

**Validated Terminal Review of the UNEP Project
“Environmental Treaties Programme – Realizing
Synergies for Biodiversity”
(PIMS ID 01988 / IPMR n. 35480)
2017 – 2023**



**UNEP Law Division
Validation date: April 2025**



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'Environmental Treaties Programme - Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity'

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This Management Led Terminal Review was prepared for UNEP Law Division by Elaine Varela, as the independent evaluation consultant.

First, the review consultant would like to express her gratitude to all persons met and who contributed to this review, as listed in Annex III. Without exception, the review consultant felt that all stakeholders reached contributed to the work and, therefore, she is deeply thankful for their support.

The review consultant would like to thank the project team and, in particular, Ms. Diane Klaimi (Project Manager) for her contribution and collaboration throughout the review process, providing the necessary documentation to conduct the independent review. Sincere appreciation is also expressed to the Project Board and Steering Committee, who took time to respond to interviews and provide comments on the draft report. The evaluator would also like to thank the Swiss Government through its Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), MINIPED (Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development of Cameroon), Biodiversity Directorate / Ministry of Climate Change of Pakistan, and Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic and Fisheries Resources of Tunisia.

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The review consultant hopes that the findings, conclusions, and recommendations will contribute to follow up phases and to the continuous improvement of similar projects in other countries and regions.

BRIEF EXTERNAL CONSULTANT(S) BIOGRAPHY

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Review team

Elaine P. Varela Alberte – Principal Evaluator

ABOUT THE REVIEW

Joint Review: No

Report Language(s): English.

Review Type: Terminal Review

Brief Description: This report is a management-led Terminal Review of the UNEP project Environmental Treaties Programme – Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity (Treaties I) implemented between 2017 and 2023. The project's overall development goal was to support countries in implementing environmental treaties and improve international environmental governance to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and other globally agreed environmental goals. The review sought to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency) and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The review has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, the Donors, and the relevant agencies of the project participating countries.

Source(s) of Funding by Country: Switzerland, China, Sweden, the Nordic Council of Ministers, and the European Commission

Source(s) of Funding by Institution Type:

Foundation/NGO	No
Private Sector	No
UN Body	No
Multilateral Fund	No
Environment Fund	Yes

Keywords¹: Multi-lateral Environment Agreements; Knowledge and information management; Governance; Global Biodiversity Framework; Policy and Planning.

Primary data collection period: 01 October 2024 to 15 December 2024

Field mission dates: Not applicable

¹ Please provide maximum five key words, which are not already in the project title.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AEWA	African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement
AFoCO-RETC	Asian Forest Cooperation Organization - Regional Education and Training Center
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BIP	Biodiversity Indicators Partnership
BLG	Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CHM	Clearing-House Mechanism
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CMS	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
COP	Conference of the Parties
EA	Expected Accomplishments
EF	Environment Fund
EU	European Union
FOEN	Federal Office for the Environment
GBF	Global Biodiversity Framework
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEF-EAS	GEF Early Action Support Programme
IDLO	International Development Law Organization
IFDD	Institut de la Francophonie pour le développement durable / Francophone Institute for Sustainable Development
IPBES	Intergovernmental science-policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPLC	Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
IPPC	International Plant Protection Convention
ITPGRFA	International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
KM-GBF	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MLTE	Management Led Terminal Review
MOUs	Memorandum of Understanding
MTS	Medium Term Strategy
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCR	Operational Closure Report
ORS	Online Reporting System
ORT	Online Reporting Tool
PCA	Programme Cooperation Agreement
PM	Project Manager
Post-2020 GBF	Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework
Prodoc	Project document
Ramsar	Convention on Wetlands of international importance
RC	Review Consultant
SBI	Subsidiary Body on Implementation to the CBD
SBSTTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice to the CBD
SCBD	Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SP	Sub-programme (UNEP)
SSFA	Small Scale Funding Agreement
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment (Programme)
UNEP-WCMC	United Nations Environment World Conservation Monitoring Centre
WESR	World Environment Situation Room
WHC	World Heritage Convention under UNESCO
XB	Extra-Budgetary Funds

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE

Table 1. Project Identification Table

UNEP PIMS ID/SMA ² ID:	01988/35480	Grant ID ³ (if applicable):	
UNEP Management (Division/Branch/Unit):	UNEP Law Division / Environmental Conventions and Policy Branch (former Environmental Governance and Conventions Branch ⁴)		
Implementing Partners:	UNEP-WCMC Other Divisions/Regional Offices (and the regional information officers) are regularly consulted: - Regional Offices: Asia Pacific, Africa, Europe, Latin America & Caribbean and West Asia. - Divisions: Ecosystems, Policy and Programmes, Communications Division; and other divisions as appropriate.		
Sources of Funding:	Country ⁵ (ies): Switzerland, China, Sweden, the Nordic Council of Ministers, and the European Commission	Institution ⁶ Name/Type: N/A	
Relevant SDG(s):	Mainly 15.9, 16.6, 16.8 and 17.14 but the project ‘realizing synergies for biodiversity’ is also contributing in varying extent to other biodiversity-related goals and targets. Indicators: 15.9.1, 17.14.1		
MTS (all that apply):	MTS 2018-2021 MTS 2022-2025	UNEP approval date:	10/11/2017
POW Direct Outcome(s) number/reference <i>(applicable for projects approved from 2022):</i> OR POW Output(s) number/reference <i>(applicable for projects approved pre-2022)</i>	<i>POW Direct Outcome:</i> <i>PoW 2022-2023</i> <i>3.5 Institutional capacity to adopt and act on national and international commitments is enhanced</i>	MTS 2025 Outcome(s) number/reference <i>(applicable for projects approved from 2022):</i> OR POW Expected Accomplishment(s) number/reference <i>(applicable for projects approved pre-2022):</i>	<i>MTS 2025 Outcome:</i> <i>PoW 2022-2023 Outcome 2C: Nature conservation and restoration are enhanced.</i>
	<i>POW Output:</i> <i>PoW 2018-19 (PoW 2020-2021)</i> <i>- 3. Advisory services on system-wide coherence ...</i> <i>- 4. Information and knowledge management products on the coherent and synergistic implementation of MEAs...</i>		<i>POW Expected Accomplishment:</i> <i>PoW 2018-19 and 2020-2021: Environmental Governance EA(a) (ii) and (iii), EA (b)(i)</i>
Sub-programme:	<i>Environmental Governance</i>	Programme Coordination Project:	

² SMA refers to the ID provided by the Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting Solution (IPMR) system, which was introduced by UNEP in July 2023.

³ For example, ID references from EC, IKI, UNDA, Adaptation Fund, GCF.

⁴ Name of UNEP Law Division's branch at the beginning of the project (in the Project Document).

⁵ Where applicable, list countries who have provided project funds and/or co-finance.

⁶ Indicate where funding institutions are any/all of the following: Foundation/NGO; Private Sector; UN Body; Multilateral Fund; Environment Fund; Other.

Expected start date:	11/2017	Actual start date:	11/2017
Planned completion date:	11/2020	Actual operational completion date:	06/2023
Planned total project budget ⁷ at approval:	2,080,196 ⁹	Actual total expenditures reported as of [date]:	2,226,355 ⁸
Planned Extra-budgetary Funds ⁹ :	Cash: - In-kind: 501,852 ⁹	Secured Extra-budgetary Funds:	Cash: 173,547 ⁹ In-kind: 466,424 ⁹
		Actual Extra-budgetary Funds expenditures reported as of [date]:	Cash: -
First disbursement:	12/2017	Planned date of financial closure:	
No. of formal project revisions:	4	Date of last approved project revision:	16/12/2021
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	5 ¹⁰	Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:	08/04/2021
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (planned date):	N/A ¹¹	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):	05/2022
Terminal Evaluation (planned date):	12/2023	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	10/2024
Coverage – Implementing Country(ies):	Global	Coverage – Implementing Region(s):	Asia Pacific, Africa, Europe, Latin America & Caribbean and West Asia
Dates of previous project phases:	14 January 2014 to June 2016	Status of future project phases:	"Leveraging transformational change through coherent and synergistic implementation of Environmental Treaties (Treaties II)", approved on 30.06.2023

⁷ Total budget may include Regular Budget, Environment Fund, Extra-Budgetary, including 'softly-earmarked' etc.

⁸ UNEP / IPRM (2024). Operational Project Closure Report. Project ID 413.4 (IPMR no. 35480). Environmental Treaties Programme – realizing synergies for biodiversity.

⁹ Extra-budgetary funds may include co-finance (cash/in-kind)

¹⁰ Source: Identified by project's mid-term review and documented in official meeting 152153154155s.

¹¹ The project was initially planned for a three-year duration. Per UNEP policies, a mid-point performance assessment is only mandated for projects with an implementation period of four years or more. As such, this requirement should be marked as Not Applicable (N/A).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project background

1. The project Environmental Treaties Programme – Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity (Treaties I) aimed to support countries in the effective implementation of environmental treaties and strengthen international governance to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other global environmental objectives. As part of a larger program¹², this initiative aligned with the Environmental Governance Subprogram of the UN Environment Programme and promoted coordination, collaboration, and cooperation among various biodiversity-related conventions in response, inter alia, to several decisions and resolutions of governing bodies of the MEAs and UNEA¹³.
2. The project addressed the growing proliferation and diversification of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) over the past 50 years while recognizing the need for Member States and Parties to build synergies among these MEAs, leading to their more coherent implementation. Despite advancements in scientific knowledge, political responses on-the-ground actions have been insufficient in addressing these challenges. The project considered that progress toward environmental targets and SDGs could be accelerated by enhancing synergies among biodiversity-related conventions, as highlighted in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) decision XIII ('24 Cooperation with other conventions and international organizations'). This decision identifies options for enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions at the national level and a detailed roadmap till 2020 for enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions at the international level.

This Review

3. Following the UNEP Evaluation Policy¹⁴ and the UNEP Programme Manual¹⁵, this report presents the results of a Management Led Terminal Review (MLTR), which has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned. It involved several phases including an initial review of project design and stakeholder analysis, development of a reconstructed Theory of Change at evaluation, desk review, extensive interviewing and survey with a wide range of project actors, data triangulation, and analysis. In 2022, a Mid-Term Review (MTR) was conducted to assess the project's interim progress, covering the period from November 2017 to December 2022.

Key findings

4. The Treaties I project played a key role in the ongoing process of promoting synergies among biodiversity-related MEAs, making significant strides toward a more coherent implementation of environmental treaties, through dialogue, knowledge management tools, and capacity building. The project's performance was assessed as Satisfactory according to UNEP Evaluation Office guidelines. While the project excelled in areas such as Strategic Relevance, Financial Management, Efficiency, and Monitoring and

¹² The Environmental Treaties Programme was designed to support multilateral environmental agreements and improve environmental governance. Initially, it consisted of the project under review, with plans to expand through additional projects.

¹³ e.g. CBD Decision XIII/24; CITES resolution 16.4 and decision 17.55 and 17.56; Ramsar Convention Resolution XII.2; CMS resolution 11.10; ITPGRFA decision 8/2011; UNESCO-WHC decision 37 COM 5A; among others) as well as UN Environment Assembly resolution 2/17.

¹⁴ <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/policies-and-strategies>

¹⁵ <https://wecollaborate.unep.org>

Reporting, it received moderate ratings in Quality of Project Design, Effectiveness, Sustainability, and Factors Affecting Performance.

5. The project demonstrated strong Strategic Relevance. It was fully aligned with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategies (MTS), Programmes of Work (PoWs), and strategic priorities across two MTS cycles (2018–2021 and 2022–2025), UNEA and MEA resolutions and decisions calling for enhanced cooperation and synergies. It effectively supported UNEP's Capacity Building and South-South Cooperation initiatives, achieving key results under expected accomplishments and indicators. The project was also well-aligned with donor objectives and global environmental policies, though it emphasized global cooperation over national implementation. Complementarity with other initiatives was moderate, with limited direct integration during execution.
6. The Prodoc's major strengths included strategic relevance, logical framework, monitoring mechanisms, governance and supervision arrangements, financial planning/budgeting, and efficiency. However, weaknesses in project design were identified, particularly in the preparatory phase, intended results, and partnerships. Areas for improvement included stronger synergies with other UNEP initiatives, improved stakeholder analysis, and clearer causal pathways in the Theory of Change (ToC).
7. The external context posed significant challenges to the project. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted operations, forcing a shift to virtual activities. While this enhanced inclusivity, broadened stakeholder participation, and reduced carbon emissions, it also hindered engagement and consensus-building. The lack of face-to-face interactions affected informal discussions, and the postponement of key events altered the project's original timeline. Despite these obstacles, the project demonstrated strong adaptability in its management and alignment with the global negotiations' agenda.
8. The ToC presented in the Prodoc was integrated into a broader umbrella program, including other projects in the branch, making it difficult to clearly distinguish the project's specific causal pathways. Although the project did not have an independent ToC, the Prodoc outlined drivers, assumptions, outputs, and outcomes, providing a framework for its intended goals. However, it did not explicitly define intermediate stages, long-term impacts, or causal relationships. At the review stage, the MLTR developed a revised ToC, illustrating the progression from outputs to outcomes, intermediate stage, and desired impact.
9. Regarding effectiveness, the project successfully delivered most planned outputs despite challenges. Outputs 1, 3, and 4 were delivered on time and to a high standard. Output 2 faced staffing and internal communication challenges within UNEP but still achieved significant progress. Output 5, constrained by limited resources and a small budget, encountered adoption challenges by countries. The project engaged 30 countries (vs. 11 initially planned) and mobilized substantial funding, contributing to the alignment of MEAs and the KM-GBF. Despite setbacks in Output 5, the intended impacts are likely to be realized. The overall effectiveness rating is 'Moderately Satisfactory'.
10. Financial management is rated 'highly satisfactory'. The project adhered to UNEP's financial policies and maintained strong financial oversight. Timely cash advances, regular expenditure reporting, and adaptive budget revisions ensured smooth operations, even during the pandemic. While financial documentation was generally complete, gaps in standardized record-keeping made document retrieval difficult. Communication between the PM and Fund Management Officer (FMO) was strong.

11. Efficiency is rated 'satisfactory'. The project demonstrated cost-efficiency by optimizing resources, leveraging partnerships, and utilizing remote activities to save costs. Despite delays and extensions, the project remained on track. Some missed opportunities to engage with other initiatives were noted, but adaptive management ensured that most outputs were delivered efficiently.
12. Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) is rated 'Satisfactory'. The project developed an M&R system aligned with UNEP standards. The indicator system was refined over time, although gaps in outcome-oriented indicators limited the effectiveness of the evaluation. Analysis of project implementation data was conducted, but it did not lead to meaningful discussion or actionable improvements. While reporting was comprehensive, inconsistencies in document organization posed challenges.
13. Evidence suggests that the sustainability of project outcomes is 'Moderately Likely'. The sustainability of the project's outcomes depends on political commitment, stakeholder ownership, financial security, and institutional support. While government and stakeholder commitment were strong, political shifts and the voluntary nature of the Data Reporting Tool (DaRT) as a synergistic platform for countries, pose challenges for long-term adoption. Financial sustainability has been strengthened through secured funding under Treaties II. Institutional engagement by biodiversity-related organizations has been significant, but collaboration with other economic sectors remains limited. Building on institutional achievements and maintaining stakeholder engagement through biodiversity committees at the national level will be critical for long-term success.
14. The factors affecting project performance were rated as 'moderately satisfactory'. Weaknesses in stakeholder engagement and project design were identified during preparation and addressed during implementation. Delays in processing legal partnership agreements between UNEP and project partners and unclear stakeholder roles caused initial setbacks. Project management and supervision were effective in achieving outcomes and adapting to challenges. Although progress was made in gender equality, the project did not fully integrate human rights and indigenous knowledge considerations. The gender review concluded that the gender code is 2a. Country ownership varied—some countries demonstrated strong leadership, while cross-ministerial engagement was inconsistent. The communication strategy was effective but could be further strengthened to enhance stakeholder involvement and feedback.

Conclusions¹⁶

15. Conclusion 1: The project supported global biodiversity governance and the cooperation and synergies agenda by facilitating collaboration between MEA secretariats and Parties (such as through the Bern Process), promoting the integrated implementation of biodiversity and chemicals agendas, and contributing to the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal GBF, including enhanced roles for the MEAs, while also organizing key workshops and fostering collaborative networks.
16. Conclusion 2: The project improved cooperation among biodiversity-related MEAs through constructive dialogues and tools but faced challenges in achieving higher levels of coherence and efficiency due to communication gaps, limited coordination, and the DaRT's interoperability and sustainability issues with other MEA reporting tools.

¹⁶ The conclusions provide a summary response to the five key strategic review questions outlined in the terms of reference for this MLTR (Annex X).

17. Conclusion 3: The project was welcomed by target countries, nevertheless had a limited impact on country-level implementation of MEAs conventions. It provided useful guidance and knowledge management tools but also faced challenges such as insufficient stakeholder engagement and uptake at the national level.
18. Conclusion 4: The roll-out of integrated approaches and tools, including DaRT, has been partially effective and efficient, While the platform gained recognition and exceeded its goals for training and outreach, it has faced challenges such as a complex user interface, insufficient stakeholder engagement, technical issues, and limited resources. As a result, the tool has not been adopted and used by countries.
19. Conclusion 5: To adapt to the impact of COVID-19, the project transitioned to online meetings and activities, which expanded participation, maintained project timelines, and reduced carbon emissions. However, it also impacted engagement, learning, and tool implementation at the national level.

Lessons Learned

20. Lesson Learned #1: Cooperation, collaboration, and alignment between MEA Secretariats are essential to advance global governance of biodiversity and chemicals, but the role of UNEP in facilitating cooperation remains limited to convening MEAs for dialogue and providing knowledge tools while respecting the independent mandates in the global environmental governance agenda.
21. Lesson Learned #2: Overemphasis on process-focused indicators at the expense of impact-focused indicators undermines the project's ability to monitor the achievement of its broader objectives.
22. Lesson Learned #3: Digital knowledge management tools can enhance access and collaboration, but their widespread use and long-term sustainability depend on key factors such as their efficiency in processing and organizing new data, continued collaboration with other UNEP tools (in particular, InforMEA), and external partners, and rapid adaptability to new emerging IT technology.
23. Lesson Learned #4: Some developing countries might need structured and continuous technical and institutional support to implement collaborative initiatives to effectively achieve synergies among MEAs.
24. Lesson Learned #5: Integrated strategic planning, early stakeholder engagement, and a stronger focus on national and regional implementation are essential to maximize the effectiveness, coordination, and impact of projects and initiatives to foster synergies in implementing MEAs at the national level.
25. Lesson Learned #6: Similar projects must prioritize the diversification of funding sources and the integration of project activities into national institutional landscapes to ensure the long-term sustainability of outcomes.
26. Lesson Learned #7: Incorporating specific guidelines and establishing monitoring mechanisms for gender and social inclusion will increase the impact and effectiveness of projects dealing with biodiversity MEAs, while at the same time aligning with gender policy work under the MEAs.
27. Lesson Learned #8: Balancing digital participation with in-person interactions is essential to enhancing the effectiveness of UNEP's global / multi-country project's implementation in the post-COVID era.

Recommendations

28. Recommendation #1: Mobilizing funding to sustain the success of the Bern Process, implement its outcomes, strengthen global cooperation, and support national-level implementation.
29. Recommendation #2: Reinstate and institutionalize Quarterly Deep Dive reviews for enhanced financial oversight and strategic alignment.
30. Recommendation #3: Strengthen existing monitoring mechanisms in follow-up projects (i.e., Treaties II) by establishing an impact-focused monitoring and evaluation system at the project level to measure long-term results and enhance sustainability.
31. Recommendation #4: Repositioning the DaRT Platform as an integrated platform for data sharing and collaboration on MEAs.
32. Recommendation #5: Mobilize and pool resources to enhance the interoperability and usability of the DaRT tool to maximize its effectiveness, utilizing Artificial Intelligence when possible.
33. Recommendation #6: Develop and implement a structured capacity-building program based on active learning with continuous technical support to ensure effective adoption of the tools promoted by the project, particularly DaRT.
34. Recommendation #7: Support / motivate the creation of National MEA working groups as a pathway to institutionalized committees to enhance national engagement and strengthen support, cooperation, collaboration, and alignment.
35. Recommendation #8: Enhancing collaboration, strategic focus, and alignment, and phased implementation between InforMEA and DaRT for greater MEA mainstreaming and implementation support and efficiency in environmental governance.
36. Recommendation #9: Enhance early, comprehensive, and inclusive stakeholder engagement to strengthen project implementation, proactive collaboration with MEA Secretariats, and sustainability in future projects.
37. Recommendation #10: Enhance engagement of vulnerable groups and strengthen social inclusion monitoring for greater equity and impact in global synergies-focused projects.
38. Recommendation #11: Adopt a hybrid work model to strengthen collaboration, cooperation, and alignment in subsequent projects (i.e., Treaties II), maximizing inclusion, efficiency, and impact.

Validation

The report has been subject to an independent validation exercise performed by UNEP's Evaluation Office. The performance ratings for the *Environmental Treaties Programme – Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity* project, set out in the Conclusions and Recommendations section, have been adjusted as a result. The overall project performance is validated at the '**Satisfactory**' level. Moreover, the Evaluation Office has found the overall quality of the report to be '**Satisfactory**' (see Annex XIII).

