiveness and transparency, and requests the Executive Director to propose options to this effect.
1997: 27 January- 7 February, with resumed session on 3-4 April 19 th session of GC Nairobi	<u>Decision 19/1</u> - Adopts the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP. <u>Decision 19/32</u> Governance of the UN Environment Programme - Decides: (a) to establish a High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials, composed of 36 members elected by GC for 2-year terms, as a subsidiary organ of GC; the Committee has the mandate to, among others, consider the international environmental agenda and provide guidance to the Executive Director on emerging environmental issues; the Committee shall meet at least once a year in Nairobi; (b) that the Committee of Permanent Representative shall have increased mandate as a subsidiary organ of GC, including review of implementation of GC decisions on administrative, budgetary and programme matters and preparation of draft decisions for consideration by GC; elect a Bureau of 5 members for 2-year terms and hold 4 regular meetings a year; (c) to review at its 21st session this governing structure.
1997: 28 June 19 th special session of the General Assembly	<u>GA resolution S/19-2</u> Programme for the further implementation of Agenda 21 Calls on the role of UNEP to be further enhanced (paragraph 123).
1998: 20-22 May 5 th special session of GC Nairobi	No major decision taken related to UNEP governing bodies.
1999: 1-5 February 20 th session of GC Nairobi	<u>Decision 20/17</u> Views of GC on the report of the Secretary-General on environment and human settlement (A/53/463, 6 October 1998).

	- Expresses support for the proposal of the Secretary-General that an annual ministerial-level global environmental forum be instituted and that regular biennial sessions of GC constitute that forum in the years that GC meets, and that in alternate years the forum should take the form of the special session of GC, meeting in different regions as a ministerial-level forum. - Welcomes the recommendations of the Secretary-General on future action-oriented agendas of GC and the structuring and timing of its meetings to enhance coordination with the Commission on Sustainable Development and the conferences of the parties to environment-related conventions. - Takes note of the proposal concerning universal membership of GC.
1999: 10 August 53 rd session of the General Assembly	<u>GA resolution 53/242</u> Report of the Secretary-General on environment and human settlements Welcomes the proposal to institute an annual, ministerial-level, global environmental forum, with UNEP GC constituting the forum in the years that it meets in regular session and, in alternate years, with the forum taking the form of a special session of GC.
2000: 29-31 May 6 th special session of GC/ Global Ministerial Environment Forum Malmö, Sweden	<u>Decision SS.VI/1</u> Adopts the Malmö Ministerial Declaration.
2001: 5-9 February 21 st session of GC/GMEF Nairobi	<u>Decision 21/20</u> Governance of UNEP and implementation of GA resolution 53/242 - Resolves to continue strengthening the role of GC/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF). - Invites the regional ministerial environment forums to provide GC/GMEF with their respective views on policy issues. - Decides to hold its sessions in alternate years in the UN regions on a rotational basis. - Decides to discontinue the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials. - Decides that the proceedings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives shall be conducted in all official languages. - Requests the Executive Director to provide all documentation for a GC session to the Committee of Permanent Representatives 8 weeks in advance of the session and that the Committee endeavour to finish its work four weeks prior to the actual GC session. <u>Decision 21/21</u> International environmental governance - Decides to establish an open-ended intergovernmental group of ministers or their representatives to undertake a comprehensive assessment of existing institutional weaknesses as well as future needs and options for