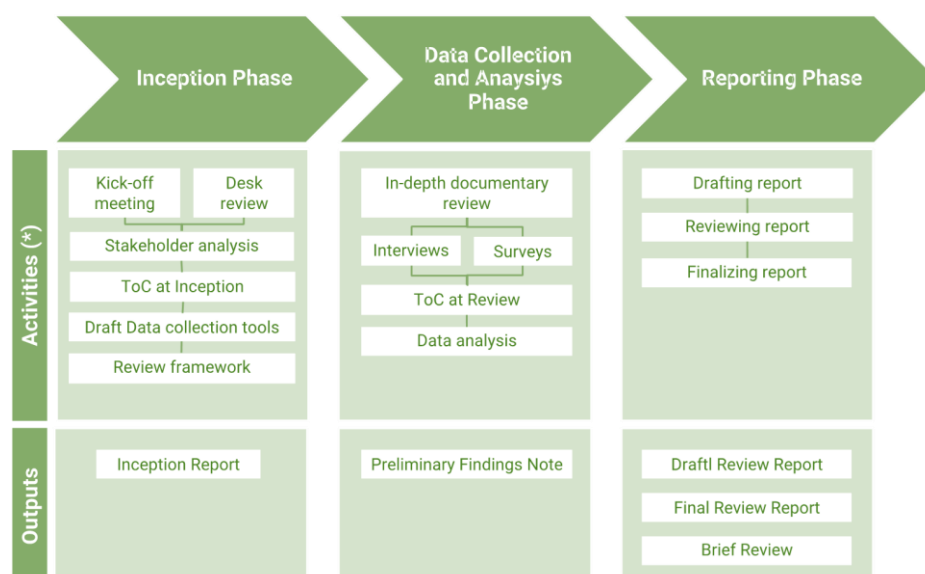
I. INTRODUCTION

39. This report presents the results and findings of the MLTR of the UNEP project “Environmental Treaties Programme – Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity” (PIMS ID 01988), conducted between November 2017 and June 2023. With a global scope, the project aimed to cover the regions of Asia Pacific, Africa, Europe, Latin America & the Caribbean, and West Asia. Initially approved by UNEP in November 2017, the project was scheduled to run for 36 months, from November 2017 to November 2020, date of the expected adoption of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and synergies roadmap of CBD. However, it extended to 67 months, with four deadline extensions: February 2021, December 2021, December 2023, and finally June 2023 due to Covid-19. The project did not initially include a mid-term review, as its duration was under four years. However, due to the extensions, a mid-term review was completed in April 2022, covering the project period from November 2017 to December 2021. The approved total project budget was USD 2,080,196, with reported expenditures totaling USD 2,226,355 as of June 2023 excluding in-kind contribution. Only the last extension was granted without additional funding.
40. The project's institutional framework and execution arrangements included UNEP as the implementing agency, responsible for overall supervision and coordination in line with its policies and procedures. A steering committee, composed of representatives from the secretariats of biodiversity-related conventions, donors, and other international organizations, oversaw the project. Members of the steering committee included UNEP, CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity), Ramsar / IUCN (Ramsar Convention on Wetlands), the Swiss Government, EU (European Union), UNEP-WCMC (World Conservation Monitoring Centre), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), AEWA (African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement), CMS (Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals), IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), IWC (the International Whaling Commission), and Carpathian Convention (The Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians). For each project output, technical subgroups were formed, which included external experts in some cases.
41. This MLTR was conducted upon the project's operational completion to evaluate its performance in terms of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency. It also assessed the outcome and impact resulting from the project, focusing on their sustainability. This MLTR had two main objectives: (i) to provide evidence of the project's results to meet accountability standards, and (ii) to support operational improvements, learning, and knowledge sharing among UNEP, UNEP-WCMC, and the MEAs. The review also highlighted lessons of operational significance for future project planning and implementation, especially for subsequent project phases, as the UNEP project “Leveraging transformational change through the coherent and synergistic implementation of Environmental Treaties (Treaties II)”, approved on June 2023.
42. The main target audiences for the review findings were UNEP project and programme management, UNEP regional offices, various divisions (such as the Evaluation Office, Ecosystems, Policy and Programmes, Communications, and others), MEAs Secretariats, current and potential donors, national governments, and implementation partners, including UNEP-WCMC.

II. REVIEW METHODS

43. The MLTR was conducted through activities organized across the following phases: Inception Phase, Data Collection and Analysis Phase, and Reporting Phase (Figure 1):

Figure 2 - Flowchart of activities



(*) Ongoing communication with the Project Manager and Team will occur throughout all stages to ensure alignment, address any emerging challenges, and facilitate collaboration and timely feedback.

44. This MLTR followed a participatory approach. The Review Consultant (RC), in coordination with the UNEP Project Manager (PM), ensured regular communication with project stakeholders to promote collaboration and ownership of the findings. From the inception phase onward, there was ongoing communication with the PM and project team, providing updates on progress and discussing any challenges.
45. This MLTR upheld integrity, honesty, confidentiality, systematic inquiry, and cultural sensitivity. It strove to represent both mainstream and marginalized groups, ensuring appropriate gender and Indigenous and local community representation. Data collection adhered to ethical standards and human rights, with informed consent obtained for all photos and information. Discussions remained anonymous, and interviewee and survey responses were treated confidentially. All data were collected and managed following relevant UNEP guidelines and UN standards of conduct. All written outputs were thorough, coherent, and aligned with the UNEP Evaluation guidelines in both substance and style.
46. The MLTR adhered to the review criteria outlined in the ToR (Annex X). Since the project's mid-term review informed the second phase of the Treaties Programme¹⁷, this review aimed to address all criteria evaluated by the UNEP Evaluation Office¹⁸ and to answer the following strategic questions (see Conclusions section):
- How has the project supported or improved biodiversity governance and the cooperation and synergies agenda globally through support to the governing bodies of the MEAs and implementation of COP decisions in the biodiversity and chemicals thematic clusters of MEAs as well as UNEA?

¹⁷ Leveraging Transformational Change through the Coherent and Synergistic Implementation of Environmental Treaties (Treaties II)

¹⁸ UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 03 TR Criterion Rating Descriptions Matrix. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>

- ii. Has the project improved cooperation among the biodiversity-related MEAs and improved measurable coherence and efficiency, avoiding duplication of efforts at the global, regional, and national levels?
 - iii. Has the project impacted country-level implementation of biodiversity-related conventions and goals through enhanced guidance, knowledge management, and harmonized reporting to MEAs?
 - iv. How effective and efficient has the roll-out of integrated approaches and tools been including the roll-out of the Data Reporting Tool (DaRT)?
 - v. What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance?
47. The **Inception Phase** aimed to establish the foundation for the review. This phase involved an initial review of key project documents, including the ProDoc, project reports, Mid-Term Review, and relevant guidelines. Meetings and regular communication with the PM and project team were maintained to clarify details. The quality of the project design was assessed using the Evaluation Office's standard template, with a formal rating of the ProDoc's key aspects. A stakeholder analysis was completed. **The Theory of Change at Inception was reconstructed** based on the results framework and ProDoc. The main elements of the review framework were established, including draft data collection tools and the review framework itself (Annex II).
48. The **Data Collection and Analysis Phase** explored how the project's change process has unfolded, focusing, for instance, on progress toward the stated outcome. This phase gathered evidence of results and impacts through primary and secondary methods (in-depth documentary review, individual and/or in-group interviews, and surveys).
49. The in-depth document review focused on identifying evidence of project achievements, challenges, and lessons learned, with a particular emphasis on progress toward outcomes and impact. Documents (Annex IV) were organized, categorized, and evaluated to assess the project's alignment with its original goals and its adaptation to emerging challenges or changes in context.
50. Individual and in-group interviews and/or surveys were conducted with organizations and individuals listed in Annex III. Interviewees and respondents were selected based on their roles in the project and their availability and/or interest in contributing to this MLTR. Efforts were focused on engaging relevant stakeholders, and representation of gender and social groups. A total of 81 individuals were contacted, resulting in 32 responses from interviews and surveys (approximately a 40% response rate). The gender balance was well-maintained, with 56% of the responses coming from men and 44% from women (Table 1). The process followed the Evaluation Office's guidelines to ensure both inclusivity and accuracy.
51. Interviews used a semi-structured approach with pre-determined open-ended questions and flexibility for deeper exploration based on participant responses. The interview guide, informed by the review framework matrix (Annex II), was tailored to each interviewee/group, averaging five questions (up to ten) and designed to last under one hour. Questions were shared in advance when requested to help participants prepare, fostering thoughtful responses and respect for their time. Ethical considerations were addressed at the start of each interview, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, and participants' consent for transcription was obtained to accurately capture responses for analysis. The communication strategy with stakeholders was adapted to the most appropriate platform, with Teams being the sole platform used. In addition to virtual meetings, email communication was used to gather further

evidence. An adaptive approach was applied during the meetings. The interviewer aimed to build a trusting relationship and make the interviewee feel as comfortable as possible to provide relevant information/evidence for the evaluation.

Table 1: Respondents' Sample

Stakeholder	# entities involved	# entities contacted	# people involved* (M/F)	# people contacted (M/F)	# respondent (M/F)	% respondent
Implementing agency	01	01	7/10	6/10	5/7	75
Funding partner / donor	01	01	2/0	2/0	1/0	50
Government officials / NFP	15	15	16/10	16/10	4/1	19
MEAs secretariats	08	08	12/8	12/8	4/5	45
Internal Implementing Partner	03	03	2/2	2/2	1/1	50
External Implementing Partner	01	01	4/3	4/3	2/0	29
Regional Convention	02	02	1/1	1/1	1/0	50
Intergovernmental body	01	01	1/1	1/1	0/0	0
Women	01	01	0/1	0/1	0/0	0
Youth	01	01	1/0	1/0	0/0	0

*People identified

52. The surveys used a structured methodology to gather insights from key stakeholders. All surveys were administered using Google Forms, which allowed for efficient distribution, response tracking, and analysis. They included closed-ended Likert scale questions for quantitative data and open-ended questions for qualitative feedback. The surveys were specifically designed and distributed to the Government officials / NFP stakeholder group. To minimize response fatigue and enhance engagement, the surveys were structured in a way that ensured each participant completed only one survey.
53. The selection of interviewees and survey respondents for each subject was based on the review framework matrix (Annex II). The goal was to involve stakeholders actively engaged in the project implementation phase and proposed tools, facilitating an in-depth study of the ToC causality in various relevant scenarios and analyzing cases from "information-rich" countries.
54. The decision to exclude field missions from the project review process was based on the nature and scope of the project, which focuses on global support for negotiations, governance, and the implementation of MEAs, rather than on-ground activities. Virtual engagements were chosen as a more efficient option, optimizing time and resources, enabling broader data collection through more meetings and interviews, and allowing the budget to prioritize direct capacity-building for the countries and parties involved. This approach also minimized the project's environmental impact by reducing air travel, aligning with sustainability goals.
55. During the Data Collection and Analysis Phase, the ToC at Inception - based on the project design document - was refined, reviewed, and validated with the project team. The ToC at Review was then developed, reflecting the causal logic of project implementation actions, and used to assess the project's output delivery, outcome achievement, and likelihood of impact.
56. Data analysis involved transcribing, translating, coding, and organizing findings using a thematic analysis approach. Triangulation of data from all sources provided evidence for the review, identifying what occurred in the project and explaining underlying issues influencing performance. Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods assessed achievements against expected outputs, outcome, and

impact, considering baseline conditions, trends, and counterfactuals. The analysis was systematic, ensuring that all findings, conclusions, and recommendations were evidence-based, using tools like a data analysis matrix to organize information and data collected from various sources and methodologies.

57. At the end of the data collection and analysis phase, the RC presented preliminary findings to the UNEP project team and stakeholders. This presentation supported the review's participatory approach by confirming that all information sources were accessed and verifying emerging findings. It also allowed the project team to engage with lessons learned, contribute to recommendations, and take ownership of the results.
58. The Reporting Phase involves drafting, revising, and finalizing the report. The final report includes an executive summary, a detailed analysis of findings by review criteria with supporting evidence, lessons learned, recommendations, and an annotated rating table. As outlined in the ToR (Annex X), this phase included multiple reviews, from the initial draft to the final report. The RC submitted the zero draft to the PM, who reviewed it and provided feedback. Based on the PM's input, a first draft was then shared with a broader group of stakeholders for their comments. Stakeholders were able to correct factual errors and provide feedback on the conclusions and recommendations (Annex I). The RC consolidated all feedback, incorporating it into the final report. This phase also included the creation of a Review Brief, a 2-page summary of the review and key findings, designed for broader dissemination.
59. Some limitations faced during the review process included:
 - i. Challenges in accessing and organizing evidence for certain review criteria/questions: Despite the RC's efforts and contributions from the PM and project team, many documents were not fully available nor properly organized. Additionally, the need to identify and analyze documents across two different systems (PIMS and IPRM) compounded this issue. To address these challenges, the RC dedicated extra time and effort.
 - ii. Response rate and delays in receiving responses: There were occasional delays in receiving answers to questions and interview requests sent via email. Some stakeholders were engaged in other projects or activities. The timing of the review, coinciding with holiday periods and COPs, likely contributed to these delays and affected response rates. To mitigate this, relationship-building and engagement strategies were implemented to encourage timely responses.
 - iii. Challenges due to time gap in project implementation: The project began in 2017 and concluded in 2023. Several key stakeholders involved in the project's implementation over the six years were no longer available or had difficulty recalling events that occurred some time ago. To address this, a thorough analysis of written documents, especially the Mid-Term Review, was conducted.
 - iv. Limited Emphasis on Climate Issues: The absence of climate-related issues in the Treaties I project was not widely highlighted by interviewees or identified as a key concern in the analysis of available documentation. While the assessment primarily reflects perspectives gathered through interviews and document review, it is important to acknowledge that there exist internal discussions within UNEP that have recognized this gap as a relevant issue in the project. Since this concern did not strongly emerge during inception data collection nor feature prominently in interviews, it was not a central focus of the findings. However, given its significance, this gap should be considered a limitation of this review.

III. THE PROJECT

A. Context

60. Over the past few decades, various conventions related to biodiversity have been established to address issues such as biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, and illegal wildlife trade, among others. Simultaneously, the understanding of the nature and interconnectivity of these challenges has evolved, especially with the advancement of globalization and technology, culminating in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, it is observed that these conventions, such as CITES and the CBD, have specific approaches, which increases the complexity of multilateral cooperation.
61. The main issue arising from this situation is the lack of coordination and synergy between the various conventions and international commitments related to biodiversity. Although many global agreements aim to resolve interconnected issues, the complexity and diversity of these conventions can lead to overlapping actions, inconsistencies in national policies, and even conflicts of priorities. This hinders the effective implementation of conservation policies, increases the risk of duplicating efforts, and may result in inefficient resource allocation. Furthermore, the lack of alignment between different levels of government and various agreements may undermine global efforts to address environmental challenges, hindering the achievement of SDGs and long-term biodiversity preservation.¹⁹
62. The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020²⁰, adopted at COP 10 in 2010, promoted greater cooperation among MEAs, encouraging countries to integrate these conventions into their NBSAPs. The need for greater coordination and synergy was emphasized in resolutions and decisions by the COP-10, as well as Rio+20 and the UNEA. In this context, the Treaties I project aimed to support countries in the effective implementation of key biodiversity-related MEAs by improving collaboration, cooperation, and alignment among multilateral agreements, reducing fragmentation, and promoting policy coherence. This global project was built on previous efforts in the field, such as the UN Environment project on "Improving the Effectiveness of and Cooperation among Biodiversity-Related Conventions and Exploring Opportunities for Further Synergies." Results of this project, like the Sourcebook²¹, which addressed challenges and solutions in the cooperation among environmental conventions.
63. During its implementation, the project faced several significant external challenges, primarily the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic disrupted operations at UNEP and among stakeholders, delaying key intergovernmental meetings essential for project activities. This situation requested adjustments to timelines and methods of engagement. To address these challenges, the project adapted by shifting to online platforms for meetings and capacity-building workshops, allowing progress to continue despite the global crisis. Additionally, the project had to navigate changes in funding timelines, register new funds, and align activities with the delayed post-2020

¹⁹ This issue is particularly relevant to the policy coherence agenda and aligns with efforts under SDG 17.14.1, which aims to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development. Additionally, it relates to broader efforts to integrate biodiversity considerations into decision-making at all levels, as outlined in Target 14 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework: <https://www.informea.org/en/goals/kunming-montreal-global-biodiversity-framework/target-14-integrate-biodiversity-decision>

²⁰ Convention on Biological Diversity. (2010). *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets*. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-10/cop-10-dec-02-en.pdf>

²¹ UNEP (2015). *Sourcebook of opportunities for enhancing cooperation among the Biodiversity-related Conventions at national and regional levels*. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Nairobi, Kenya.

GBF and related meetings, such as the COP-15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which was postponed until 2022.

B. Objectives and components

64. As outlined in ProDoc²² and confirmed/maintained in later revisions, the project aimed to achieve the outcome: 'Increasingly coherent implementation of environmental treaties contributes to biodiversity goals and targets and the Sustainable Development Goals'. To achieve this outcome, the project, according to its third revision²³, would deliver 5 outputs (Table 2).

Table 2: Project outcome and outputs

Outcome	Output	Description
Increasingly coherent implementation of environmental treaties contributes to biodiversity goals and targets and the Sustainable Development Goals	Output 1: Support is provided to the MEAs for the global synergies discussions and inputs provided to the post-2020 GBF.	Interactions with MEA synergies and UNEP technical inputs made available to Parties in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework processes
	Output 2: Cooperation between UNEP and public information officers of the media and MEAs	Sharing information about key knowledge products and events to a broad, biodiversity-relevant audience through United Nations channels and networks
	Output 3: Tools related to synergies are made available and are disseminated to Parties of the MEAs	Availability and dissemination of several tools (e.g., The Sourcebook of Opportunities for Enhancing Cooperation among the Biodiversity-Related MEAs at National and Regional Levels ²⁴ , The Compendium of Guidance for Capturing, Managing and Using Biodiversity-related Data and Information ²⁵ and The Compendium of Guidance on Key Global Databases Related to Biodiversity-related Conventions ²⁶) and the number of beneficiaries that acknowledge having access to them
	Output 4: MEA parties use and become familiar with the enhanced and interoperable Data and Reporting Tool (DaRT)	Development, training, capacity building, communication, and interoperability of the DaRT tool, along with increasing its recognition through MEA decisions. It focused on the number of national working spaces established in DaRT, outreach activities promoting the tool, the number of participants in these activities, and the number of tools DaRT is interoperable with
	Output 5: National and regional level capacity-building service on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the use of the synergies' tools provided	Country and regional capacity-building activities, involving trained national MEA focal points and government representatives working on national MEA policies. It also included the provision of gender-responsive guidance documents to Parties and stakeholders of the CBD and other biodiversity-related MEAs

65. No significant changes were made to the expected outputs, outcome, or objectives during project implementation. Between the initial version of the ProDoc and its final review, the main change was the addition of more detailed descriptions for all outputs and related funding. These revisions aimed to enhance clarity and specificity and adopt a more results-oriented approach. Additionally, clearer and more precise indicators were developed for all outputs throughout the project's reviews, except for output 2.

66. Section IV, " Theory of Change at review, " describes the causal pathways linking the project outputs and outcomes to higher-level expected results (intermediate state and impact). Table 3 (Section IV) reformulates results statements, aiming to frame the wording of the expected results in line with the Theory of Change and UNEP Glossary of Results Definitions.

²² UNEP. (2017). Project document. Project ID 413.4 (PIMS no. 01988). Environmental Treaties Programme – realizing synergies for biodiversity.

²³ UNEP. (2021). Project Revision #3. Project ID 413.4 (PIMS no. 01988). Environmental Treaties Programme – realizing synergies for biodiversity.

²⁴ UNEP (2015) Sourcebook of opportunities for enhancing cooperation among the Biodiversity-related Conventions at national and regional levels. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Nairobi, Kenya.

²⁵ UNEP-WCMC (2018) Compendium of guidance for capturing, managing and using biodiversity-related data and information. Cambridge (UK): UNEP-WCMC. <https://doi.org/10.34892/969Z-8Q06>

²⁶ UNEP-WCMC (2018) Compendium of guidance on key global databases related to biodiversity-related conventions. Cambridge (UK): UNEP-WCMC. <https://doi.org/10.34892/9XC8-0D10>.

C. Stakeholders

67. The ProDoc presented the major stakeholders, and their priorities related to the project (Prodoc sections 2.3 and 4.2), brief sections on a gender perspective and Indigenous people and local communities mainstreaming (Prodoc sections 2.4, 2.5, 4.3, and 4.4), and an expected stakeholders' participation on project implementation (Prodoc section 5). No stakeholder matrix was identified.
68. This MLTR produced a stakeholder matrix at review based on the information available in the approved project document (ProDoc), the Theory of Change (ToC) at review, the approved mid-term review, other documents consulted, and interviews. This stakeholder matrix aimed to improve the visualization and assessment of the project's key stakeholders by categorizing them based on their roles (implementation²⁷, support²⁸, and beneficiary²⁹ stakeholders) and types (implementing agency, implementing partner, funding partner/donor, MEAs secretariats, regional conventions, international bodies, government officials / national MEA focal points (NFPs), non-governmental organizations, private sector, Indigenous people and local communities, and women and youth).
69. This review identifies the implementing agency, implementing partners, funding partner/donor, MEA secretariats, and government officials/national MEA focal points as key players, defined as stakeholders with high influence and high interest. Regional conventions, international bodies, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, indigenous peoples and local communities, and women and youth are classified as subjects ("show consideration"), representing stakeholders with low influence but high interest. Figure 1 presents an organigram of the project with key project stakeholders.

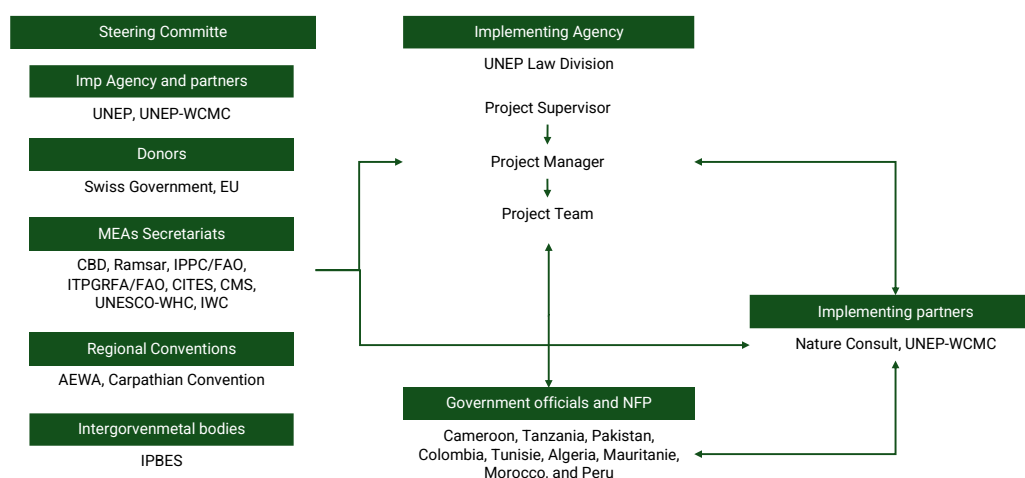


Figure 1: Organigram of the Project with key project stakeholders

²⁷ Implementation Stakeholders are the individuals or groups directly or indirectly responsible for executing the project, ensuring it progress according to plan. This category includes the implementing agency and its core staff, who manage day-to-day tasks and coordination, and internal partners (with whom financial agreements (SSFA, PCAs, contracts) take place), such as UNEP-WCMC and Nature Consult - DaRT consultant.

²⁸ Support Stakeholders are external partners that assist in the project's implementation by providing resources, expertise, or additional capacity without directly managing daily activities. This group comprises the MEA secretariats, regional conventions, and intergovernmental bodies that contribute to the project's success. Several MEAs, such as the CBD, signed ICAs with the project to support the execution of activities, including gender-related initiatives and the preparation of documents for COP meetings.

²⁹ Beneficiary Stakeholders are the individuals or groups who directly benefit from the project's outcome. Their needs and feedback are critical to ensuring the project's relevance and effectiveness. This group includes the end users (e.g., National MEA focal points), who directly utilize the project's outputs, and national stakeholders, such as scientific institutions, universities, or CSO, women, the Indigenous Peoples, local communities, youth, etc..., who benefit from improved initiatives for biodiversity conservation.

70. It is important to note that the Treaties I project engaged with eight MEA secretariats: CBD, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, IPPC/FAO, ITPGRFA/FAO, CMS, UNESCO, and IWC. However, this accounts for just some of the UNEP-administered biodiversity-related MEAs³⁰.

D. Changes in design during implementation

71. Initially planned from November 2017 to November 2020, the project encountered several delays, resulting in four extensions, with the final no-cost extension extending the project until June 2023. These adjustments were primarily driven by external challenges, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted UNEP operations and stakeholder engagement, postponed key intergovernmental meetings, and required a shift to online formats to maintain progress (Figure 2). No changes were made to the Theory of Change (ToC). Additional time was also needed to implement activities that received new funding from Switzerland, China, Norway, the Nordic Council, and Finland³¹. Each revision responded to these evolving circumstances:

- I. **First Revision (October 2020):** The project was extended to February 2021 due to COVID-19 impacts, which affected UNEP and stakeholder's operations and delayed critical intergovernmental meetings. This revision allowed the project to adapt by transitioning to a virtual work environment and securing additional funding to support continuity. This interim revision was made in anticipation of further funding from donors. By then, the intention was to extend the project for three additional years, focusing on post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) implementation and developing synergy tools, including the DaRT tool. Additionally, the description of outputs was refined, and new indicators were proposed for Outputs 1, 3, 4, and 5 to better track achievements.
- II. **Second Revision (February 2021):** This revision pushed the deadline to December 2021 to accommodate shifts in funding and the impacts of COVID-19 on the post-2020 biodiversity framework. The revision allowed alignment with postponed international meetings, expanded virtual engagement, and the successful organization of the Bern II Virtual Consultation Workshop³². Indicators for Outputs 3, 4, and 5 were adjusted to reflect these developments. Minor updates to milestones, targets, and indicators ensured project progress while maintaining consistency with the broader framework.
- III. **Third Revision (December 2021):** The project was further extended to December 2022 to synchronize activities with the postponed post-2020 GBF and COP-15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity. This review included adjustments to indicators and alignment with new secured funding mobilized to support the implementation of outputs 1, 4, and 5. Organizational restructuring within UNEP influenced project staffing and focus during this period.
- IV. **Fourth Revision (October 2022):** A no-cost extension was approved to extend the project until June 2023, allowing the completion of project activities, particularly to

³⁰ The MEAs related to biodiversity administered by the United Nations Environment Programme are presented at the following link: <https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/why-does-un-environment-matter/secretariats-and-conventions#others>

³¹ Source: ToR, Mid Term review, Revisions, and Operational Project Closure Report

³² Bern II Consultation Workshop of Biodiversity-Related Conventions on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework - (Online Meeting), initially scheduled for March 2020, was postponed due to COVID-19 and held virtually from 18 January to 2 February 2021. It included three live video-conference sessions (two open and one closed) and an interactive online discussion forum from 18 to 26 January, allowing participants to contribute across five key topics related to indicators, implementation, cooperation, synergies, and operationalization. The workshop involved MEA-nominated participants, secretariat staff, UN agencies, and NGOs (<https://www.unep.org/events/workshop/bern-ii-consultation-workshop-biodiversity-related-conventions-post-2020-global>).

support the CBD COP15 negotiations. This extension ensured continuity in rolling out the DaRT tool, with Swiss donors consenting to extend the remaining budget.

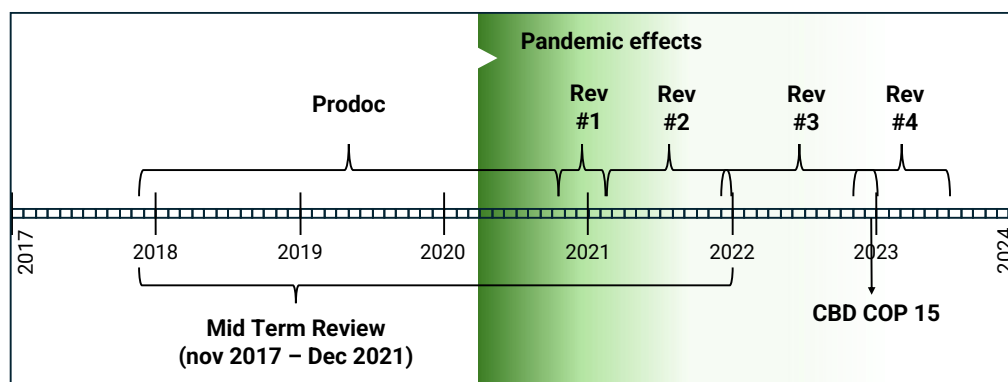


Figure 2: Project Timeline - Key Revisions and Updated Deadlines

E. Project financing

72. According to the operational closure report³³, the project presented a total planned funding and contributions of USD 2.582.047,00. The total secured funding and contributions reached USD 2.976.004,00, representing an increase of 15,3% over the initially planned amount. Approximately 80% of the funding secured originated from cash contributions, of which nearly 90% was derived from extra-budgetary funding. The largest donor, the Swiss Government, accounted for 30.3% of the total cash contributions. In-kind contributions comprised about 16% of the total secured funding, while co-financing in-kind contributions accounted for approximately 6%.
73. The estimated cost at design was USD 2.336.031,00. The actual cost/expenditure amounted to USD 2.226.356,00, a reduction of 4.7% from the initial design estimate. Output 4 received the largest share of funding (37.1% of the total expenditure), followed by Output 1 (28.3%) and Output 5 (26.8%).
74. Annex VI (Project Budget and Expenditures) includes Table 7, detailing the Project Funding Sources, and Table 8, which provides a breakdown of Expenditures by Outcome/Output. Annex VII (Financial Management) contains Table 9, presenting the Financial Management overview.

³³ UNEP / IPRM (2024). Operational Project Closure Report. Project ID 413.4 (IPMR no. 35480). Environmental Treaties Programme – realizing synergies for biodiversity.

IV. THEORY OF CHANGE AT REVIEW

75. The Theory of Change (ToC) presented in the Prodoc is integrated into the overarching umbrella program, making it difficult to distinguish the project's specific causal pathways clearly. While the project lacks a standalone ToC, the Prodoc does outline the drivers, assumptions, outputs, and outcome specific to the project, providing a framework for understanding its intended goals. However, intermediate states, long-term impacts, and causal pathways are not explicitly defined. During the mid-term review, a 'ToC at Review' was reconstructed from available documentation, aligning as much as possible with UNEP guidelines³⁴. Despite this, the causal pathways between outputs and outcome remained unclear, with weak links between drivers, assumptions, and key pathways.
76. Figure 3 presents **the reconstructed ToC at Review of this MLTR**, depicting the sequence from outputs to outcome through intermediate states and leading to the desired impact. It explains the change process by outlining the major causal pathways throughout the intervention. These changes are mapped as a set of interrelated pathways, illustrating how the required outcome is logically connected. Table 3 reformulates results statements, aiming to frame the wording of the expected results in line with the Theory of Change and UNEP Glossary of Results Definitions³⁵.
77. It was expected that the delivery of 5 outputs (see Section III.B) would lead, during the life of the project, to the achievement of the outcome **'Increasingly coherent implementation of environmental treaties contributes to biodiversity goals and targets and the Sustainable Development Goals'**, which in turn would place the process of change in an intermediate state (**Parties are collectively implementing environmental treaties with enhanced coherence, taking steps toward aligning with global biodiversity targets and SDGs**) towards the desired impact (**Coherent implementation of environmental treaties contributes to the achievement of the SDGs and environmental goals**). These expected changes would be effectively achieved if seven assumptions³⁶ and three drivers³⁷ were met (Table 4). All four stakeholder groups were expected to be involved in the change process: implementation stakeholders (IS), support stakeholders (SS), and beneficiary stakeholders (BS) – see section III.C.
78. Output 1 aims to support global synergies discussions among MEAs and help shape the post-2020 GBF. This involves facilitating collaboration among MEAs to ensure alignment and coherence in addressing biodiversity goals, fostering a more integrated approach. For Output 1 to effectively contribute to the project's outcome, both a key driver (D1) and an assumption (A5) are necessary. The driver, D1, relates to the recognized potential for synergies and capacity building, where stakeholders value cooperation. This means that stakeholders recognize the value of achieving more through greater cooperation and collaboration, as well as the importance of synergies. This potential is evident in decisions made by the COPs and UNEA, reflecting a strong interest in improving coordination. The assumption, A5, is linked to the integration of MEAs into the post-2020 GBF. It assumes that the successful integration of MEAs will enhance the capacity to implement the post-2020 framework, increasing its effectiveness in addressing global biodiversity challenges. Without

³⁴ UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 13 TR Use of Theory of Change in Reviews Guidance Note.

<https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>

³⁵ UNEP (2023) Glossary of Results Definitions (version 8)

³⁶ An assumption is a significant external factor or condition that needs to be present for the realization of the intended results but is beyond the influence of the project and its partners. Assumptions are often positively formulated risks.

³⁷ A driver is a significant external factor that, if present, is expected to contribute to the realization of the intended results of a project. Drivers can be influenced by the project and its partners.

these synergies and integration, the project may struggle to fully achieve its desired outcome.

Table 3: Justification for Reformulation of Results Statements

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Review Inception (RTOC)	Justification for Reformulation
(LONG LASTING) IMPACT		
-	Coherent and integrated implementation of environmental treaties contributes to the achievement of biodiversity goals, the SDGs, and broader environmental targets on a global scale.	The original ProDoc does not include a standalone ToC diagram. The review interprets the project's long-term impact as aligning with the overall long-term impact of the Environmental Treaties Programme (see ProDoc page 13). Only a few minor adjustments were made to the original text to enhance clarity.
INTERMEDIATE STATES		
-	Parties are collectively implementing environmental treaties with enhanced coherence, taking steps toward aligning with global biodiversity targets and SDGs.	The original Prodoc does not present an intermediate state. It reflects the necessary step where countries work in a coordinated way to implement these treaties. Without this collective and coherent implementation, the treaties may be implemented in isolation or inconsistently, limiting their effectiveness in addressing global environmental challenges and achieving the SDGs.
PROJECT OUTCOME		
Increasingly coherent implementation of environmental treaties contributes to biodiversity goals and targets and the SDGs	Same as original	-
OUTPUTS		
Engagement with the global synergies' discussions and Input paper to a long-term strategy for capacity- building	Support is provided to the MEAs for the global synergies discussions and inputs provided to the post 2020 global biodiversity framework	No major changes were made to the expected outputs during the project implementation. The main adjustment between the initial ProDoc and the final review was the inclusion of more detailed descriptions for each output, improving clarity and ensuring a more results-focused approach. The reconstructed Theory of Change (ToC) aligns with the detailed version found in the Operational Project Closure Report.
Cooperation with public information officers	Cooperation between UNEP and public information officers of the media and MEAs	
Tools related to synergies are made available and are disseminated	Tools related to synergies are made available and are disseminated to Parties of the MEAs	
Data and reporting tool	MEA parties use and become familiar with the enhanced, gender-sensitive, and interoperable DaRT	
National level work	National and regional level capacity building service on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the use of the synergies' tools provided	

79. Output 2 focuses on enhancing cooperation between UNEP, public information officers, the media, and MEAs to improve communication, raise awareness, and promote understanding of environmental agreements and related initiatives. It is important to note that Output 2 directly impacts the success of the other outputs. Strong communication is essential for ensuring their visibility and effectiveness, as it fosters public and stakeholder engagement in environmental governance. For Output 2 to effectively contribute to the project's outcome, in addition to the key driver (D1), two other assumptions (A1 and A2) are essential. Assumption A1 involves enhanced cooperation and collaboration with partners, where ongoing partnerships are seen as beneficial. Assumption A2 addresses synergy awareness and action, where increased awareness leads to tangible actions for environmental solutions.
80. Output 5 is centered on providing capacity-building services at national and regional levels to support the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

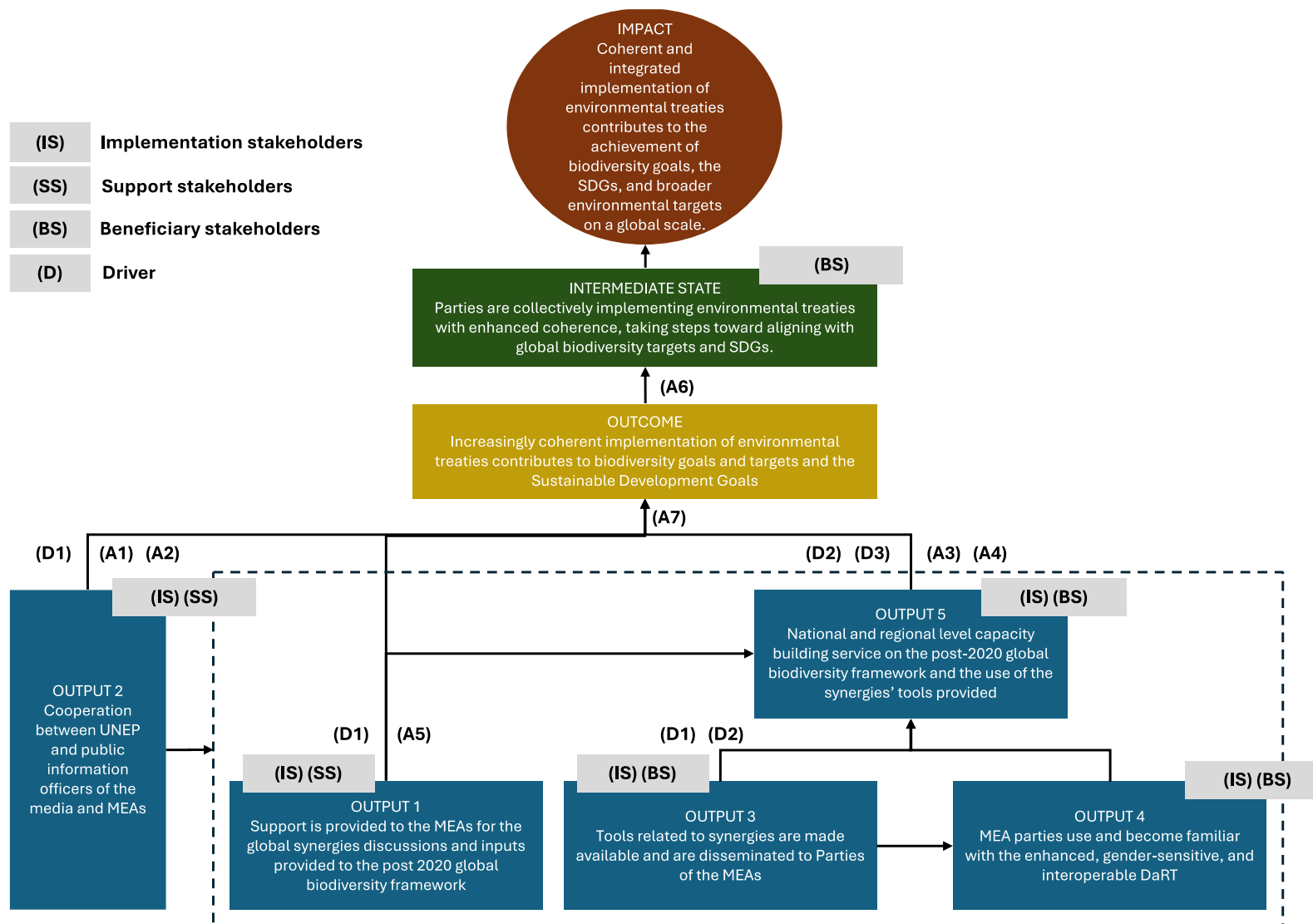
It includes training on synergies tools, enabling countries and regions to better align with global biodiversity goals. For Output 5 to effectively contribute to the project's outcome, two key drivers (D2 and D3) and two assumptions (A3 and A4) are essential. D2 is crucial because the willingness of parties is vital for realizing synergies at the national level. D3 is important because it creates an opportunity for enhanced focus on biodiversity within broader development initiatives. A3 is significant as without political commitment, efforts may falter. Finally, A4 is essential because the commitment of Countries and Treaty Bodies is crucial for promoting synergies and achieving successful implementation of MEAs.

81. The achievement of Output 5 depends on the realization of Outputs 3 and 4. Output 3 aims to make available and disseminate tools related to synergies for MEA parties, equipping them with the resources needed to improve their environmental efforts. Output 4 focuses on ensuring that MEA parties use and become familiar with the enhanced and interoperable DaRT (Data Reporting Tool). These outputs are crucial for improving data management, sharing, and reporting, thereby strengthening the implementation and coherence of MEAs at both national and global levels. The increased usability and adoption of DaRT, in particular, are intended to enhance environmental governance and promote more effective decision-making across MEA parties. Drivers D1 and D2 are identified as essential for ensuring that Output 3 effectively influences Output 5.
82. The achievement of the project outcome was expected to lead to the **intermediate state** where “Parties are collectively implementing environmental treaties with enhanced coherence, taking steps toward aligning with global biodiversity targets and SDGs.” To reach this intermediate state, a contributing condition largely outside the project's sphere of influence (assumption) was anticipated: “National Commitment and Stakeholder Willingness to Implement MEAs” (A6). Ultimately, the **overall impact** of the project—“Coherent implementation of environmental treaties contributes to the achievement of the SDGs and environmental goals”—would be realized through this intermediate state.
83. The main stakeholders for Output 1 and Output 2 are the implementation and support stakeholders (IS and SS). For Outputs 3, 4, and 5, the primary stakeholders are implementation stakeholders (IS) and beneficiary stakeholders (BS). Additionally, decision-making stakeholders (DMS) influence all outputs. During the review process, it is crucial to clarify the specific contributions of IS and SS in Outputs 1 and 2, and the roles of IS and BS in Outputs 3, 4, and 5. It is also important to examine how DMS impacts all outputs. Furthermore, the validity of assumptions regarding stakeholder commitment and willingness to act should be assessed, along with the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement and its contribution to achieving project goals, especially in the case of the key beneficiary stakeholders (Government officials / national focal point).
84. Indigenous peoples, local communities, youth, and women are identified as beneficiary stakeholders (BS) within the Theory of Change (ToC). This MLTR will evaluate the specific challenges and opportunities related to this project, as well as their involvement in decision-making processes and their contributions to achieving the project outcome. To ensure equitable project outputs, it is essential for the broader social, political, and institutional context to support the promotion of human rights, gender equality, and the inclusion of Indigenous peoples and local communities (Assumption 7), given that the project's results framework does not directly address these issues. Data collection mechanisms targeting these groups will be instrumental in assessing the project's impact on their needs

Table 4: Drivers and Assumptions of the project

DRIVERS		DESCRIPTION
Driver 1	D1	Perceived Potential and Need for Synergies and Capacity Building: The perceived potential for achieving more through greater cooperation, collaboration, and the realization of synergies and a well-recognized need for synergies and capacity. This potential is shown, for instance, by the decisions of COPs and UNEA.
Driver 2	D2	Willingness to Collaborative Implementation of Environmental Treaties: The willingness of Parties, especially national focal points of biodiversity-related MEAs, to implement environmental treaties in a cooperative way across divisions and departments by realizing synergies also at the national levels.
Driver 3	D3	Leveraging Momentum to Integrate Biodiversity into the 2030 Agenda: The momentum built by previous work, other projects, and recent decisions as well as the opportunity to ensure that biodiversity is appropriately taken up in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.
ASSUMPTIONS		DESCRIPTION
Assumption 1	A1	Enhanced Cooperation and Collaboration with Partners: Increased cooperation and collaboration with partners continue to be seen as useful
Assumption 2	A2	Synergy Awareness and Action for Environmental Solutions: Increased awareness and concrete solutions for synergies lead to actions.
Assumption 3	A3	Sustained Political Will for MEA Implementation: Countries maintain political will to enhance synergies for improved implementation of MEAs at both national and global levels
Assumption 4	A4	Commitment of Countries and Treaty Bodies to Foster Synergies: Countries and the governing bodies and secretariats of environmental treaties are willing, able, and/or mandated to engage and take action to promote cooperation and collaboration and realize synergies.
Assumption 5	A5	Integration of MEAs into the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework: Successful integration of the MEAs is expected to enhance the capacity to implement the post-2020 biodiversity framework, increasing its effectiveness in addressing global biodiversity challenges.
Assumption 6	A6	National Commitment and Stakeholder Willingness to Implement MEAs: Effective implementation of MEAs requires not just capacity but a strong commitment from national governments and key stakeholders. Willingness to act is crucial for achieving the desired outcome.
Assumption 7	A7	Supportive Context for Human Rights, Gender Equality, and Inclusion: The broader social, political, and institutional context will support the promotion of human rights, gender equality, and the inclusion of Indigenous peoples and local communities.

Figure 3. ToC at Review



V. REVIEW FINDINGS

A. Strategic Relevance

Alignment to UNEP's UNEP Medium Term Strategy³⁸ (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities

85. The project's implementation strategies and expected contributions were closely aligned with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategies (MTS), Programmes of Work (PoWs), and strategic priorities across two MTS cycles (2018-2021 and 2022-2025). This alignment was achieved by addressing core UNEP objectives in environmental governance and ecosystem management, promoting policy coherence, and strengthening institutional capacities.
86. For MTS 2018-2021, the ProDoc, project revisions, and the Operational Project Closure Report show that the project contributed directly to the Environmental Governance sub-programme, particularly through the following expected accomplishments (EA) and PoW indicators for 2018-2019³⁹ and 2020-2021⁴⁰:
- I. EA (a) (i) (ii): Supporting international convergence on integrated approaches to achieve environmental objectives and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
 - II. EA (b) (i): Enhancing institutional capacities and policy or legal frameworks to achieve internationally agreed environmental goals, including those of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
87. The project was aligned with the following PoW Outputs under *PoW 2018-19 and PoW 2020-2021*:
- I. 3. Advisory services to governments to promote synergies in the implementation of MEAs and other multilateral institutional arrangements
 - II. 4. Information and knowledge management products on the coherent and synergistic implementation of MEAs, the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and on legal and institutional responses to emerging environmental issues of international concern
88. Under MTS 2022-2025 and PoW 2022-2023, the project sustained its relevance to UNEP's Environmental Governance sub-programme, particularly contributing to Outcome 2C (Nature conservation and restoration are enhanced), and PoW Direct Outcome 3.5 (Institutional capacity to adopt and act on national and international commitments is enhanced). The third project revision aligned with specific indicators for Environmental Governance, including fostering synergies among MEAs and strengthening policy frameworks. The project's emphasis on national-level cooperation and capacity building supported UNEP's MTS priority for country-level impact, promoting coherent and sustainable environmental governance.