	strengthened international environmental governance, view a view to presenting a report to the next session of GC.
2002: 13-15 February 7 th special session of GC/ GMEF Cartagena, Colombia	<u>Decision SS.VII/1</u> International environmental governance - Adopts the report of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or Their Representatives on International Environmental Governance and requests the Executive Director to present the report to the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. - Among others, the report calls for UNEP and its financial situation to be strengthened as the principal UN body in the field of environment, and provides recommendations on the role and structure of GC and the Global Ministerial Environment Forum.)
2002: 20 December 57 th session of the General Assembly	<u>GA resolution 57/253</u> World Summit on Sustainable Development - Endorses the outcome documents of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the "Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development" and the "Johannesburg Plan of Implementation". - The Plan of Implementation includes paragraph 140 which, among others, invites the General Assembly at its 57th session to "consider the important but complex issue of establishing membership for GC/GMEF".
2003: 3-7 February 22 nd session of GC/GMEF Nairobi	<u>Decision 22/17</u> Governance and law - Notes the invitation of GA to Member States and relevant bodies of UN system to submit to Secretariat their comments on the issue of establishing universal membership of GC and requesting the Secretary-General to submit a report to GA. - Requests the Executive Director to submit a report on the subject incorporating comments from Governments to the 8th special session of GC.
2004: 29-31 March 8 th special session of GC/ GMEF Jeju, Republic of Korea	<u>Decision SS.VIII/1</u> Implementation of decision SS.VII/1 on international environmental governance - Notes the variety and divergence of views of Governments on the question of universal membership of GC/Global Ministerial Environment Forum. - Requests the Executive Director to continue to invite views and to represent a report on this matter to GC/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its 23rd session.
2005: 21-25 February 23 rd session of GC/GMEF Nairobi	<u>Decision 23/1</u> Implementation of decision SS.VII/1 on international environmental governance - Notes the differences in the views on the issue of establishing universal membership of GC/Global Ministerial Environment Forum. - Decides to undertake the further review of the issue at its 9th special session.
2005: 16 September 60 th session of the General Assembly	<u>GA resolution 60/1</u> 2005 World Summit Outcome Agrees to explore the possibility of a more coherent institutional framework for efficient environmental activities in the UN system, with

	enhanced coordination, improved policy advice, strengthened scientific knowledge, better treaty compliance and better integration of environmental activities in the broader sustainable development framework (paragraph 169).
2006: 7-9 February 9 th special session of GC/ GMEF Dubai, United Arab Emirates	No major decision taken related to UNEP governing bodies.
2007: 5-9 February 24 th session of GC/GMEF Nairobi	<u>Decision 24/1</u> Implementation of decision SS.VII/1 on international environmental governance Takes note of GA resolution 61/205 in which GC decided to consider, if necessary, the issue of universal membership of GC/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its 64th session, while noting the differences in views expressed so far.
2008: 20-22 February 10 th special session of GC/GMEF Monaco	No major decision taken related to UNEP governing bodies.
2009: 16-20 February 25 th session of GC/GMEF Nairobi	<u>Decision 25/4</u> International environmental governance Decides to establish a regionally representative, consultative group of ministers or high-level representatives to present options for improving international environmental governance to GC at its 11th special session.
2010: 24-26 February 11 th special session of GC/GMEF Bali, Indonesia	<u>Decision SS.XI/1</u> International environmental governance - Expressing thanks to Serbia and Italy for hosting the meetings of the consultative group in Belgrade and Rome, respectively (co-chairs Kenya and Italy), requests the Executive Director to identify the incremental changes in the set of options that can be immediately implemented. - Decides to establish a regionally representative, consultative group of ministers or high-level representatives to present a report on the broader reform of the international environmental governance system to GC at its 26th session. <u>Decision SS.XI/9</u> - Adopts the Nusa Dua Declaration.
2011: 21-24 February 26 th session of GC/GMEF Nairobi	<u>Decision 26/1</u> International environmental governance Expressing thanks to Kenya and Finland for hosting the meetings of the consultative group in Nairobi and Espoo, respectively (co-chairs Kenya and Finland), invites the Preparatory Committee for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development to consider the options for broader institutional reform identified in the Nairobi-Helsinki Outcome.
2012: 20-22 February 12 th special of GC/GMEF Nairobi	No major decision taken related to UNEP governing bodies.