³⁸ UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs), of the Sub-programmes. <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach/un-environment-documents>.

³⁹ Indicators of achievement of Sub-programme 4 Environmental Governance (UNEP PoW 2018-2019) can be found on <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/7707>

⁴⁰ Indicators of achievement of Sub-programme 4 Environmental Governance (UNEP PoW 2020-2021) can be found on <https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/28411>

89. The project's strategies—from facilitating MEA synergies to strengthening national frameworks—were designed to fulfill UNEP's strategic vision for inclusive and coherent environmental governance, directly supporting UNEP's 2030 impact goal.
90. Although not explicitly referenced in the ProDoc, the project was aligned with the Bali Strategic Plan (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (S-SC) by supporting developing countries in addressing environmental challenges through capacity building, technology transfer, knowledge-sharing, and institutional strengthening. However, clearer articulation of S-SC mechanisms and specific outcomes in the project design would have reinforced this alignment. Output 5, for instance, had the potential to foster S-SC by promoting a collaborative approach to shared environmental challenges. This approach could have been further developed.
91. Overall, the project's implementation strategies and contributions demonstrated alignment with UNEP's mandate and thematic priorities as outlined in the MTS cycles 2018-2021 and 2022-2025, along with their respective PoWs (2018-2019, 2020-2021, and 2022-2023). Alignment with UNEP's Capacity Building (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (S-SC) policies was evident. Contributions were also identified for PoW Expected Accomplishment indicators (2018-2019 and 2020-2021) and Direct Outcome indicators (2022-2023). Despite limited funding, Output 5 was instrumental in advancing UNEP's objectives across MTS and PoW frameworks.

Rating for Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities: Highly Satisfactory

Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities

92. The project aligned well with donor and partner priorities by addressing national environmental challenges, promoting biodiversity conservation, and ensuring compliance with international conventions. It specifically reflected the needs of the Parties (page 9 of the original Prodoc) and the SDGs, reinforcing its relevance to donors' strategic objectives.
93. According to the MTR, the project contributed to critical areas, including 'Healthy and Productive Ecosystems,' 'Climate Change,' 'Resilience to Disasters and Conflicts,' and 'Resource Efficiency.' It also had the potential to support the strategic priority of 'Environment under Review,' particularly through the DaRT tool.
94. The Operational Closure Report (OCR) highlighted the crucial role of key financial and technical partners, including Switzerland, China, and Sweden, in the project's success and continuity:
 - I. Switzerland: The Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) was the primary donor, contributing 31% of the total project cost (USD 696,253). FOEN played a central role in organizing the Bern II MEAs online workshop and the subsequent Bern III Conference⁴¹. Its advocacy helped incorporate the Bern Process into decisions and resolutions from several MEAs, strengthening UNEP's mandate. Switzerland also hosted the Bogis-Bossey meeting of experts in June 2023 and funded DaRT roll-outs and outreach to over 50 countries.
 - II. China: The Ministry of Ecology and Environment funded 17% of the project (USD 380,274) and supported the China Presidency of CBD COP-15 through the UNEP office in Beijing. China also supported DaRT roll-outs and workshops, such as the

⁴¹ Bern III is an event related to Treaties II; however, project stakeholders view it as a positive and evolutionary follow-up result of Treaties I and the Bern process activities carried out within its scope. (<https://www.unep.org/events/conference/bern-iii-conference-cooperation-among-biodiversity-related-conventions>)

Nanjing Institute of Environmental Science event in September 2023. They continue to back synergies among MEAs and participated actively in the Bern III Conference and side events during SBSTTA-26.

- III. Other Financial Partners: Sweden, the Nordic Council of Ministers, and the European Commission provided essential ongoing support. Sweden and the Nordic Council of Ministers continued funding for Treaties II, while the European Commission contributed to a sister project, "Scaling up actions to realize synergies for biodiversity," which ran until December 2024.
95. Project results were communicated to donors and stakeholders through the steering committee, MEAs governing bodies, and UNEP platforms. Initiatives like the Bern Process contributed significantly to Global Biodiversity Framework. Tools like DaRT and Compendia enabled beneficiaries to access knowledge, while the Bern Process website expanded the dissemination reach. The project's transition into the second phase, Treaties II (2023–2026), was made smooth through effective collaboration with partners. UNEP-WCMC, a key implementation partner, provided technical expertise and contributed to DaRT's development and interoperability. Their efforts included DaRT Phase 3 development, the online Compendia, and the Bern II MEAs consultation workshop, all of which enhanced the project's scalability and reporting systems.
 96. Feedback from stakeholders indicated that the project's implementation strategies and expected outcomes aligned well with donor priorities, effectively addressing demands while allowing for necessary flexibility.
 97. It can be affirmed that the project's implementation strategies and delivered contributions are fully aligned with the priorities of donors and partners, as well as the anticipated contributions to the reported results indicators.

Rating for Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities: Highly Satisfactory

Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Priorities

98. The project demonstrated alignment with global and regional environmental priorities by addressing various MEAs and their related governance structures, as outlined in the ProDoc, subsequent project revisions, and feedback from interviews.
99. The ProDoc and revisions highlighted the project's alignment with the SDGs and Agenda 2030, particularly through indicators 15.9.1⁴² and 17.14.1⁴³. These indicators emphasize integrating biodiversity values into national planning and sustainable development strategies, as well as enhancing institutional capacities for coherent environmental governance.
100. At the regional and sub-regional levels, the project aimed to strengthen biodiversity-related MEAs by supporting frameworks like the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its successor, the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, to guide collective environmental objectives.
101. Evidence indicated that the project focused more on global-level cooperation and less on implementing national-level decisions, limiting its overall impact. While

⁴² Indicator 15.9.1(a) Number of countries that have established national targets in accordance with or similar to Aichi Biodiversity Target 2 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 in their national biodiversity strategy and action plans and the progress reported towards these targets; and (b) integration of biodiversity into national accounting and reporting systems, defined as implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (Tier II)

⁴³ 17.14.1 Number of countries with mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence of sustainable development (Tier II)

national priorities were not detailed for individual countries, they were incorporated through Output 5, which tailored project implementation to specific national contexts in collaboration with UNEP regional offices and country partners. National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) were central to these efforts, guiding the implementation of all biodiversity-related conventions and promoting synergy across them.

102. The feedback from interviews and surveys indicates that the project's strategies and objectives were well-aligned with national environmental priorities, particularly in addressing biodiversity loss and ensuring compliance with international conventions. The DaRT tool was recognized as an effective resource for managing data, streamlining administrative processes, and facilitating the integration of NBSAPs with NDCs. Additionally, the project successfully promoted collaboration among stakeholders, such as governments, NGOs, and local communities.
103. However, several challenges were identified, including inconsistent adoption of the tools in countries. If the DaRT Tool had been extensively tested and used as envisaged in the ProDoc, it could have become a valuable tool for Parties to incorporate biodiversity information into planning processes, public policy design, and implementation. This would have positioned the tool to contribute to SDG targets 15.9.1 and 17.14.1. Despite this potential, the DaRT Tool has not yet been utilized to its full potential and has not effectively integrated ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, and poverty reduction initiatives (see details in Section D. Effectiveness).
104. Therefore, the project's implementation strategies and contributions aligned with global, regional, sub-regional, and national environmental priorities, though activities focused more on global cooperation than national-level implementation. Although not explicitly highlighted in the Prodoc, the project's national context was indirectly aligned with the UN's "Leave No One Behind" policy by addressing development and human rights and engaging least-developed countries (e.g., Mauritania, Rwanda, Tanzania, Myanmar) to foster an inclusive and equitable impact.

Rating for Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Priorities: Satisfactory

Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence

105. The project's design and adjustments made during inception demonstrated complementarity of results and showed active engagement with UNEP interventions by the time. The project built on previous UN Environment projects, publications, and workshops, such as the one that informed CBD decision XIII/24. Additionally, the ProDoc indicated that the development of DaRT would leverage analyses of commonalities across reporting formats of biodiversity-related conventions, promoting a modular reporting approach. The ProDoc also emphasized the importance of ensuring complementarity with other efforts by UNEP, MEA secretariats, and the UNEP-WCMC regarding reporting tools.
106. Despite this, the project design exhibited limited integration with ongoing and planned initiatives within UNEP or other agencies, potentially hindering broader synergies. While the ProDoc acknowledged the need for complementarity, specific strategies or mechanisms for engagement with related UNEP interventions, particularly in high-priority policy areas, were not detailed. For example, although the

ProDoc mentioned alignment with the ACP-MEAs Phase III project⁴⁴ and the InforMEA Phase II project⁴⁵, it did not clarify how this would be operationalized. Additionally, as noted in the MTR, there was no explicit engagement with National Focal Points of the Montevideo Environmental Law Programme⁴⁶, designated by the Member States under UNEA Resolution 2/19, adopted at the same UNEA meeting as resolution 2/17, and used as a major justification for the project. This missed opportunity could have enhanced project coherence with UNEP's broader policy initiatives.

107. Interview feedback indicated that the project had limited connections with other initiatives due to its fixed scope, budget, and timelines. While the project reported joint activities with ACP MEAs and adhered to its planned approach, it missed opportunities to integrate with related projects, such as those focused on climate change and chemicals. Additionally, feedback highlighted missed opportunities to showcase DaRT at no additional cost during joint workshops already organized by MEA Secretariats, due to insufficient planning and/or communication. This was later improved in phase 2 of Treaties with co-funding from GEF (para. 144).
108. Overall, the design during inception showed moderate complementarity (but no duplication) and active knowledge of, or dialogue/engagement with, other recent, ongoing, or planned interventions by UNEP or partner initiatives in the project area. The design does not clearly anticipate any identified benefits of collaboration with other recent, ongoing, or planned interventions. Limited integration was observed during project implementation.

Rating for Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence: Moderately Satisfactory

Rating for Strategic Relevance: Satisfactory

B. Quality of Project Design

109. This section summarizes the project's strengths and weaknesses at the design stage. The project design quality was assessed using a template provided by the UNEP Evaluation Office, with ratings assigned to specific criteria. An overall rating was determined through a weighted approach. Table 5 provides a summary of the assessment.
110. The project was well-grounded in its strategic relevance, addressing a problem backed by solid evidence and documented needs of governments, particularly through decisions of MEA governing bodies like CBD decision XIII/24. As indicated in Section A. Strategic Relevance, the project was aligned with UNEP's MTS and PoW 2018-19 (and 2020-21), focusing on capacity building and supporting SDG indicators. While the project did not directly reference the BSP for Technology Support and Capacity-building, it aligned with its objectives by enhancing the ability of developing countries to tackle environmental challenges through access to technology and institutional

⁴⁴ The ACP-MEAs Phase III project, led by UNEP, supports Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries in implementing MEAs. This phase focuses on enhancing compliance with biodiversity and waste agreements, improving coastal and ocean management, and integrating biodiversity and safe chemical practices in agriculture. (<https://www.unep.org/cep/multilateral-environmental-agreements-ACP-countries-phase-iii-ACP-meas-3>).

⁴⁵ The InforMEA project is a UNEP initiative designed to expand the InforMEA platform, an online portal that centralizes and makes information on Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) accessible. InforMEA Phase I focused on developing the first version of DaRT (2018), while Phase II aimed to test and improve DaRT (2019-2020). (<https://dart.informe.org/about>).

⁴⁶ The Montevideo Environmental Law Programme is a long-term initiative led by UNEP to develop and strengthen global environmental law. Since 1982, it has supported countries in creating, implementing, and enforcing environmental laws, aiming to address urgent issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. (<https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/environmental-rights-and-governance/what-we-do/promoting-environmental-rule-law-1>).

assistance. It also mentioned its intention to explore opportunities for promoting South-South cooperation as an implementation strategy. Regional priorities were well considered, and the project was built on previous UNEP initiatives. The ProDoc mentioned alignment with UNEP projects (e.g. ACP-MEAs Phase III project), but it did not clarify how this would be operationalized. Also, there was no explicit engagement with the NFP of the Montevideo Environmental Law Programme⁴⁷.

111. The logical framework provided a coherent structure that aligns with the project's objectives, with outputs, outcome, and SMART indicators to track progress. Milestones in the log frame established time-bound deadlines, ensuring accountability throughout implementation. Project monitoring responsibilities lay with the management team, though no specific budget allocation for monitoring activities is indicated. The work plan was clear and realistic, although the deadlines were tight.
112. Project governance and supervision arrangements were defined and explained in the ProDoc, detailing the structure, roles, and dynamics of the project management group, steering committee, and external stakeholders. It outlined UNEP's roles and responsibilities, providing insight into their functions within the project.
113. The financial planning/budgeting was streamlined, featuring minimal project management costs that indicate good value for money. Yet, it lacked a detailed breakdown by activity and did not consider potential implementation challenges. The overall coherence appeared adequate. The resource mobilization strategy aimed to secure additional funding throughout the project, providing flexibility in reaching out to new donors.
114. Project efficiency at design was considered satisfactory. As part of a larger program⁴⁸, the project aligned with existing biodiversity-related agreements and considered established communication channels and networks to foster synergies with other initiatives. The ProDoc outlined several value-for-money strategies to enhance economy, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness, such as emphasizing resource optimization through partnerships with other organizations and in-kind contributions. The project aimed to achieve cost efficiency by managing operational and management budgets. However, the project was extended beyond its original date four times, with deadlines moved to December 2020, 2021, 2022, and June 2023. The final extension was no-cost.⁴⁹
115. Regarding project preparation, the project design has the following issues:
 - I. Problem and Situational Analyses: The project document provided a context and situational analysis but did not clearly define the problem it seeks to solve (item 2.1 Problem analysis described the major MEAs and presented a summary of their evolution, but did not clearly explain the problem to be addressed by the project). Although the project title is clear, it is essential that the project explicitly contextualizes the Problem and Situational Analyses, clearly defining its research question. While elements of the Problem and Situational Analyses are implied within the project document (ProDoc), it is crucial for these issues to be more explicit. This clarification not only facilitates the project designer's and readers'

⁴⁷ The Montevideo Environmental Law Programme is a long-term initiative led by UNEP to develop and strengthen global environmental law. Since 1982, it has supported countries in creating, implementing, and enforcing environmental laws, aiming to address urgent issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. (<https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/environmental-rights-and-governance/what-we-do/promoting-environmental-rule-law-1>).

⁴⁸ The Environmental Treaties Programme was designed to support multilateral environmental agreements and improve environmental governance. Initially, it consisted of the project under review, with plans to expand through additional projects.

⁴⁹ Reasons included: the COVID-19 pandemic impacting UNEP and stakeholders (1st extension), adjustments to changing timelines and funding, with most milestones achieved despite delays (2nd extension), alignment with the post-2020 biodiversity framework and postponed meetings (3rd extension), and support for the CBD COP15 negotiations along with an extension of the DaRT consultant's contract (4th extension).

understanding of the project's core issue but also enables a stronger, more precise connection between the issue being addressed and the planned outputs and outcomes during the project design phase. While relevant MEA and UNEA decisions and previous UNEP projects, such as "Improving the Effectiveness of and Cooperation among Biodiversity-Related Conventions and Exploring Opportunities or Further Synergies" outputs were mentioned, their influence on project design is not explained. There was no clear justification for why the project was limited to biodiversity-related MEAs.

- II. Stakeholder Analysis: No formal and detailed stakeholder analysis was conducted in the ProDoc design. The ProDoc provided a superficial overview of stakeholders, focusing on environmental policy actors and omitting key groups such as specialized government agencies and the private sector. The needs of gender/minority groups and indigenous peoples are not fully assessed, and it was unclear how these stakeholders would be integrated into project activities. Concerns about limited stakeholder participation were raised in the second project steering committee meeting⁵⁰. It was noted that Member States and additional MEAs should have been involved during project design, rather than just at the implementation stage.

116. The project design also presented limitations regarding the intended results and causality. The ToC in the ProDoc was based on the broader program's ToC, which made it difficult to clearly distinguish the project's causal pathways from those of the larger program. Additionally, the ProDoc did not outline the roles of key actors and stakeholders for each causal pathway. These limitations were identified in the MTR, leading to a reconstruction of the ToC. The ToC developed during the MTR played a crucial role in guiding the project from 2022 to 2023, particularly since no project-specific ToC existed before. However, despite these efforts, this terminal review finds that some challenges remained. The causal pathways between outputs and outcomes were still, to some extent, unclear, and the links between drivers, assumptions, and key pathways were not fully articulated. Furthermore, while the MTR acknowledged the lack of clearly defined roles for key actors and stakeholders in the ProDoc, this terminal review confirms that these roles were not fully clarified following the MTR's ToC revision. Section IV (Theory of Change at Review) presents the reconstructed ToC in this MLTR, where the issues highlighted here have been addressed.

117. Finally, the project design could have been strengthened in terms of detailing its partnerships. The ProDoc referenced various internal and external partners, including UNEP, biodiversity-related secretariats, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and donors. However, it did not provide a detailed description of their roles and responsibilities nor a clear assessment of their capacities. The MTR acknowledged this limitation and highlighted the need for stronger engagement with key partners. It noted that the main partners identified in the ProDoc were UNEP or UNEP-related offices/institutions, along with a broadly defined group of "UNEP Partners," but there was no formal assessment of any partner's capacity. While some improvements were made in collaboration—particularly with WCMC and government entities—formal agreements remained limited, with only one ICA established with CBD. This terminal review confirms that despite these efforts, the project could have further clarified the nature of its partnerships in the ProDoc and strengthened financial and qualitative collaboration mechanisms with MEA Secretariats and other stakeholders during implementation.

⁵⁰ Source: UNEP. (2022). Mid-term Review. Project ID 413.4 (PIMS no. 01988). Environmental Treaties Programme - Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity (page 20).

118. Overall, the project design quality was rated as 'Moderately Satisfactory'. Its major strengths were strategic relevance, logical framework, monitoring, governance and supervision arrangements, financial planning/budgeting, and efficiency. The project design's major weaknesses were related to project preparation, intended results, and partnerships.

Table 5: Overall project design quality score

SECTION		SELECT RATING	SCORE (1-6)	WEIGHTING	TOTAL (Rating x Weighting/10)
A	Operating Context	Moderately Unsatisfactory	3	0,4	0,12
B	Project Preparation	Moderately Unsatisfactory	3	1,2	0,36
C	Strategic Relevance	Satisfactory	5	0,8	0,4
D	Intended Results and Causality	Moderately Unsatisfactory	3	1,6	0,48
E	Logical Framework and Monitoring	Satisfactory	5	0,8	0,4
F	Governance and Supervision Arrangements	Satisfactory	5	0,4	0,2
G	Partnerships	Moderately Unsatisfactory	3	0,8	0,24
H	Learning, Communication and Outreach	Moderately Satisfactory	4	0,4	0,16
I	Financial Planning / Budgeting	Satisfactory	5	0,4	0,2
J	Efficiency	Satisfactory	5	0,8	0,4
K	Risk identification and Social Safeguards	Moderately Satisfactory	4	0,8	0,32
L	Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects	Satisfactory	5	1,2	0,6
M	Identified Project Design Weaknesses/Gaps	Satisfactory	5	0,4	0,2
TOTAL SCORE (Sum Totals)					4,08

Rating for Project Design: Moderately Satisfactory

C. Nature of the External Context

119. The COVID-19 pandemic⁵¹ was the key unanticipated challenge faced by the project, having a significant impact. By the second quarter of 2020, the pandemic's impact on project implementation became evident, including halting staff and stakeholder travel and in-person meetings. Feedback from interviews confirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the project. The most notable consequence was the shift from in-person activities to virtual meetings and workshops, which affected engagement and the effectiveness of certain events. The inability to conduct in-person interactions made it challenging to foster informal discussions, consensus-building, and direct feedback, especially during negotiations and training.

⁵¹ The COVID-19 pandemic officially began in December 2019, when the first cases were identified in Wuhan, China. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. While there is no official "end" to the pandemic, many countries began to gain better control in 2021, following mass vaccination campaigns. However, some regions continued to face restrictions in 2022 due to new virus variants and varying vaccination rates.

120. Additionally, the pandemic caused delays in key processes and intergovernmental meetings, such as CBD COP-15, and disrupted global biodiversity negotiations, particularly those related to the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), which was postponed by two years. These delays impacted project timelines and hindered the delivery of outputs, particularly Output 1, which was closely tied to the progress of these negotiations, and Output 5. Without the pandemic, the GBF would have been finalized earlier, enabling timely reporting and providing more time to prepare national biodiversity strategies and action plans.
121. Implementing partners, MEA Secretariats, and parties also faced capacity constraints. For example, the simultaneous occurrence of multiple COPs and subsidiary body meetings between September and December 2022 further reduced their ability to engage with project activities. As a result, a no-cost extension was granted in 2022, extending the project until June 2023.
122. Despite these setbacks, the project adapted its workplan to address the evolving pandemic situation and secured additional funding from Switzerland, China, Norway, Finland, and the Nordic Council. The experience also led to new methods for delivering capacity-building activities and technical assistance to MEA parties through online platforms.
123. According to interview feedback, while initially challenging, the project management team effectively adapted by transitioning to online working modalities. However, external performance was affected, as some countries struggled to deliver results due to limited virtual infrastructure and disruptions to national processes. Despite these challenges, the virtual format enabled broader participation in discussions and consultations (e.g., Bern II MEAs online workshop), enhancing inclusivity.
124. The Mid-Term Review and Operational Project Closure Report noted that although COVID-19 caused delays—particularly in travel and face-to-face meetings—it presented an opportunity to reduce carbon emissions, aligning with UNEP's sustainability goals. Consequently, the Mid-Term Review recommended adopting this approach as UNEP's corporate modus operandi moving forward.
125. In conclusion, the health and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic affected project staff and partner operations to a moderate extent.

Rating for Nature of the external context: Moderately Unfavourable

D. Effectiveness

Availability of Outputs

126. Effectiveness was evaluated against the Theory of Change at Review (Figure 3) and the log frame in the third revision of the project. The evaluation of output availability assesses the project's success in producing the planned outputs and achieving milestones based on the most recent revision of the project document. This evaluation considers both the quantity and quality of outputs, their ownership by and usefulness to intended beneficiaries, and the timeliness of their delivery. A brief explanation is provided of the reasons behind the project's success or shortcomings in meeting these standards.
127. As its basis for evaluation, the analysis considered the outcome 'Increasingly coherent implementation of environmental treaties to contribute to biodiversity goals and targets and the Sustainable Development Goals', and the intermediate state

'Parties are collectively implementing environmental treaties with enhanced coherence, taking steps toward aligning with global biodiversity targets and SDGs'.

128. Overall, the project delivered most planned activities within the adjusted timeframes, reflecting the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. All five outputs were fully achieved. The project demonstrated notable efficiency in Outputs 1, 3, and 4, successfully achieving their objectives. However, Output 2 was impacted by insufficient staffing and a lack of dedicated focus on communication efforts within UNEP. While stakeholders recognized the value of the project, the absence of dedicated resources limited its communication effectiveness. Output 5 faced significant constraints due to a small budget, limited personnel, and an inadequate methodology for rolling out the DaRT tool. Although outreach activities effectively raised some engagement, the tool's implementation by NFP was often lacking upon their return to their respective countries, diminishing its overall impact.
129. Regarding the output-related indicators evaluated in this section, it is observed that most of them were process-focused indicators. Process-focused indicators measure direct actions, such as information dissemination, tool creation, and outreach events, which are important for the execution of activities but do not measure substantial changes or direct impact on behavior or policies. Examples include the number of interactions with MEA synergies or the number of accesses to the DaRT website. Some indicators, such as the availability of gender-responsive guidance documents, can be seen as intermediaries, depending on their effective use by decision-makers.

Output 1) Support is provided to the MEAs for the global synergies discussions and inputs provided to the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

130. Output 1 was successfully delivered. The output effectively supported the development phase of the Kunming-Montreal GBF, which strengthened MEA roles in various clusters. The Bern II consultations significantly advanced collaboration among MEAs, resulting in the CBD COP15's endorsement of the Bern Process and UNEP's subsequent role in this initiative. Switzerland financially backed UNEP's efforts, leading to the Bogis-Bossey Expert Meeting (June 2023) in preparation for Bern III. Outcomes of the Bern II consultation informed five intergovernmental meetings, with key outputs shared with CBD COP15, CITES COP19, Ramsar COP14, ITPGRFA-9, and CMS-STC53. The project's impact extended to national levels, where 44 countries utilized project outputs for MEA alignment, and two countries established coordination mechanisms among national MEA focal points. Additionally, the international community committed an extra USD 1.3M for Phase II, including support for the Bern Process, DaRT, and inter-cluster synergies.
131. Considering the output performance against indicators:
- I. **Number of interactions with the MEAs synergies on the post-2020 GBF processes:** The project exceeded its target of one additional interaction with MEAs on post-2020 GBF processes. By the end of the project, there were six documented interactions, during which six MEA governing body meetings considered the Bern II Report in their negotiations and made follow-up decisions to support the Bern Process and DaRT.
 - II. **Number of UNEP technical submissions to the post-2020 GBF made available to the parties:** The target of one UNEP technical submission for the post-2020 GBF was surpassed, with two reports submitted to CBD COP15 for Party review.
132. The project met its targets, with some milestones completed ahead of schedule. According to MTR, most outputs were delivered on time, fulfilling their purpose and contributing to the project's outcomes.

133. The quality and utility of the project's key outputs can be categorized as high. Feedback from interviews highlighted the project's critical role in delivering high-quality technical submissions to post-2020 GBF meetings and supporting related side events, despite the challenges posed by COVID-19. Notably, the Bern I and Bern II workshops received positive recognition for their significant impact on GBF discussions. Several stakeholders' feedback identified the Bern process as one of the most remarkable successes of the project, which facilitated dialogue among biodiversity-related conventions and governing bodies, creating opportunities for collaboration and knowledge-sharing. Although the Bern III Conference was not explicitly within the project's original scope, it emerged as an important outcome influenced by the project. This development resulted from discussions and collaborations with biodiversity convention secretariats during the formulation of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and likely would not have occurred without the project's contributions. The outcomes of these workshops were reflected in official pre-session documents and meeting results, underscoring their importance in shaping GBF processes and fostering collaboration among MEAs.
134. Most MEA Secretariats reported engagement with the project and regarded its contributions as valuable in promoting synergy-focused collaboration. The Bern workshops, in particular, emphasized the importance of addressing MEA synergies within the post-2020 GBF, making cross-references to chemical conventions, and recommending stronger links in the GBF itself. This input was positively received by some secretariats, reinforcing that the quality and utility of the outputs were considered good, with important, albeit nuanced, impacts on the project's overall goals.
135. However, some challenges were identified. While the Bern process was appreciated as a platform for discussion, some respondents felt its outcomes were too general, with limited practical implementation, particularly within the biodiversity cluster. Additionally, some respondents noted that including chemicals in the discussions diluted the focus on biodiversity-related conventions, making it more difficult to translate synergies into concrete actions. However, it is important to clarify that the MEA respondents were referring to the Bern III conference, held in January 2024, after the Treaties I project had concluded. On the other hand, although Treaties I remained focused on biodiversity-related MEAs until its completion in June 2023, it introduced discussions on cross-sectoral connections, such as the Nordic workshop on biodiversity-chemicals/waste intersections and online courses involving focal points from both biodiversity and chemicals sectors. Given that the drivers of biodiversity loss cut across multiple sectors of society, expanding the scope is a natural and necessary step. UNEP, through its Medium-Term Strategy (MTS), inevitably promotes integrated approaches, as this strategy strongly emphasizes the three planetary crises and the need for cross-sectoral solutions. Expanding the scope to include other areas, such as chemicals, was actually one of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) recommendations aimed at addressing UNEP's triple planetary scope (climate, biodiversity, and pollution). This recommendation is being implemented under the Treaties II project. Therefore, while Treaties I contributed to fostering integrated approaches, concerns about scope expansion reducing effectiveness are more relevant to Treaties II activities.
136. Additionally, last-minute planning by project management, combined with differing processes and priorities across the secretariats (e.g., reports, mandates, and systems), may have further constrained the project's impact. Several respondents mentioned receiving decisions and information at very short notice, which limited opportunities for deeper collaboration between the secretariats and project activities. Moreover, some Secretariat members interviewed were not fully aware of the project's

role in specific processes, suggesting a gap in stakeholder engagement rather than a shortcoming in the quality or effectiveness of the outputs.

137. Despite these challenges, there is consensus that the project provided opportunities to advance engagement on synergies among MEAs and contributed valuable insights to the development of the post-2020 GBF.

Output 2 (Cooperation between UNEP and public information officers of the media and MEAs)

138. According to indicators, Output 2 was successfully made available to the intended users, as evidenced by some key actions. The indicator measuring information sharing on major knowledge products and events with a broad audience relevant to biodiversity through United Nations channels and networks was met. Starting with a baseline of 6 at the third revision, the project achieved its target by reaching 7, including the recognition of the Data Reporting Tool for MEAs (DaRT) and the Bern Process at CBD COP15 and Ramsar COP14⁵². These efforts were widely shared through UNEP's Environmental Governance update⁵³, ensuring the targeted outreach. The Meltwater media monitoring tool was also made available to MEA secretariats. It enabled amplifying biodiversity messages following MEA meetings and major report launches. The tool had been operational and used by all MEAs and UNEP divisions during 6 international briefing events, demonstrating its accessibility and utility in reaching the intended users. Finally, a final media event organized by the DaRT team at CBD COP15 further highlighted the availability and impact of the outputs. Regional media officers interviewed the team, disseminating messages about DaRT, which shows direct engagement with media users and an increased reach of biodiversity-related content.
139. The quality and utility of the project's key outputs can be categorized as good. While the project delivered valuable tools and initiatives, its impact was somewhat limited due to resource constraints and insufficient staffing focus on communication efforts within UNEP. However, the level of ownership of the key outputs by the intended users—MEA Secretariats—was somewhat limited. Evidence from the MTR and interviews indicated that the involvement of MEA Secretariats with UNEP, particularly in the communications area, was generally more reactive than proactive, with UNEP primarily receiving information to disseminate. This suggests that their role in shaping the project's outputs was somewhat constrained. The degree of direct involvement in output preparation varied, with some Secretariats more actively engaged in identifying opportunities, while others had less direct input. Concerns were also raised about the project's limited expertise in public information exercises. In addition, the Law Division froze the position of Communication Officer P4, that planned for that output with the original PM. As a result, while the project provided useful outputs, there were notable gaps in its ability to effectively engage with and support MEA public information officers.
140. Overall, the outputs were seen as valuable, but their full potential was hindered by limited resources and the project's lack of a stronger communications capacity.

Output 3 (Tools related to synergies are made available and are disseminated to Parties of the MEAs)

⁵² Source: UNEP. (2023). Operational Project Closure Report: Environmental Treaties Programme – Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity (Project ID 413.4, 01988); UNEP. (2023). Project progress Report: Environmental Treaties Programme – Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity (Project ID 413.4, 35480).

⁵³ <https://express.adobe.com/page/sqeFTI9UmySg2/#multilateral-environmental-agreements-implementation-and-compliance>

141. Output 3 was partially made available to the intended users. While tool development and enhancement continued, several tools were shared with MEAs. After CBD COP 15, efforts on this output shifted to the standalone EU-GPGC project, "Scaling Up Actions to Realize Synergies for Biodiversity"⁵⁴. Regarding the indicators:

- I. **Tools made available and disseminated:** The target for the tools made available was achieved (2 tools available) and exceeded (7 tools disseminated vs. 4 planned), although final records for the dissemination indicator are not documented. Notably, the interactive, searchable database of 3 compendia of guidance, developed through the DaRT tool, was shared and tested in workshops across several countries (Tanzania, Colombia, Peru, Tunisia, and Jordan). DaRT user needs were also assessed at these events to develop additional tool specifications, and the operational prototype was launched at the CBD COP 15 side event on Tools and Solutions for the GBF. A user summary report and feedback mechanisms were introduced to support ongoing improvements and sustainability. This indicator is outdated, as the output was transferred to the standalone project, the EC-GPGC on scaling up tools to realize biodiversity synergy.
- II. **Number of beneficiaries acknowledging access to the tool:** The project successfully met its target of 3,500 beneficiaries in December 2022. The compendia were launched on the DaRT platform during CBD COP 15, and the number of visitors to the website increased significantly, from 300 visitors per month in 2021 to 700 in 2022, with a global reach of 189 countries. This visitor growth reflected that the tools were made available to and acknowledged by the intended users.

142. Overall, the milestones outlined within the maintained scope of this output were successfully achieved, with all related milestones met on time:

- I. Tools are made available through a suitable website for publishing synergies-related information.
- II. A new dissemination tool is delivered (e.g. webinar, presentation, workshop module).
- III. At least one gap is filled (e.g., an existing publication is updated or tailored to national application), and at least one product focusing on gender and biodiversity is initiated.
- IV. An overview of all available tools is created, and a plan to disseminate the materials and what can be done to fill possible gaps is elaborated.

Output 4: MEA parties use and become familiar with the enhanced, gender-sensitive, and interoperable DaRT

143. By June 2023, DaRT had 104 country workspaces in 6 languages, exceeding expectations with populated NBSAPs. Following the recognition of four CBD COP15

⁵⁴ The EU-GPGC project "Scaling Up Actions to Realize Synergies for Biodiversity" complements the Environmental Treaties Programme - Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity (Treaties I, 2017–2023). It was funded by the EU, Switzerland, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Approved by the PRC in November 2021, it supported Outputs 1, 3, and 4 from December 2021 to December 2023. This project enabled UNEP to assist countries in improving the coherent implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and scaling up synergies and tools, with interoperability across the Data Reporting Tool, Online Reporting System, Bioland, and the clearing-house mechanism. Now in its second phase, titled "Leveraging Transformational Change through Coherent and Synergistic Implementation of Environmental Treaties (Treaties II)," the programme aims to address this issue over the next years.

decisions⁵⁵, DaRT was actively involved in the GEF Early Action Support Programme GEF-EAS⁵⁶. Originally designed for national reporting under biodiversity conventions, DaRT was further recognized as a tool for monitoring, reporting, review, knowledge management with CHM, and cooperation with other organizations and MEAs. The platform allows for the cross-mapping of biodiversity strategies and gap analyses for NBSAPs. The KM-GBF is reflected in DaRT, including mappings by SCBD among Aichi targets, SDGs, and GBF targets, facilitating the alignment of NBSAPs with the KM-GBF.

144. DaRT proved useful for countries revising their NBSAPs under the GEF-EAS Programme. The DaRT team participated in two GEF-EAS regional workshops in Nairobi (with 21 Anglophone African countries) and Istanbul (with 23 Pacific and Eastern European countries). The team created 44 DaRT national spaces for these countries, presented DaRT's functionalities, and offered help-desk support. However, while additional outreach activities occurred in the last six months of the project, no DaRT roll-out or training workshops were organized. The DaRT national workshop in China, planned for June 2023, was delayed and rescheduled for September 2023.

145. Regarding project indicators:

- I. **Instances of testing of the tool:** This indicator was only presented in the Prodoc, the first project revision, and the Operational Closure Report. By December 2021, DaRT had undergone testing in 84 instances, greatly exceeding the initial target of 5. This engagement indicates widespread initial interest in and utilization of DaRT's functionalities. However, no further data was collected after this period, so subsequent testing activity remains undocumented. This indicator relates to a country working space created by the team, where NBSAPs were uploaded, and countries logged in during workshops to receive training. Training requests were successfully fulfilled, but there was no guarantee of continued use beyond the sessions. Most workshops included a session on a national work plan to encourage sustained use of DaRT, but follow-up or control over its implementation was not possible. Surveys were conducted to gather feedback on the training sessions.
- II. **Number of times the DaRT website is accessed by MEA parties and organizations:** Between the project's start and June 2023, DaRT was accessed approximately 15,000 times. In the first half of 2023 alone, about 1,400 new users visited the platform. A total of 13,619 unique users accessed DaRT from December 2020 to December 2022, with 3,308 accessing in 2020–2021 and 10,311 in 2022, reflecting a notable increase in awareness and usage. These figures underscore DaRT's relevance and its successful outreach within the MEA parties and organizations.
- III. **Number of outreach activities that disseminate the tool:** Since the beginning of the project, DaRT has been promoted through 44 outreach activities, which included in-person training workshops and help desk support during GEF GBF sessions in 2023, presentations at IFDD (Institut de la Francophonie pour le développement durable) and AFoCO-RETC (Asian Forest Cooperation Organization - Regional Education and Training Center) workshops, and webinars and meetings with countries and MEA Secretariats (e.g., CBD, UNCCD, and the Carpathian Convention) interested in DaRT. During the latest reporting period, 11 new outreach events were organized: 2 in-person workshops (Nairobi and

⁵⁵ DaRT for modular reporting in Cooperation and Synergies decision (CBD/COP/15/L.21); DaRT in monitoring framework decision CBD/COP/15/L.26; DaRT in Mechanisms for planning, monitoring, reporting and review (CBD/COP/15/L.27); DaRT in Knowledge Management Decision (CBD/COP/15/L.32).

⁵⁶ <https://open.unep.org/project/GEF-10946>

Istanbul, ~50 participants), 2 online workshops (IFDD and AFoCO-RETC, 83 participants combined), 5 webinars (South Africa, Canada, Nigeria, CBD, UNCCD), and 2 online meetings (Tanzania and Switzerland). These activities reached a broad and diverse audience and ensured DaRT's functionalities and benefits were well understood by stakeholders.

- IV. **Number of beneficiaries that participated in the outreach activities:** According to the Operational Closure Report, throughout the project, 1,151 individuals—including country experts, national focal points, and MEA Secretariat members—participated in DaRT outreach activities. This number reflects the project's extensive reach and highlights the broad community interest in adopting and integrating DaRT into biodiversity management practices.
- V. **Number of tools and action plans DaRT is interoperable with:** By the end of June 2023, DaRT achieved interoperability with four key tools: InforMEA⁵⁷, CHM (CBD Clearing-House Mechanism)⁵⁸, Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (BiP)⁵⁹, and Compendia of Guidance on Biodiversity (hosted on DaRT)⁶⁰. It is assumed that the planned updates and translations for the Compendium of Guidance after its launch in December 2023 were completed on schedule, as a visit to the website confirmed that the Compendium of Guidance is now updated and translated. Significant progress was also made toward aligning DaRT with the Kunming-Montreal GBF, including introducing a draft mapping to facilitate NBSAP alignment with GBF targets. Some challenges in Interoperability were identified by that time:
 - a. ORS (Online Reporting System)⁶¹: Integration was delayed due to staff turnover at UNEP-WCMC, the implementing partner. Despite these challenges, the team established 102 national working spaces by June 2023 to support user countries in engaging with DaRT independently.
 - b. ORT (CBD Online Reporting Tool)⁶²: Collaboration discussions with the CBD Secretariat took place in March 2023. As a result, national working spaces are being created across all countries to ensure streamlined data sharing and reporting.
 - c. Future Integrations: While progress with CHM Bioland is ongoing, additional feedback is awaited from partners on integrating with UNEP's World Environment Situation Room (WESR)⁶³ and UNEP-WCMC's Target Tracker⁶⁴.

146. Evidence from interviews and surveys indicates that DART is considered one of the project's greatest successes by many stakeholders. National focal points perceive the tool as facilitating access to consolidated data, improving coordination between ministries and administrative units, and promoting effective knowledge management.

⁵⁷ An information-sharing platform managed by the UNEP that consolidates data from biodiversity-related MEAs (<https://www.informea.org/en>).

⁵⁸ A platform under the CBD for sharing information and promoting cooperation on biodiversity-related issues among governments, organizations, and stakeholders (<https://www.cbd.int/CHM>).

⁵⁹ A global initiative that aims to improve the use of biodiversity indicators in decision-making processes to track progress on biodiversity goals (<https://www.bipindicators.net>).

⁶⁰ An online resource that hosts a collection of guidance materials to help countries implement biodiversity-related policies and actions, particularly focusing on NBSAPs (<https://dart.informea.org/compendia>).

⁶¹ A web-based system developed to support reporting on the implementation of biodiversity-related MEAs, enabling countries to report on their progress in a structured and accessible manner (<https://ors.ngo>).

⁶² A tool used under the CBD to facilitate the submission of national reports on the implementation of the Convention's provisions, providing a standardized approach for monitoring and assessment (<https://ort.cbd.int>).

⁶³ A platform that aggregates environmental data from various sources, providing decision-makers with a comprehensive overview of the global environmental situation (<https://wesr.unep.org>).

⁶⁴ A tool developed by UNEP-WCMC to track progress on global biodiversity targets, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (<https://www.unep-wcmc.org/en/news/monitoring-global-biodiversity-goals-and-targets-a-new-website-offers-insight>).

Additionally, DART is recognized for simplifying the reporting process, enabling countries to monitor progress more effectively toward biodiversity targets.

147. The indicators provided a clear view of the initial engagement with the DaRT tool. Furthermore, DaRT's interoperability with key tools like InforMEA, CHM, and alignment with the Kunming-Montreal GBF showcase its technical progress and relevance within global biodiversity initiatives. However, the indicators fail to capture sustained use and the long-term effectiveness of DaRT, with no data collected after 2021 on testing activity and website access figures not reflecting the depth of user engagement. While the number of dissemination activities is considerable, the effectiveness of these actions in terms of actual tool use is not assessed. Although interoperability is highlighted as a technical achievement, challenges in integrating with other tools and the lack of data on using interoperable features limit the evaluation of DaRT's true utility for users.
148. The general perception among MEA secretariats is that DaRT represents a significant advancement in the reporting process, streamlining data collection and sharing between governments and organizations. However, there is still a need for greater integration with other existing online reporting systems and increased engagement among MEAs to optimize its use. While DaRT is considered a valuable tool, some stakeholders believe additional efforts are necessary to enhance its implementation and foster greater collaboration among the involved parties. In some cases, frustration arises due to the tool's limited scope, which leads to its underutilization. Biodiversity MEA secretariats have established official online reporting tools, such as the Online Reporting Tool (CBD) and the Online Reporting System (e.g., CMS, Ramsar), to facilitate national reporting, though Parties may still submit reports in PDF format. Additionally, other platforms, like the UNDP Target Similarity Assessment Tool and UNEP-WCMC Target Tracker, serve a similar purpose as DaRT by supporting data collection and national strategy updates. This results in duplication on both fronts—while MEA reporting tools are beyond influence, there may be opportunities to address redundancies among other platforms.
149. In this context, evidence from interviews and analysis of the tool indicates that DaRT primarily functions as a comprehensive knowledge management tool. It can potentially promote synergies by facilitating collaboration, cooperation, and alignment among users through data sharing. However, in its current state, the tool still presents some complexity for users, resulting in increased workload and redundant efforts, underscoring the need for greater operational efficiency.
150. This evidence indicated DaRT's widespread testing, engagement with MEA stakeholders, outreach, and ongoing interoperability efforts, positioning the platform as a potential tool for facilitating alignment with global biodiversity frameworks and supporting collaborative action among MEAs. To increase its impact, additional efforts should have been taken to improve stakeholder engagement.

Output 5: National and regional level capacity building service on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the use of the synergies' tools provided

151. UNEP delivered eight national and regional capacity-building activities to implement tools for synergies, MEA effectiveness courses, and the DaRT reporting tool, all supporting the Post-2020 GBF. Additionally, a concept for a policy tracker tool was developed. However, the availability of this output was constrained by limited financial resources. Throughout the project, adjustments to the logical framework, outcomes, and timelines were necessary as donor support became available.