2012: 27 July 66th session of the General Assembly	<u>GA resolution 66/288</u> The future we want Endorses the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, “The future we want” whose paragraph 88 calls for strengthening and upgrading of UNEP by, among others, establishing universal membership in UNEP GC.
2012: 21 December 67th session of the General Assembly	<u>GA resolution 67/213</u> Report of GC of UNEP on its 12th special session and the implementation of section IV.C, entitled “Environmental pillar in the context of sustainable development”, of the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development - Decides to: (a) strengthen and upgrade UNEP in the manner set out in subparagraphs (a) to (h) of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want”; (b) establish universal membership in UNEP GC and mandates it to expeditiously initiate the implementation of the provisions contained in paragraph 88 of the outcome document in their entirety, make a recommendation on its designation to reflect its universal character and decide on future arrangements for the Global Ministerial Environment Forum”.
2013: 18-22 February 1st universal/27th session of GC/GMEF Nairobi	<u>Decision 27/1</u> New rules of procedure of the Governing Council <u>Decision 27/2</u> Implementation of paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development - Decides: (a) to recommend to GA to rename GC to the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) of UNEP; (b) to convene UNEA sessions in Nairobi on a biennial basis starting in 2014; (c) to discontinue GMEF; (d) that each session of UNEA will conclude with a two-day high-level segment, which will take strategic decisions and provide political guidance; (e) that the Bureau of UNEA shall be composed of 10 members; (f) to ensure the active participation of all relevant stakeholders; (g) that an open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives will be the intersessional subsidiary body of UNEA, which will convene for 5 days in an even year; (h) to establish a subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives that will meet annually for five days.
2013: 13 March 67th session of the General Assembly	<u>GA resolution 67/251</u> Change of the designation of GC of UNEP Decides to change the designation of the “Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme” to the “United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme”.

2014: 23-27 June 1 st session of UNEA Nairobi	<u>UNEA resolution 1/2</u> Amendments to the Rules of Procedure
2016: 23-27 May 2 nd session of UNEA Nairobi	<u>UNEA resolution 2/1</u> Amendments to the rules of Procedure <u>UNEA resolution 2/2</u> Review of the cycle of UNEA of UNEP - Decides to hold UNEA regular sessions and the open-ended meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives in odd numbered years commencing in 2017. - Decides that on an exceptional basis, the 3rd session of UNEA shall consist of a 3-day meeting and the 3rd open-ended meeting of Committee of Permanent Representatives shall consist of a 3-day meeting back-to-back with the 3rd session of UNEA.
2017: 4-6 December 3 rd session of UNEA Nairobi	No major decision taken related to UNEP governing bodies.
2019: 11-15 March 4 th session of UNEA Nairobi	<u>UNEA decision 4/L.29</u> Provisional agenda, date and venue of the 5 th session of UNEA - Requests the Executive Director to prepare, in consultation with Member States, the commemoration of the creation of UNEP by the UN Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm from 5-16 June 1972, making use of contributions from relevant stakeholders. - Requests the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, in close consultation with the President of UNEA, to present to the CPR for its deliberation and decision at the 6th annual subcommittee meeting (tentatively 7-11 October 2019) a consolidated proposal outlining a consensual CPR based review process of UNEA and its subsidiary bodies, with a view to providing concrete proposals towards the improvement of their efficiency and effectiveness, for consideration at the 5th session of UNEA; - Decides that the scope of the considerations during the review process will include: (a) The preparation, working arrangements, and scheduling of the sessions of UNEA and the objectives, preparation, working arrangements and the scheduling of meetings of its subsidiary body, namely the Open-ended meeting of the CPR, and the regular and the annual meetings of the Sub-Committee of the CPR; (b) The respective roles and responsibilities of the Bureau of the Assembly and of the Bureau of the CPR, including those related to the interactions with their respective constituencies; (c) Criteria, modalities and timing for presenting and negotiating the Assembly resolutions and decisions; (d) Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Programme of Work and Budget and the Assembly resolutions;

	• Requests the Executive Director to conduct a mapping exercise and provide an input paper on the topics specified in OP10 three weeks ahead of the 6th annual subcommittee meeting; • Decides that the review process shall work in an open, inclusive and transparent manner with opportunity for submitting written inputs by Member States and stakeholders throughout the duration of the process, and further decides that it will be co-chaired by two members of the CPR, one from a developing country and one from a developed country. • Requests the chair of the CPR to hold a stock-taking meeting, not exceeding 2 days, under the framework of the 7th annual subcommittee meeting, with the goal of considering endorsement of the progress at that point. • Requests the Executive Director to submit an action plan to implement all subparagraphs (a)-(h) of Paragraph 88 of the Outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development: The Future We Want, to be submitted for consideration at the 5th session of UNEA, and invites the Director General of UNON to contribute to the development of the plan in respect to the implementation of sub-paragraph (g) regarding headquarter functions in Nairobi.
--	---