152. The project exceeded targets in all key areas, including capacity building, training national focal points, and promoting gender-responsive guidance, as represented by the following indicators⁶⁵:

- I. **Country-level or regional-level activity:** The project surpassed its target of 8 activities, conducting a total of 26 capacity-building sessions, including national and regional workshops in diverse locations such as Cameroon, Tanzania, Pakistan, Colombia, Peru, Tunisia, and Jordan. Between January and June 2023, 11 additional activities were completed, covering both in-person and online formats. These events promoted the Data Reporting Tool (DaRT) for aligning and reviewing National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).
- II. **Number of capacity-building activities implemented:** The project exceeded its initial goal of 5, completing 26 activities that provided comprehensive training in MEA implementation across regional workshops and national webinars.
- III. **Number of trained national MEA focal points and government representatives involved in national policies on MEA:** With an original baseline of 80 focal points, the project trained an additional 40, reaching its target of 120 focal points and government representatives. Key training initiatives included a specialized online course for Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, conducted by UNEP in partnership with Northeastern University. Although there were minor engagement challenges, such as low interaction on the Canvas platform and lack of participation from Malawi, course analytics showed that participants engaged with recorded sessions and supplementary materials, and post-course surveys indicated high satisfaction levels. Additionally, another 35 MEA NFPs received training on the DaRT through a series of workshops and webinars, further strengthening national-level capacity for biodiversity reporting.
- IV. **Number of gender-responsive guidance documents made available to Parties and stakeholders to the CBD, and to other biodiversity-related MEAs:** According to the progress and operational closure reports, the project went beyond its single-document goal by producing three guidance materials to support CBD gender mainstreaming. These resources were developed to support Parties, stakeholders, and the CBD in mainstreaming gender considerations. Two guidance documents were identified: CBD/WG2020/3/INF/10 (2022) and CBD/COP/15/INF/20 (2022).

153. Feedback from interviews and surveys indicated:

- I. National focal points' general perception suggested that the organization of webinars and workshops strengthened the technical capacity of those involved. Capacity-building initiatives at the national and regional levels have contributed to developing practical skills and ensuring a better understanding and use of synergies tools and frameworks. Through these initiatives, the project not only supported the improvement of the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements but also facilitated greater integration and data sharing among stakeholders, such as the National Focal Points and relevant sectors.
- II. However, several stakeholders considered that intensive training was essential to ensure the effective use of DaRT. Training and technical support related to the DaRT tool were considered insufficient, making it difficult to adopt and use it effectively. Issues such as accessibility and the ongoing maintenance of the system were also mentioned as areas that need strengthening to maximize the

⁶⁵ Source: UNEP. (2023). Operational Project Closure Report: Environmental Treaties Programme – Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity (Project ID 413.4, 01988); UNEP. (2023). Project progress Report: Environmental Treaties Programme – Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity (Project ID 413.4, 35480).

impact and utility of DaRT. Countries with limited resources require personalized support, which has not been fully addressed. There is a perception that more frequent, practical, and context-specific training tailored to the users' needs could have significantly improved system usage. It was also mentioned that it was essential for the training to reach not only technical users, but also other stakeholders involved, to promote a broader and more integrated understanding of DaRT's features and benefits. In this regard, another challenge was balancing the needs of technical and political users, making training sessions more complex. Some interviewees also highlighted challenges in coordinating between conventions and national entities, suggesting the need for a structured approach, such as the Bern process model, to foster synergies.

- III. The DaRT tool faced operational limitations, such as the need for manual data entry and the lack of resources and dedicated personnel in developing countries, leading to incomplete information. The inability to capture data not foreseen in its design, along with difficulties in using the protocol, can be challenging for inexperienced users. There were also challenges in integrating with existing systems, especially when data is managed differently across various agencies or departments, which can lead to issues of duplication and inefficiency, particularly in countries with already integrated systems.
- IV. Additionally, focusing on fewer countries with deeper engagement could lead to more tangible and replicable impacts. Selecting countries based on surveys or assessments could optimize the project's effectiveness. Additionally, better leveraging collaboration with UNEP's regional offices could enhance visibility and provide additional support.

154. The "Progress Report on Rolling Out the Data Reporting Tool for MEAs – DaRT"⁶⁶ presents a SWOT analysis based on feedback from countries, identifying internal strengths, weaknesses, and external opportunities and threats. Its findings partially align with the results observed in the interviews conducted during the terminal review. The SWOT analysis indicates that DaRT is praised for promoting collaboration, consolidating data, and facilitating knowledge sharing. It also helps harmonize data across multiple environmental conventions. However, it faces weaknesses such as a lack of interoperability with existing platforms, incomplete translations for global plans, and dependence on good internet connectivity. Opportunities include adding features like tracking strategic plan implementation, improving interoperability with global databases, and securing funding partnerships. The creation of national and regional DaRT committees could enhance collaboration. Key threats include limited political recognition, insufficient institutional support, and challenges with sustainable funding and follow-up communication.

155. Overall, most programmed outputs were successfully delivered to the intended beneficiaries. The most critical outputs for achieving outcomes were made available on time. Among the delivered outputs, the most important ones for achieving outcomes were deemed to be of good quality and utility by users and reviewers. The lack of wide-scale adoption and effective use of the tool by countries highlights the need for improvements in strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, strengthened training and technical support, and greater integration between tools and processes. However, there were good levels of user ownership, with key users actively involved in preparing the outputs.

⁶⁶ CBD/COP/15/INF/19 (2022). *Progress report on rolling out the data reporting tool for MEAs - DaRT*. 15th meeting – Part II, Montreal, Canada, December 7-19, 2022. Agenda items 9, 13, 14, and 15.

Rating for Availability of Outputs: Satisfactory

Achievement of Project Outcomes

156. The achievement of Project Outcome⁶⁷ was assessed as performance against the outcome as defined in the reconstructed Theory of Change at Review. This outcome was intended to be achieved by the end of the project timeframe and within the project's resource envelope. This MLTR also analyzed to what extent the assumptions for progress from project outputs to outcomes were held, and the drivers to support the transition from outputs to outcomes were in place.
157. An outcome progress overview indicated that the project progressed steadily from its inception in 2017 through 2022, achieving milestones at various stages. Early efforts included engaging in discussions on the post-2020 GBF and promoting alignment between biodiversity-related MEAs and the SDGs. By 2019, the project delivered outputs such as workshops, policy inputs, and tools to support synergies across biodiversity conventions. From 2020 to 2022, the project continued its activities through initiatives like the Bern II Consultation, DaRT workshops, and tools for improving coherence among MEAs. It supported international meetings, including SBI-3, SBSTTA 24, and COP sessions, and facilitated the use of project tools in countries like Cameroon, Vietnam, and Gambia. Additionally, UNEP's involvement in key events and reports contributed to discussions on biodiversity frameworks and the implementation of MEAs.
158. The review assessed the extent to which the project outcome was achieved using outcome-level indicators defined during project design. It is important to note that pandemic-related delays significantly impacted the project's logical framework. However, the outcome-level indicators were systematically refined to better measure progress toward the coherent implementation of the project. The indicators used in the review were identified through project revisions and the operational closure report. Regarding the outcome indicators:
- I. **Number of Intergovernmental Forums at the Global Level Considering Project Outputs:** The project successfully met its target, achieving engagement with 6 intergovernmental forums⁶⁸. UNEP supported biodiversity-related MEAs in facilitating the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal GBF (COP15). UNEP provided continuous support, including the development of the post-2020 GBF, and submitted the Bern II report to another 5 key forums. Five conventions acted on the Bern Report by adopting resolutions to strengthen cooperation for implementing the Post-2020 GBF (CITES decision 17.56 (Rev. CoP19); ITPGRFA resolution 13/2022; Ramsar Convention resolution XIV/6; CMS decision 13.4; and WHC decision 44 COM 7.2). UNEP further supported coordination between biodiversity and chemical clusters, such as through a Thought Starter submitted to the CBD Secretariat⁶⁹.
 - II. **Number of Countries Using Project Outputs for Coherent Implementation of MEAs:** The project surpassed its goal of 11, achieving 30 countries that used project outputs for coherent MEA implementation. The DaRT tool was introduced to 30 new countries through GEF Early Action NBSAPs workshops in Nairobi and Istanbul in 2023. Regional DaRT workshops facilitated by UNEP and the Belgian

⁶⁷ An outcome is a change at the institutional level, or changes in behaviors, attitudes or conditions achieved from the use (i.e., uptake, adoption, application) of outputs by intended beneficiaries.

⁶⁸ 15th CBD COP in Montreal, the 9th ITPGRFA Governing Body Session in New Delhi, the 53rd CMS Standing Committee Meeting in Bonn, the 14th Ramsar COP in Wuhan/Geneva, the 19th CITES COP in Panama City, and the Extended 44th World Heritage Committee Session in Fuzhou/Online.

⁶⁹ UNEP (2020). A thought starter: Strengthening the links between the biodiversity post-2020 framework with chemicals & waste. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/cbdocumentspublic-imagebucket-15w2zyxk3prl8/a426992b24d9968973e92a2878b5ad5f>

CHM partner network helped roll out the tool in 30 countries (Colombia, Peru, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, and several others in Africa, East Europe, and the Pacific). This rollout enabled the creation of country working spaces, alignment of NBSAP targets and indicators with the KM GBF, and efficient access by CBD Parties for streamlined reporting and alignment with the GBF.

- III. **International community provides funding for the coherent implementation of environmental treaties that contribute to biodiversity goals and targets and SDGs:** The project successfully mobilized substantial funding, exceeding initial expectations. Contributions were secured from Switzerland, SIDA/EF, Norway, the Nordic Council of Ministers, and Finland, supporting MEA-effectiveness work across multiple areas. Additionally, the EC-GPGC project on "Scaling up Actions to Realize Synergies for Biodiversity," approved in November 2021, contributed a substantial amount (USD 606,796) under the umbrella project, which supported outputs 1, 3, and 4 from December 2021 to December 2023. This specific funding supported the completion of remaining activities and provided a resource base for the Treaties II phase, ensuring sustained progress.
- IV. **Number of National Coordination Entities Created that include MEA Focal Points:** The project exceeded its target of establishing two national coordination entities, creating mechanisms in five countries through DaRT workshops: Cameroon (June 2021), Pakistan (May 2022), Tanzania (June 2022), Colombia (July 2022), and Rwanda (which established a coordination mechanism with the University of Massachusetts).
- V. **Number of implementation mechanisms for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework that integrates elements of synergies between biodiversity-related MEAs:** Although full implementation mechanisms were still under development and planned for the Treaties II phase, significant progress was achieved. With COP15's adoption of the KM Global Biodiversity Framework delayed, efforts by countries to implement the GBF under the GEF Early Action project were supported by UNEP through training and webinars. Cameroon established an implementation mechanism through DaRT, while Rwanda developed a mechanism supported by UNEP to enhance MEA effectiveness. It is expected that future NBSAP alignments will aim to incorporate synergies with UNEP assistance.

159. Six output-related assumptions were outlined in the project. Some were fully upheld, while others were only partially upheld during implementation, with each playing a key role in achieving the desired outcome:

- I. **Assumption 1 (Enhanced Cooperation and Collaboration with Partners):** This assumption is related to output 2. Throughout the project, cooperation with partners was recognized as beneficial. The establishment of successful synergies and the collaborative efforts of stakeholders were evident, especially in discussions related to the post-2020 biodiversity framework. For example, the facilitation of biodiversity-related MEAs through UNEP, as evidenced by the engagement in six intergovernmental forums (e.g., CBD COP15 COP14 of Ramsar, CITES COP19), reflects enhanced partnerships and the recognition of synergies at the global level. Feedback from the interviews confirmed that international agreements are increasingly interconnected, with the progress made in aligning objectives, partly due to work done in the project.
- II. **Assumption 2 (Synergy Awareness and Action for Environmental Solutions):** This assumption is also related to output 2. Feedback from the interviews confirmed that as stakeholders became more aware of the benefits of synergy, this awareness translated into concrete actions.

- III. **Assumption 3 (Sustained Political Will for MEA Implementation):** This assumption is related to output 5. Countries maintained their political will to support the implementation of MEAs, which was critical for advancing synergies. For instance, the decisions made at various COPs and intergovernmental meetings (e.g., CITES, Ramsar, CMS, ITPGRFA) to strengthen cooperation and implement the post-2020 GBF confirm that political will persists among countries to enhance synergies and implement MEAs effectively. The significant funding raised for MEA-related activities (e.g., from Switzerland, SIDA, Norway, and the Nordic Council of Ministers) further demonstrated that political commitment to biodiversity and environmental protection remained a priority. Additionally, feedback from interviews and surveys suggested that there was a strong political will in many countries to enhance synergies for implementing MEAs, with significant commitments from various ministries and legal frameworks in place. However, political awareness and decision-maker engagement remain limited in some countries, which could hinder further progress. Despite these challenges, many countries have shown positive actions, such as participating in workshops and establishing national committees to strengthen collaboration and improve MEA implementation.
- IV. **Assumption 4 (Commitment of Countries and Treaty Bodies to Foster Synergies):** This assumption is also related to Output 5. Countries and treaty bodies demonstrated commitment to promoting synergies. The five conventions (CITES, ITPGRFA, Ramsar, CMS, and WHC) that made decisions based on the Bern II report in 2022 exemplify the willingness and mandate of treaty bodies to engage in collaborative action. Moreover, countries' commitment to realizing synergies is reflected in creating national coordination entities in five countries (Cameroon, Pakistan, Tanzania, Colombia, and Rwanda). Feedback from interviews and surveys suggested that countries and governing bodies are generally willing to engage and promote cooperation to achieve synergies, but there are varying levels of commitment and capacity. In some cases, there is a willingness to adopt new protocols and establish synergies, but challenges exist in integrating biodiversity into sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, and forestry. This integration is often hindered by specific sectoral goals, which can dilute the biodiversity message. In contrast, other countries have demonstrated strong commitment, with national projects, workshops, and policy documents being developed to promote collaboration among stakeholders.
- V. **Assumption 5 (Integration of MEAs into the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework):** This assumption is related to output 1. The successful integration of MEAs into the post-2020 biodiversity framework was a critical assumption that held throughout the project. The synergy discussions and capacity-building activities directly contributed to aligning the implementation of MEAs with the framework. This integration was further supported by the commitments made at the CBD CoP15, where countries emphasized the need for greater coordination among MEAs to enhance biodiversity outcomes. Interview feedback highlighted that while progress had been made, challenges remained in fully aligning biodiversity-related indicators and operationalizing synergies. Continued efforts and follow-up actions were essential for advancing this integration.
- VI. **Assumption 7 (Supportive Context for Human Rights, Gender Equality, and Inclusion):** This assumption is related to output 5. A supportive context for human rights, gender equality, and inclusion was evident in the project's activities. The project's focus on gender mainstreaming, including developing gender action plans in countries such as Laos and Myanmar, reinforced this

assumption. Additionally, the workshop in Cambodia in 2019 included gender considerations and promoted the involvement of both men and women, as well as local communities, further supporting the broader social and institutional context.

160. Three output-related drivers were held throughout the project's implementation, with each playing a crucial role in achieving the intended outcomes:

I. **Driver 1 (Perceived Potential and Need for Synergies and Capacity Building):**

This driver is related to outputs 1 and 2. The perceived potential for achieving more through greater cooperation and the realization of synergies remained a strong driver throughout the project. This was particularly evident in the decisions made by the intergovernmental forums, which consistently emphasized the importance of enhanced cooperation and synergy-building among MEAs. The pandemic, while creating logistical challenges, also underscored the need for integrated approaches to global environmental issues, making collaboration and capacity building even more essential. For example, during the pandemic, the online training courses for national focal points and officials were successfully implemented, allowing countries to continue engaging in capacity-building activities despite travel restrictions. These events, which focused on biodiversity and chemicals/waste-related conventions, demonstrated the ongoing recognition of the need for synergies and capacity building in addressing global biodiversity challenges. Interview feedback highlighted a perceived potential to achieve more through greater cooperation, collaboration, and the realization of synergies. Over the years, decisions have emphasized the importance of building cooperation and improving alignment between strategies such as NSAPs. However, caution was raised against using "synergy" as an action, emphasizing it as an outcome of efforts like cooperation, collaboration, and alignment. While progress in collaboration has been gradual and iterative, challenges in fully realizing this potential were pointed out due to high expectations and the complexity of governance systems.

II. **Driver 2 (Willingness to Collaboratively Implement Environmental Treaties):** This driver is related to output 5. The willingness of Parties, particularly NFPs of biodiversity-related MEAs, to collaboratively implement environmental treaties across different divisions and departments was another key driver. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a commitment from national governments and stakeholders to work together on the implementation of MEAs. This willingness was reflected in the participation rates in online courses and national-level workshops. Establishing national coordination mechanisms in Cameroon, Pakistan, Tanzania, Colombia, and Rwanda was another key example. Interview feedback suggests that national focal points for biodiversity-related MEAs generally showed a willingness to implement environmental treaties in a cooperative way across divisions and departments, with efforts to realize synergies at the national level. In some cases, national focal points are housed within the same institution, facilitating collaboration and data uniformity. However, there were concerns about limited political awareness and the need to further sensitize decision-makers.

III. **Driver 3 (Leveraging Momentum to Integrate Biodiversity into the 2030 Agenda):**

This driver is related to output 5. The momentum built by previous work, other projects, and decisions played a critical role in ensuring that biodiversity was appropriately integrated into the 2030 Agenda. The COP decisions and UNEA

2/17⁷⁰ were the key drivers for the project creation to support Parties with capacity building to implement synergies actions and provide knowledge on integrated approaches. Interview feedback indicated that there was a recognition of the momentum built by previous work, other projects, and recent decisions, particularly in aligning NBSAPs with SDGs. Despite the disruption caused by the pandemic, key stakeholders continued to engage in the post-2020 biodiversity framework discussions, ensuring that biodiversity remained a key focus in the broader context of sustainable development. UNEP's ongoing support for the post-2020 GBF and the rollout of the DaRT tool in 30 countries reflected an important push to integrate biodiversity goals into national and global strategies. It showed a growing momentum to incorporate biodiversity targets into national development plans and the broader 2030 Agenda. The funding raised further reinforced the momentum behind these efforts and highlighted the opportunity to build on this momentum for future work.

161. Based on the achievement of indicators and the fact that the assumptions and drivers were validated, it can be concluded that the project successfully achieved greater coherence and coordination in implementing environmental treaties among the Parties, aligning with biodiversity goals and the SDGs. All 11 milestones related to the outcome were achieved within the expected timeline, including milestones 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11, which had deadlines during a period impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic:

- I. M6: Outputs of this project are reflected by at least one governing body from at least two biodiversity-related MEAs.
- II. M7: The draft post-2020 global biodiversity framework integrates MEA synergy elements.
- III. M8: The updated draft of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework integrates MEA synergy elements with UNEP support.
- IV. M9: New resources are mobilized to support the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, particularly in scaling up synergies among MEAs.
- V. M10: Two national coordination mechanisms that include MEA focal points were created (outcome indicator 1).
- VI. M11: The adopted post-2020 global biodiversity framework integrates MEA synergy elements, facilitated by UNEP (outcome indicator 2).

162. However, some outcome-related indicators could have been more specific and measurable, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative analyses to improve outcome measurement:

- I. The indicator "Number of Countries Using Project Outputs for Coherent Implementation of MEAs" initially appears to be outcome oriented. But the way it was reported only partially measure the use of project outputs by countries. For instance, the project reported here the rollout of the tool in various countries, the establishment of country working spaces, the alignment of NBSAP targets and indicators with the KM GBF, and the facilitation of streamlined reporting and alignment with the GBF by CBD Parties. These indicates that some of the project's outputs were in fact used by countries, but it does not inform if countries are using key outputs of the project such as DaRT.

⁷⁰ UNEP/EA.2/Res.17. United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme, Second session, Nairobi, 23–27 May 2016. 2/17. Enhancing the work of the United Nations Environment Programme in facilitating cooperation, collaboration, and synergies among biodiversity-related conventions.

- II. The indicator "Number of National Coordination Entities Created that Include MEA Focal Points" could have assessed not only their establishment but also their effectiveness and functionality. A more precise version could be: "Number of national coordination entities established and operational, with regular meetings, dedicated resources, and integrated actions across MEAs."
163. Additionally, there was a need to adjust some output-related indicators associated with Outputs 4 and 5 to ensure their application and evaluation contribute directly to achieving the expected outcome:
- I. Regarding Output 4 (MEA Parties use and become familiar with the enhanced, gender-sensitive, and interoperable DaRT), some of its indicators were only partially suitable for measuring the products and services delivered by the project. For example, Indicator "Number of times the DaRT website is accessed by MEA Parties and organizations" did not capture whether these Parties are actively using the tool.
 - II. For Output 5 (National and regional level capacity-building service on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the use of the synergies' tools provided), limitations in monitoring and reporting hinder a comprehensive assessment of its successful delivery. While the Output 5 indicators provide valuable analytical insights – measuring the number of capacity-building activities, target audiences, and countries reached – they fall short in assessing the actual result of the training sessions. To ensure a more result-oriented analysis, the indicators could have evaluated, for example, the effectiveness of the training programs. Instead of merely counting the number of participants trained, it would have been important to assess the practical application of the acquired knowledge. A suggested improvement would be to refine the indicator "Number of trained national MEA focal points and government representatives involved in national policies on MEA" to "Number of trained national MEA focal points and government representatives actively applying acquired knowledge in national MEA policies/process". For this indicator some of the means of measure could be post training surveys to report of the number of trained national MEA focal points and government using the knowledge gained from the project in policy development, implementation, or decision-making processes.
164. It is important to highlight that the successful delivery of Output 5 is particularly important for supporting drivers 2 and 3 and achieving the project's results at the national level. Output 5 is a key element to reach the expected outcome and desired intermediate state, as it is necessary to further consolidate implementation mechanisms for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework that integrated synergy elements among biodiversity-related MEAs. According to the Operational Project Closure Report, only Cameroon has established an implementation mechanism through DaRT, while Rwanda developed a mechanism with UNEP support to enhance MEA effectiveness.
165. Feedback from NFP interviews and MLTR's surveys indicated mixed results regarding achieving the project outcome. While some respondents highlighted the DaRT tool's success in fostering synergies, contributing to biodiversity goals and SDGs, simplifying reporting processes, and enhancing collaboration, data quality, and transparency, others pointed out limitations, such as the lack of institutional anchoring, which hindered the tool's full potential. In this context, the Treaties II project, along with all support and resources allocated to it, will play a crucial role in achieving the intermediate state and intended impact. It also shows that the Treaties I project provided a vital boost toward these results.

166. Finally, it is important to emphasize that refining certain indicators does not mean the project lacked positive results and impact. On the contrary, the project achieved many relevant results, especially considering its limited budget. Having better indicators could have clearly highlighted the project's key successes and provided clearer direction for future initiatives.
167. Thus, it can be stated that the achievement of the project outcome was moderately satisfactory, as the most critical aspect for reaching the intermediate state was partially achieved, with some elements still pending to fully reach the desired state. Assumptions for progress from project outputs to outcomes were partially upheld, while drivers to support the transition from outputs to outcomes were in place.

Rating for Achievement of Project Outcomes: Moderately Satisfactory

Likelihood of Impact

168. The likelihood of the intended impacts of the project becoming a reality was assessed based on the articulation of longer-term effects in the reconstructed ToC, specifically from outcome, through the intermediate state, to impact. As outlined in the ToR for this review, the Excel-based flow chart, "Likelihood of Impact Assessment Decision Tree," guided the review process. This approach follows the 'Likelihood Tree' from output to impact, considering whether the assumptions identified in the reconstructed ToC were upheld. No new drivers were identified in this assessment.
169. The intermediate state, which envisions "Parties are collectively implementing environmental treaties with enhanced coherence, taking steps toward aligning with global biodiversity targets and SDGs," was expected to be achieved by realizing the project outcome. However, the shortcomings identified in Output 5 hindered the likelihood of reaching the intermediate state in the near term.
170. It is important to note that this issue is largely one of timing. Assumption 6 (National Commitment and Stakeholder Willingness to Implement MEAs) was partially held. The project's success in engaging 30 countries with the DaRT tool and establishing national coordination entities provides compelling evidence that national commitment and stakeholder willingness to implement MEAs are central to effective implementation. The coordination mechanisms created in Cameroon, Pakistan, and Tanzania, as well as the active participation of countries in workshops, demonstrated that national governments were not only committed but also proactive in their engagement. Feedback from interviews and surveys suggests that effective implementation of MEAs requires not only capacity but also a strong commitment from national governments and key stakeholders. The willingness to act was seen as crucial for achieving the desired outcomes. However, while some countries demonstrated ongoing commitment and active implementation of tools, in some cases, the lack of awareness among decision-makers and politicians has been noted as a challenge. Nonetheless, the funding raised from various governments and organizations further underscored the importance of this commitment, as financial support was a key indicator of willingness to act.
171. Interview feedback indicated that the likelihood of the intended impact becoming a reality is generally viewed as positive but with varying degrees of optimism among respondents. Several interviewees highlighted that strong international partnerships, national frameworks, and effective implementation of biodiversity-related MEAs are essential for achieving these goals. Specific contributions were noted toward SDG 14 (life below water) and SDG 15 (life on land), as well as SDG 17 (partnerships for the

goals), particularly through improved synergies, GBF, and national-level actions. However, some respondents pointed to significant challenges, including the lack of institutional anchoring, insufficient focus on SDGs in project activities, and limited impact on certain national programs. Others stressed the need for enhanced capacity building, awareness, and institutionalization to realize the full potential of the initiatives. While examples of regional coordination and national progress indicate positive momentum, the path forward requires sustained commitment, targeted support, and stronger alignment between global frameworks and national implementation.

172. Overall, there were no significant unintended negative effects resulting from the project. The project played a significant catalytic role by promoting cooperation and coherence in the implementation of MEAs and contributing to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. This alignment can facilitate replication at various levels—local, national, and international.

173. Based on the "Likelihood of Impact Assessment Decision Tree" flow chart used by the Evaluation Office, the likelihood of achieving the intended impact was rated as "Moderately Likely." It can be stated that the aspects of the project outcome that were most crucial for attaining the intermediate state were achieved. Other aspects of the project outcomes were still in progress by the time of the project's conclusion. As noted in previous sections, assumptions and drivers to support the transition from outputs to project outcomes were partially in place, and the intermediate state had been partially achieved. Assumptions for the change process from the intermediate state to impact were partially held.

Achievement of Likelihood of Impact: Moderately Likely

Rating for Effectiveness:	Moderately Satisfactory
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E. Financial Management

Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures

174. The project demonstrated a strong application of financial management standards and adherence to financial management policies. Financial expenditures had generally aligned with the project's financial planning, despite delays in some outputs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Evidence from the project revisions, mid-term review, financial reports, operational project closure report, and interviews highlighted the following:

- I. Approval and disbursement of cash advances to partners occurred promptly, and regular analysis of actual expenditures against the budget and work plan ensured effective financial oversight.
- II. Expenditure reports were submitted on a six-monthly and annual basis, ensuring transparency and accountability.

- III. Expenditures remained within the approved annual budget, with timely budget revisions made when variations exceeded 10% (e.g., First project revision⁷¹)
 - IV. Revisions were made to address pandemic-related delays and to integrate newly secured funding. These revisions supported timeline adjustments, added follow-up activities, and aligned the project with the evolving timeline of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).
175. No significant financial issues were reported that affected the timely delivery or quality of project performance. The regular budget reviews and adjustments reflect a responsive and adaptive management approach. Although pandemic-related delays challenged the project, the ability to mobilize additional resources and adjust timelines showcases strong financial governance. Despite global disruptions caused by the pandemic, the project met most milestones, with delays affecting only a few activities.
176. It was not possible to compare the expenditure by output in relation to the original ProDoc design, the last revised design, and actual expenditures because the ProDoc did not clearly allocate costs by output. However, throughout the project's development, the management successfully mobilized new funding across three revisions. The project underwent four extensions, three involving additional funding to enhance outcomes and adapt to changing circumstances. The first extension addressed the pandemic's impact on activities and intergovernmental meetings, incorporating newly secured funds to support results. The second extension adjusted timelines and funding allocations, while the third focused on follow-up activities and aligning outputs 1, 4, and 5 with postponed intergovernmental meetings, including the delayed CBD COP-15. The fourth extension was a no-cost extension that added six months to the project, ensuring the uninterrupted completion of activities supporting CBD COP-15 negotiations and allowing for the extension of the DaRT consultant's contract, funded by remaining Swiss contributions with donor approval.
177. In the end, the three outputs with the greatest strategic potential for the project received the largest share of funding. Output 4 accounted for the highest proportion of expenditure (37.1%), followed by Output 1 (28.3%) and Output 5 (26.8%).
178. In conclusion, all key financial practices are consistently followed, including timely cash advance disbursements, regular expenditure analysis, on-time report submissions, adherence to the approved budget, and regular budget updates for significant expenditure variations. A financial summary is provided in Annex VI (Project Budget and Expenditures). It includes Table 7, detailing the Project Funding Sources, and Table 8, which provides a breakdown of Expenditures by Outcome/Output. Annex VII (Financial Management) contains Table 9, presenting the Financial Management overview.

Rating for Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures: Highly Satisfactory

Completeness of Financial Information

179. The financial documentation for the project was generally complete, accurate, and accessible, as evidenced by various project revisions, the mid-term review, financial reports, the Operational Closure Report (OCR), and interview feedback. During the

⁷¹ First project revision aimed to register a new amount of funding of USD 325,000 from the Swiss Government raised to support new activities under Output 1 and 4. Additionally, UNEP provided co-funding of USD 97,000 to support the delivery of Outputs 3, 4, and 5.

project, financial documentation was timely and accessible through systems like IPMR and PIMS. Budget revisions were regularly conducted to align expenditures with planned outcomes. Internal reviews ensured compliance, with processes in place to verify supporting documents before transaction approvals. While minor discrepancies occurred, overall financial information was complete and accurate. The project provided high-level budgets, including a breakdown by secured and unsecured funds, and detailed budgets for secured funds. Additionally, project expenditure sheets were presented regularly at annual and quarterly intervals, with a summary budget at the output level in the OCR. Co-financing, including both cash and in-kind contributions, was clearly detailed in the project's financial documentation, with the ProDoc, project revisions, and OCR presenting cost breakdowns by funding type and source.

180. However, while several key documents were identified in PIMS, there were gaps in the standardized record-keeping system. For instance, there was no uniform system for file naming or recording, which made it difficult to verify whether all agreements and proofs of fund transfer were available. While copies of donor agreements were identified as evidence of fund transfers, it could not be confirmed whether all related documentation was consistently stored or easily retrievable. Moreover, while partner legal agreements and amendments were identified in PIMS, the lack of a standardized system prevents complete verification of the availability of all agreements. Furthermore, bank receipts were not requested as part of the financial documentation review.
181. In summary, all required documents, including project budgets, disbursement records, expenditure sheets, and legal agreements, were completed and available for review. Items on project expenditure and detailed budgets were provided at the annual/quarterly level and signed by the Project Manager/FMO. A financial summary is provided in Annex VI (Project Budget and Expenditures). It includes Table 7, detailing the Project Funding Sources, and Table 8, which provides a breakdown of Expenditures by Outcome/Output. Annex VII (Financial Management) contains Table 9, presenting the Financial Management overview.

Rating for Completeness of Financial Information: Highly Satisfactory

Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff

182. The level of communication between the PM and the FMO was exemplary and significantly contributed to the effective delivery of the project while supporting a responsive and adaptive management approach. Steering Committee minutes and interviews provided clear evidence of the PM's strong awareness of the project's financial status, complemented by regular, proactive communication with the FMO. Communication and collaboration were effective, characterized by regular biweekly meetings and ad hoc interactions. Joint reviews of narrative and financial reports ensured alignment and addressed any discrepancies. Proactive consultation between teams enhanced program delivery and financial oversight, creating a consistent and supportive working relationship. This collaboration ensured financial disbursements were closely aligned with technical and financial progress reports, demonstrating mutual accountability and shared awareness of project developments.
183. Mid-term review findings also highlighted the UNEP Law Division Programme Delivery and Management Unit's satisfaction with the completeness of financial information, effective communication channels, and high-quality project management. The established bi-weekly financial meetings, complemented by quarterly "deep dive" sessions, illustrated a systematic approach to financial risk

monitoring and resolution. Although the frequency of these meetings was occasionally impacted by COVID-19, there were no significant negative effects on project implementation.

184. The no-cost extension approved for the project further underscored this effective collaboration. The requested no-cost extension complied with the conditions outlined in the *Note to File* dated 23 October 2022 regarding the extension of projects scheduled to close by 31 December 2022⁷². Properly justified and documented through the Project Review Committee (PRC) process, the extension complied with UNEP's established guidelines and had donor approval. FMO staff were appropriately included in all related communications, ensuring transparency and adherence to procedural requirements.
185. Overall, strong communication between the PM and FMO had positively impacted project implementation, ensuring effective delivery and a responsive, adaptive management approach. Both the PM and FMO were well-informed about the project's financial status and progress, with regular contact between them. They proactively addressed financial issues, and all reports were reviewed by both finance and project staff before submission, contributing to successful project outcomes.

Rating for Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff: Highly Satisfactory

Rating for Financial Management: Highly Satisfactory

F. Efficiency

186. The project effectively delivered the expected results given its resources, achieving its objectives with commendable cost efficiency. The project optimized resource utilization by leveraging partnerships with biodiversity-related agreements, in-kind contributions, and pre-existing networks. Remote working models adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic contributed significantly to cost savings, particularly by reducing travel expenses and logistical costs. Activities were sequenced efficiently, and outcome milestones were met largely within adjusted timeframes, demonstrating prudent resource management.
187. The project underwent four extensions, with the final being a no-cost extension. These extensions were well-justified, primarily due to the following factors:
- I. COVID-19 Pandemic: This unprecedented global disruption necessitated a shift to online operations, postponement of key intergovernmental meetings, and adjustments to project timelines.
 - II. Alignment with Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework: Synchronizing activities with evolving timelines of international biodiversity negotiations required adjustments.
 - III. Funding Availability: Additional resources, including funding from Switzerland, China, and others, supported new activities, such as scaling up the DaRT tool.

⁷² The PRC Secretariat will automatically clear project reviews/extensions, subject to the following three project conditions: (i) Commitment to mandatory operational project closure not exceeding 30 June 2023; (ii) Confirmation of non-substantive TOC and PoW amendments (i.e. a few selected outputs and milestones per project with only minor budgetary amendments); and/or (iii) Project budget balances of no more than USD 500,000, in lieu of the Divisional Director Delegation of Authority threshold allowances.

188. The delays caused by extensions had a limited negative impact on project outcomes. The project largely met its output and outcome indicators within the revised timeframes. The extension allowed for alignment with major biodiversity frameworks, which bolstered the project's relevance and effectiveness. However, prolonged timelines could have delayed the realization of certain benefits at the national level (Output 5), particularly where stakeholder engagement was postponed (see Section C. Nature of External Context).
189. The project adopted several time and cost-saving mechanisms: (1) Transitioning to remote activities during the pandemic, which minimized travel and accommodation expenses and contributed to UNEP's carbon footprint reduction; (2) Integrating project meetings into pre-scheduled intergovernmental events ("piggybacking"), reducing additional logistical costs; (3) Collaborating with partners to enable co-benefits and resource sharing, thereby optimizing overall project efficiency. These measures not only supported the achievement of targets but also underscored the potential for UNEP to adopt sustainable working models in future projects, further minimizing its carbon footprint.
190. Regarding the project design, it is important to note that the original plan and timeline could not have anticipated the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, project revisions addressed these challenges as much as possible. The design limitations that may have affected project efficiency include:
- I. The project was conceived with the expectation of securing additional financial resources during implementation. Starting without guaranteed funding created uncertainty, instability, and additional demands that may have hindered the smooth execution of activities. According to the PIMS register⁷³, the project faced insufficient funding between June 2019 and December 2020.
 - II. Insufficient stakeholder engagement during the design phase. Greater early engagement could have strengthened synergies and mobilized additional resources, further enhancing efficiency and maximizing the project's potential impact.
191. Despite the challenges and obstacles encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic and project uncertainties, adaptive management and robust partnerships ensured the timely delivery of most outputs. The project made extensive use of pre-existing agreements, partnerships, and networks. This not only increased efficiency by reducing setup time and costs but also enhanced the project's integration with global biodiversity efforts. These synergies amplified the project's reach and impact. Project activities were frequently sequenced efficiently, with events and outputs delivered in alignment with evolving frameworks and funding timelines. The project operated within existing roles, mechanisms, and institutions, expanding them where necessary in an efficient and effective manner.
192. Interview feedback indicated that the project generally utilized resources efficiently, achieving cost-effective results despite challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. Several respondents highlighted the project's ability to manage delays, ensure broad participation, and minimize costs. Strong partnerships with MEA bodies, national focal points, and donors contributed to its efficiency and sustainability. However, some interviewees pointed out that the project missed opportunities to engage with

⁷³ PIMS. Project Title: [01988] Environmental Treaties Programme – realizing synergies for biodiversity. Management Actions and Follow-up.

ongoing initiatives (e.g.; ACP-MEA) and further promote its goals, which could have improved its efficiency and impact.

193. Finally, the project's efficiency is rated satisfactory, as it had one justified no-cost extension of less than one year and included justified amendments to the formally approved results framework. Evidence suggests that the application of cost-effective approaches strongly supported achieving project targets. Activities and events were frequently sequenced efficiently, and the project operated within existing roles, mechanisms, or institutions, expanding them in an effective and efficient manner when necessary.

Rating for Efficiency: Satisfactory

G. Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring Design and Budgeting

194. The Prodoc (item 7) proposed a Monitoring and Reporting model based on UNEP standards, incorporating SMART indicators for outputs and outcomes. The original Monitoring and Reporting plan specified periodic monitoring through six-monthly reviews. Data collection, based on the logical framework's means of verification, tracked progress against outputs, milestones, deliverables, and indicators. Monitoring responsibilities were distributed among the project manager, team members, and administrative support. Interview feedback indicated that the project team had a sense of ownership over the monitoring plan. Adaptive management strategies were employed to address delays or unanticipated challenges. The plan also emphasized lessons learned, donor commitments, and financial accountability, ensuring alignment with UNEP procedures and the Steering Committee's oversight.
195. Throughout the implementation of the project, the indicator system was refined through project revisions to better align with its scope and objectives. However, there are opportunities for improvement in the design of the project's outcome and output-related indicators (para. 162, 163 and 164). The project considers both process and impact metrics. Process-focused indicators monitor the execution of activities, such as organizing events or producing materials. While they provide data on the implementation, they do not measure the results or changes generated. Given the project's goals, it would have been more effective to focus also on impact-focused indicators. Impact-focused indicators assess long-term effects and the changes brought about by the project, measuring whether the expected outcomes and objectives were achieved and the actual impact on social, economic, or environmental conditions. While process-focused indicators focus on project operations, impact-focused indicators evaluate the changes generated.
196. Outcome-related indicators such as the number of intergovernmental forums considering the project's outputs, the number of countries using these outputs for the implementation of MEAs, and international funding for the implementation of environmental treaties reflect structural and political changes, qualifying as impact-focused indicators. These demonstrate the project's influence on global environmental governance and strategic decision-making. On the other hand, the creation of national coordination entities with MEA focal points could be classified as a process-focused indicator, as it represents an institutional advancement within the project's implementation period, being a process that may lead to future impacts.

197. The mid-term review highlighted strengths and areas for improvement in outcome indicators. For example, Outcome Indicator 1, measuring intergovernmental forum discussions, was less effective in demonstrating “Increasingly coherent implementation of environmental treaties contributes to biodiversity goals and targets and the SDGs” compared to Outcome Indicator 2, which measured the use of project outputs by countries for coherent MEA implementation. These findings underscored the need for more precise indicators by that time. The absence of clear attributions and focus on tangible outcomes posed challenges for assessing progress.
198. The following sections address monitoring within the scope of what was outlined and deemed feasible in the framework of the third project revision and the operational closure report. Despite the challenges, the project’s monitoring plan was robust. According to the Operational Closure Report, the project tracked 20 indicators—five for outcomes and 15 for outputs—to assess global, national, and regional progress. These indicators measured intergovernmental forum engagement, national coordination mechanisms, dissemination of tools and knowledge, testing and outreach activities for DaRT, and capacity-building efforts. A gender-specific indicator (notably under Output 5) was developed, promoting gender consideration in project monitoring.
199. While some indicators could have been further refined for better outcome measurement (see Section D. Effectiveness), the M&R plan, adapted throughout the project’s implementation, supported results-based management and adaptation. It covered all critical components, including indicator coverage, data collection methods, and frequency, dedicated monitoring budgets, and gender-specific disaggregation.
200. The project initially did not foresee a mid-term review, as its duration was less than four years. However, due to the project’s extended timeline, the UNEP Evaluation Office instructed the project manager to conduct a mid-term evaluation in addition to a terminal review. The UNEP Evaluation Office deemed the allocated funds for both the mid-term and terminal evaluations to be adequate.

Rating for Monitoring Design and Budgeting: Satisfactory

Monitoring of Project Implementation

201. The assessment of the monitoring system throughout the project implementation period indicates that the system was generally operational and facilitated the timely tracking of results and progress toward the project’s objectives. According to the ProDoc, project revisions, progress reports, and the operational closure report, a detailed monitoring plan was in place. This plan covered all indicators appropriately as outlined in the logical framework, included data collection methods, and established a suitable frequency for data collection, which aligned with the requirements of the indicators. Furthermore, evidence from the ProDoc and project revisions showed that a workplan, broken down by outputs, was created and updated regularly throughout the project’s implementation. Updated versions of the workplan were produced during the project revisions, reflecting ongoing adjustments to the project’s needs and scope.
202. The project successfully collected relevant and useful baseline data, although initial baseline data were not considered in the ProDoc. During implementation, progress reports updated the baseline data for most indicators, with project data being utilized to establish these baselines as they were collected. While some areas for improvement in indicator construction were identified (see “Monitoring Design and

Budgeting” section), it can be affirmed that the data gathered was complete and useful for tracking progress.

203. However, it is important to highlight that some of the indicators used showed limitations in their relevance for a comprehensive evaluation of the project’s outcome. While outputs, such as the number of workshops conducted and access to the sourcebook for focal points, were documented, the project lacked more indicators capable of effectively measuring outcomes and concrete impacts in participating countries, such as changes in national policies or improvements in integrating synergistic approaches.
204. The eventual focus on process-oriented indicators (e.g., participation in training sessions) at the expense of a more impact-focused indicators undermined the project’s ability to monitor the achievement of its broader objectives. Although recognition in governing body decisions demonstrates a qualitative impact, the absence of a continuous monitoring system hindered the systematic tracking of these concrete changes. A better structured monitoring approach would not only enable a more precise assessment of these transformations but also better showcase the many positive results achieved by this project.
205. A detailed monitoring system was implemented, anchored on the PIMS and IRPM (updated every six months), which tracked progress toward the project’s implementation. Monitoring data were collected regularly and entered into these systems, providing a comprehensive picture of the project’s deliverables.
206. Data was not disaggregated by vulnerable or marginalized groups, which would have been important for tracking inclusive participation. Gender disaggregation was, however, addressed by one specific indicator, namely the number of gender-responsive guidance documents made available to Parties and stakeholders of the CBD and other biodiversity-related MEAs (Output 5).
207. Evidence indicates that tools and methodologies tailored to the needs of different stakeholder groups were used while implementing the project. One example is the survey highlighted in CBD/WG2020/3/INF/10 (2021)⁷⁴ that aimed to assess the capabilities and challenges faced by national government entities in monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the new global framework in a gender-responsive manner.
208. According to interviews, project performance data were analyzed, but the process could have been more effective. It failed to foster meaningful discussions or prompt actions for improvement, limiting its potential for timely adjustments and informed decision-making. There is no clear indication that the information generated by the monitoring plan was used to adapt and improve the project’s execution and outcomes or ensure sustainability. While the monitoring system was effective in tracking progress, it seems that opportunities to use this information for timely adjustments or to inform decisions may have been missed.
209. The project expenditure reports do not show that funds were explicitly allocated to monitoring activities. However, it can be inferred that the budget allocated for monitoring was reasonably well-spent, given the operational efficiency of the monitoring system and the regular updates provided by the project.

⁷⁴ CBD/WG2020/3/INF/10 (2021). *Developing and Measuring a Gender-Responsive Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework: Information on Gender Considerations within the Draft Post-2020 Monitoring Framework*. Open-Ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Third meeting (resumed), Geneva, Switzerland, 12–28 January 2022.

Rating for Monitoring of Project Implementation: Satisfactory

Project Reporting

210. The project demonstrated substantial documentation of progress throughout its lifecycle, with records maintained in UNEP's PIMS (December 2017–December 2022) and IPMR (January–June 2023) repositories:
- I. UNEP PIMS 01988. Documents Repository and Monitoring. (November 2017 – December 2022): containing project design and revision documents, Project reports, including six-month progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners and donors, Steering Committee meeting minutes, technical meeting minutes, agreements, letters, and communications, project deliverables, and publications, background documents of Bern II Conference, MEAs Cross-Mapping documents, Bogis-Bossey Expert Meeting Planning Note, DaRT PowerPoint and Flyer side-event for CBD COP15.
 - II. UNEP IPMR 35480. Documents Repository. (Jan-June 2023): containing Third Project revision, operational closure project, indicators, last six-month progress report, and some communications.
211. Reports to donors were produced regularly and without gaps. Subcontracted partners, such as UNEP-WCMC, provided timely reports per their contractual arrangements.
212. Interview feedback suggested that the documentation of project progress was thorough and of good quality, with monitoring and reporting consistently completed on time and in line with established templates and procedures. Reports were delivered punctually to donors and internal stakeholders, ensuring smooth tracking of project implementation and compliance. Regular bilateral communication and ongoing contact throughout the year further complemented formal reporting, contributing to donor satisfaction and effective project oversight. Evidence confirmed collaboration and communication among UNEP colleagues.
213. Despite the completeness of project life documentation, challenges arose in document identification due to the lack of standardized naming conventions, version control, and traceability. This led to difficulties locating information and/or determining the most recent versions of some files. Monitoring reports were generally gender-neutral, except for documents specifically addressing gender-sensitive actions. Data disaggregation by vulnerable or marginalized groups was absent across reporting.
214. Notably, reporting for the period from project inception to June 2019 was vague, lacking detailed references to progress, indicators, or evidence-based results. Improvements in reporting were evident following the project's management transition in January 2019, with more detailed and focused reports from July 2019 onwards. These reports included quantified progress linked to project indicators, outputs, and outcomes, accompanied by evidence and means of verification.
215. The mid-term review highlighted that key documents, such as questionnaires on enhancing synergies among conventions, were not filed in PIMS at this time. While Outputs 1, 4, and 5 were well-documented in reports, there was a notable absence of tangible products or detailed reporting for Outputs 2 and 3. Steering Committee meeting minutes were incomplete in PIMS and had to be obtained directly from the project manager upon request. Despite the shortcomings, reporting systems

adequately reflected the project's scope of work and facilitated overall tracking, although earlier phases lacked the rigor necessary for robust evaluation.

Rating for Project Reporting: Satisfactory

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting:	Satisfactory
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H. Sustainability

Socio-political Sustainability

216. The sustainability and further development of project outcomes depend heavily on political will and stakeholder ownership. Continued interest and commitment from government representatives to adopt tools like DaRT and other project outputs, such as synergies tools and capacity-building initiatives, are essential. While the relevance of capacity-building efforts for MEA implementation aligns with the post-2020 GBF, the tools promoted by the project (e.g., DaRT) must clearly demonstrate their utility in easing reporting burdens and promoting national collaboration to ensure adoption.
217. Interview feedback confirmed that the sustainability of the project outcomes significantly depended on social and political factors. Changes in political leadership and the prioritization of environmental issues by governments can directly impact the continuity of the project's results. Political shifts, especially within ministries, may lead to changes in responsibilities, undermining the expected impact of the project outcomes. Furthermore, without strong political support, the project's results may not be fully valued or integrated into national agendas.
218. Regarding socio-political factors, the SWOT analysis in the "Progress Report on Rolling Out the Data Reporting Tool for MEAs – DaRT"⁷⁵ emphasizes the significance of collaboration among stakeholders supported by the DaRT tool. According to countries' perceptions, this tool facilitates knowledge exchange at local, provincial, and national levels and enables data sharing on implementing MEAs. However, the lack of recognition of DaRT as a reporting tool presents a critical threat. This highlights the need for political will, a robust regulatory foundation, and a clear institutional structure with well-defined, shared responsibilities. The SWOT analysis also indicates that establishing a national DaRT committee and regional working spaces could offer opportunities to enhance regional and institutional collaboration.
219. DaRT's voluntary nature presented challenges, as its uptake relied on incentives or clear benefits for users. Integrating existing national processes (e.g., ORT and ORS) could enhance relevance and reduce resistance from countries with established reporting mechanisms. To succeed, DaRT must provide smarter functionality and customizable models that align with national needs.
220. Stakeholder engagement with DaRT remained moderate, with limited country ownership and sustained use. While workshops initially encouraged engagement, most countries did not continue using the tool, highlighting gaps in capacity-building and a lack of strategies to drive behavioral and organizational change. Better integration into national workflows and stronger national-level commitment are paramount to long-term adoption, and ownership remains unlikely.

⁷⁵ CBD/COP/15/INF/19 (2022). *Progress report on rolling out the data reporting tool for MEAs - DaRT*. 15th meeting – Part II, Montreal, Canada, December 7-19, 2022. Agenda items 9, 13, 14, and 15.

221. Evidence from interview feedback and mid-term review indicated strong confidence that MEA Parties will continue to seek coherent implementation and synergies, particularly under the Kunming-Montreal GBF and the management of chemicals and waste. The continuation of initiatives under the Treaties II project marked progress in consolidating the tool's use, addressing the need for behavioral and organizational change, as well as capacity building. Broader adaptive mechanisms—such as systematic stakeholder engagement and contingency planning—are necessary. Enhancing DaRT's usability and intelligence, offering incentives for its adoption, and enabling countries to customize reports according to their existing structures could significantly enhance its appeal and long-term sustainability.
222. In conclusion, the sustainability of project outcomes is heavily influenced by social and political factors. Evidence indicated strong ownership and commitment from the government and other stakeholders, particularly at critical levels of government, which were essential for sustaining project outcomes. However, this ownership may be impacted by potential government changes. Moderate adaptive mechanisms also posed challenges to progress. Ensuring the project's socio-political sustainability requires addressing these barriers through smarter tool design, tailored country models, strategic incentives, and robust capacity-building initiatives.

Rating for Socio-political Sustainability: Moderately Likely

Financial Sustainability

223. The maintenance and development of project outcomes, especially the ones related to Outputs 4 and 5, are heavily reliant on future funding. Key activities requiring ongoing financial support include DaRT tool maintenance, continuous capacity building, and stakeholder engagement. Regular updates, technical improvements, and integration with national systems (e.g., ORT or ORS) are essential to keep DaRT relevant. The project secured funding by transitioning to a subsequent project (Treaties II), reflecting financial sustainability and the interest of participating countries. However, long-term financial sustainability remains uncertain as funding is tied to the new project phase. Continued funding will depend on sustained country commitment, MEAs secretariats engagement, demonstrated utility, and strategic planning.
224. Interview feedback suggested that the financial sustainability of the project remains a concern. While some opportunities for future funding were identified through collaborations with other projects or donors, the lack of long-term financial resources for maintaining the project's outcomes was highlighted as a challenge. Although the project had benefited from substantial funding, particularly from Switzerland, there was a clear need to diversify funding sources to ensure continued support. Additionally, the importance of low-cost approaches, was noted, along with the need to integrate synergies between projects to avoid duplication of efforts and reduce costs.
225. Regarding financial factors, the SWOT analysis in the "Progress Report on Rolling Out the Data Reporting Tool for MEAs – DaRT"⁷⁶ highlights the need to ensure sustainable and continuous funding for DaRT. Seeking collaborations with donors, development partners, and other organizations is key to securing the necessary financial resources.

⁷⁶ CBD/COP/15/INF/19 (2022). *Progress report on rolling out the data reporting tool for MEAs - DaRT*. 15th meeting – Part II, Montreal, Canada, December 7-19, 2022. Agenda items 9, 13, 14, and 15.

Additionally, there is a need to address sustainable funding, monitoring, and evaluation of the tool.

226. Short term financial sustainability was ensured, as the results of Treaties I have been integrated into the follow-up project. Treaties II secures future funding and demonstrates the participating countries' commitment to the project's outcomes. However, to ensure long-term sustainability, the next project phase should include a more detailed exit strategy with financial mechanisms, such as national budget allocations or international partnerships, to support project outputs (e.g. DaRT) beyond donor funding. Exploring financial incentives and cost-sharing models and fostering country-driven funding mechanisms would be crucial for reducing reliance on external support and ensuring the tool's integration into national systems. While securing funding for DaRT Phase III (Increasing interoperability with other tools) through a subsequent project (Treaties II) was a positive development, future phases must prioritize financial sustainability and strategic planning for long-term sustainability.
227. Overall, the project outcomes are highly dependent on future funding and financial flows for continued success and sustainability. A significant portion of the required future funding has already been secured through the next project phase, demonstrating substantial progress in addressing the project's financial needs. While the project included a comprehensive exit strategy at design without a financial component, which could have limited its effectiveness in the transition and long-term sustainability, the project ensured its financial sustainability by integrating its results into the Treaties II project.

Rating for Financial Sustainability: Moderately Likely

Institutional Sustainability

228. The sustainability of project outcomes was highly dependent on institutional frameworks and governance structures. Institutional support mechanisms under the Convention on Biological Diversity provided a robust framework to sustain and institutionalize some project results. These mechanisms, complemented by UNEP's central focus on international environmental law, ensured a high level of institutional support.
229. However, a gap was identified in integrating project outcomes beyond biodiversity-focused institutions and stakeholders. For example, while biodiversity-related institutions demonstrated greater capacity and readiness to sustain the project's benefits, the Parties and other sectors, such as economic development and development planning, required more substantial integration of project outcomes. This limitation posed a challenge to the broader institutionalization of the project's achievements at both national and international levels.
230. Institutional capacity-building efforts under the project (Output 5) enhanced the skills and knowledge of key individuals and organizations, increasing the likelihood of sustained support. Stakeholders involved in implementing the DaRT tool within countries were, in principle, equipped with the necessary competencies to maintain and effectively utilize the tool. These individuals, given their expected retention in relevant positions, were well-positioned to continue contributing to the project's outcomes.
231. Interview feedback emphasized the importance of a clear institutional framework and committed personnel to manage, oversee, and sustain the project's results. Establishing Parties committees, such as biodiversity committees, would help ensure

that diverse stakeholders remain engaged and that institutional support for the DaRT tool is maintained. Conversely, the absence of clear ownership and responsibility for the tools' data was identified as a barrier to sustainability, particularly given the voluntary nature of the DaRT tool. Strong institutional support, including capacity-building initiatives and ongoing engagement with key stakeholders, is critical to ensuring the tool remains relevant and operational in the long term.

232. The SWOT analysis in the "Progress Report on Rolling Out the Data Reporting Tool for MEAs – DaRT"⁷⁷ also highlighted institutional aspects influencing the tool's success. The DaRT tool can potentially consolidate information on implementing MEAs into a single national space, fostering synergies and standardizing data and reporting. However, weaknesses such as limited interoperability with existing platforms must be addressed. Recommendations include ensuring interoperability with other national and international tools and establishing a national DaRT committee to strengthen the institutional infrastructure required for the tool's success and sustainability.
233. The project developed an exit strategy with an institutional component, emphasizing integrating project results into existing governance structures and processes to ensure continuity beyond project closure. Additionally, the DaRT tool was transitioned to an independent project phase (DaRT Phase III: Increasing interoperability with other tools), supported by institutional mechanisms under UNEP. This transition demonstrated the project's efforts to institutionalize its outcomes and secure future support through aligned governance frameworks.
234. The mid-term review highlighted that UNEP's prospects for institutional sustainability are very strong, if not assured. International environmental law is a key focus of the UNEP Law Division, with MEAs playing a central role in many of UNEP's subprogrammes.
235. While the institutional support mechanisms and capacity development efforts appeared robust and aligned with governance frameworks, future projects should prioritize expanding the reach of institutional achievements at the national level. This approach will ensure broader and more sustainable impacts.
236. In conclusion, the sustainability of project outcomes was highly dependent on institutional support. A robust mechanism was in place to support the institutionalization of project outcomes. The capacity of relevant individuals was enhanced, and they were likely to remain in positions where they could sustain these outcomes. Additionally, an exit strategy with an institutional component has been initiated to guide the transition and ensure the continuation of project benefits.

Rating for Institutional Sustainability: Moderately Likely

Rating for Sustainability (Likelihood):	Moderately Likely
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I. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

Preparation and Readiness

⁷⁷ CBD/COP/15/INF/19 (2022). *Progress report on rolling out the data reporting tool for MEAs - DaRT*. 15th meeting – Part II, Montreal, Canada, December 7-19, 2022. Agenda items 9, 13, 14, and 15.

237. According to the mid-term review, there is no record of a project inception process. This should have taken place in late 2017/early 2018⁷⁸ and involved key stakeholders. However, evidence from PIMS indicates that a second Project Deep Dive Review took place on December 5, 2018. This type of review typically provides an opportunity for project leaders, program management, and senior officials to assess risks, identify weaknesses, and strategically align project plans. No records were found indicating when the first Project Deep Dive Review took place. Minutes from the first Steering Committee meeting (September 2018) also make no mention of an inception process and instead focus mainly on the exchange of information among participants.
238. While this kind of meeting could have served as a solid foundation for the project's start, other critical elements were either incomplete or lacked sufficient detail. For example, work plans were revised during the project's revisions; however, they did not offer the level of detail necessary to fully guide implementation. No evidence was found of a detailed procurement plan, and the Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESE) assessment -though conducted during the project's design phase and included as Annex D of the ProDoc - did not include clear documentation of stakeholder participation. Furthermore, the ProDoc's stakeholder analysis was superficial, focusing narrowly on environmental policy actors and excluding other relevant groups, such as specialized government agencies and the private sector. Partnerships mentioned in the ProDoc lacked clear definitions of roles, responsibilities, or formal assessments of their capacities.
239. Governance arrangements were generally adequate, as evidenced by the establishment of a Steering Committee with appropriate representation from implementing partners and MEA secretariats. Steering Committee meetings were held approximately once a year throughout the project. The first Steering Committee meeting, only held in September 2018, focused primarily on updating participants and exchanging information rather than functioning as a platform for a comprehensive inception process. The mid-term review and interviews also indicated that stakeholders consulted during the review phase reported they had not been involved in a detailed inception process.
240. It was also observed that there was a lack of early and structured engagement with beneficiaries, such as the Parties, from the outset. Early and structured involvement of national governments through a working group, technical committee, or similar structure could have fostered a more interactive approach to the development of solutions, accelerated their adoption, strengthened ownership and effectiveness, and facilitated cooperation among different ministries. Additionally, it would have allowed for agile adjustments based on user feedback.
241. Measures taken during the project's first year strengthened aspects of the project design, such as refining communication strategies and stakeholder engagement approaches. However, some challenges persisted. For instance, delays in implementing Output 4 arose due to intense coordination needs around the development of the Data and Reporting Tool (DaRT). Additionally, delays in signing legal agreements, such as Small-Scale Funding Agreements (SSFAs), hindered a smooth transition to implementation, although these issues were eventually resolved. Records and reports in the PIMS from the project's early stages were superficial. During the period between November 2017 and December 2018, notable events included:

⁷⁸ Preparation and Readiness is the time between project approval and first disbursement i.e. the inception/mobilisation period. Evidence indicated that the first project disbursement was in December 2017.

- I. In December 2017, the project was set up, and initial discussions and activities took place during the margins of the CBD SBSTTA-21, including a side event co-organized with UNEP-WCMC and the CBD Secretariat on decision XIII/24 (Output 3).
 - II. In June 2018, the project reported delays in preparing SSFAs and agreements with implementation partners, with assurances that these issues would be resolved shortly.
 - III. By December 2018, instead of an SSFA with UNEP-WCMC, a PCA incorporating past SSFAs was developed. Additionally, delays with Output 4, due to coordination demands for the DaRT tool, were reported. At the time, it was anticipated that these issues would be back on track in the following months.
242. The period between project approval and the first disbursement of funds was six months or less, reflecting a relatively efficient timeline. Staffing mobilization was undertaken promptly, and the project team effectively managed personnel changes to minimize disruptions.
243. In conclusion, although the absence of a more robust inception process limited the project's ability to fully capitalize on opportunities and mitigate foreseeable risks at the outset, the project addressed these weaknesses through initiatives such as the Project Deep Dive Review and the establishment of governance structures. The evidence indicates that a late inception meeting was held and reported, and both an annual work plan and a procurement plan were developed, although lacking detail and accuracy. A Steering Committee was established, and an ESE safeguards assessment was conducted, but the assessment was superficial. Limited stakeholder engagement, superficial planning, and delays in legal agreements hindered the project's readiness.

Rating for Preparation and Readiness: Moderately unsatisfactory

Quality of Project Management and Supervision

244. In general, project management and supervision (UNEP and Partners) demonstrated overall effectiveness in guiding the project towards achieving its planned outcomes, managing team structures, fostering productive partner relationships, and ensuring adaptability to changing external and strategic contexts. While there were areas for improvement in the early stages, significant progress was evident as the project advanced, particularly under the management team from 2019 onward.
245. Initially, project management faced challenges, including the absence of a robust inception process, gaps in early monitoring and reporting, and insufficient organization of project records in the PIMS. However, in 2019, the project benefitted from improved management practices, including more detailed reporting, revisions to the project log frame to enhance indicators and milestones, and greater emphasis on obtaining feedback from workshops and training activities. These changes addressed part of the weaknesses present at the project's inception.
246. The Steering Committee functioned effectively, providing good oversight and guidance throughout the project. Implementation teams were managed very well, with a constructive and effective working relationship between the project manager and project partners.
247. Staff turnover at UNEP was managed with minimal disruption due to systematic and thorough handover processes supported by documentation and information exchange. Moreover, all staff demonstrated the necessary capacity to meet project

requirements and were strategically located to ensure efficient implementation. However, evidence indicated that staff turnover at UNEP-WCMC, the implementing partner, delayed key activities, particularly the interoperability of the DaRT tool with relevant systems such as the Online Reporting System (ORS).

248. Communication and collaboration between the project team, PM, UNEP colleagues, and UNEP partners were regular and constructive, fostering alignment on objectives and activities. Adaptive management was a hallmark of the project's management approach, as evidenced by swift and effective responses to execution challenges, financial shortfalls, and external disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The project management team demonstrated clear prioritization and resource reallocation to meet implementation needs while maintaining accountability. Notably, the project manager successfully mobilized additional resources during the project's execution, ensuring the completion of all planned activities despite initial funding gaps. The management team also responded adeptly to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted operations, delayed intergovernmental meetings, and necessitated alternative approaches to maintaining project momentum. By adopting virtual meetings and remote capacity-building workshops, the project adapted effectively, minimizing the pandemic's impact on implementation timelines. Although schedules were affected by the pandemic, these delays did not significantly hinder the project.
249. According to the mid-term review, stakeholders expressed high levels of satisfaction with the project management. Regular intra-division meetings, including quarterly in-depth "deep dive" sessions with the UNEP Law Division Programme Delivery and Management Unit, allowed for consistent assessment of progress, risks, and corrective measures. Stakeholder feedback highlighted the project manager's commitment, enthusiasm, and ability to communicate clearly about planned activities.
250. Interview feedback suggested that the project management and supervision (UNEP and partners) had positive aspects, including the dedication and involvement of management teams, clear communication, regular meetings, and effective technical support. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the teams demonstrated resilience and adaptability, ensuring that deadlines were met most of the time. However, challenges such as staff turnover, insufficient planning, and last-minute decision-making were highlighted as factors that impacted efficiency and coordination. Additionally, centralized management and limited consideration of stakeholder feedback were cited as barriers to engagement and the expected impact, emphasizing the need for greater alignment and strategic planning.
251. Interview feedback also highlighted aspects related to the work plan. The project followed multiple directions simultaneously, with numerous parallel activities impacting the performance of some, particularly the development of activities related to InforMEA. The effort to advance on multiple fronts compromised the consolidation of its core functionalities. A clearer prioritization of activities, supported by a detailed work plan with defined timelines and mapping of regional and national needs, would have provided greater implementation clarity and better alignment with the capacities of the countries involved.
252. In conclusion, the evidence indicates that the project has been managed effectively, with a functioning Steering Committee, strong team management, and a constructive working relationship between the PM/TM and project partners. Staff turnover has been well-handled through comprehensive handovers and information exchange, and the majority of project staff, including key members, are well-qualified and appropriately located for efficient implementation. Regular and constructive communication between the project team, PM/TM, and UNEP colleagues has been

maintained, and both the Implementation Agency and Executing Agency have provided strong leadership. Additionally, the project has demonstrated strong adaptive management, with swift responses to challenges, effective management of financial shortfalls, and timely, relevant advice to address risks and issues.

Rating for Quality of Project Management and Supervision: Satisfactory

Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation

253. The effectiveness of stakeholder participation and cooperation in the project was mixed, reflecting both strengths and areas for improvement. Stakeholder engagement, which encompassed a broad spectrum of participants, including project partners, duty bearers, target users of outputs, and external collaborators, evolved over the life of the project but suffered from foundational weaknesses during the design phase.
254. Feedback from stakeholders, particularly the MEA Secretariats, indicated dissatisfaction with the level of consultation during the project design. While some stakeholders reported being consulted and making suggestions, they felt these were not adequately reflected in the final design. According to the mid-term review, the perception that proposals were already predetermined, and donor constraints shaped the design process likely hindered stakeholder ownership and trust. Additionally, no formal participatory situation analysis or collaborative development of the theory of change and log frame was conducted, undermining early stakeholder alignment and support. The absence of these processes was a missed opportunity to foster ownership and collaboration from the outset.
255. As the project moved into implementation, stakeholder engagement improved. The Steering Committee, composed of key stakeholders, became a focal point for participation. A total of five Steering Committee meeting minutes were identified and analyzed, occurring at average intervals of one year throughout the project. Attendance and engagement at Steering Committee meetings were consistently high, reflecting sustained interest. Attendance records indicate the presence of 18, 29, 21, and 36 participants, respectively, in the first four Steering Committee meetings (The attendance list for the fifth meeting was not identified.) In all the meetings, nearly all organizations represented on the Steering Committee were in attendance. However, these meetings primarily served as forums for information exchange and coordination, rather than platforms for strategic steering or design refinement. Several critical insights emerged during these meetings, such as the need for clear distinctions between outcome-oriented and action-oriented targets, the importance of capacity-building priorities, and the early inclusion of additional MEAs and Member States in planning stages. These points reinforced earlier criticisms of the project's inception and design processes.
256. Beyond formal meetings, stakeholder discussions were facilitated in the margins of events and side meetings, particularly within the constraints posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. These interactions allowed for supplementary engagement and collaboration, albeit within limited contexts.
257. Evidence suggests that the project implemented a moderate analysis of stakeholder groups, balancing inclusivity with feasibility. While efforts to promote stakeholder ownership were limited in the inception phase, the project team provided good support for collaboration, particularly in sharing plans, pooling resources, and exchanging expertise. The project also maintained mostly effective, though occasionally irregular or poorly timed, communication with stakeholders.

258. Regarding inclusivity, linkages to poverty alleviation and economic livelihoods were only moderately addressed. The project document briefly acknowledged human rights concerns but lacked a thorough and formal analysis. Sustainable development goals were integrated into the project's outcome, but primarily through the lens of public governance, with limited direct focus on natural systems or human rights. Regarding gender, the ProDoc outlined basic commitments, such as balanced representation at events and discussions on the gender-biodiversity nexus but lacked deeper integration of gender perspectives. Indigenous peoples, recognized as biodiversity stewards, were mentioned primarily as beneficiaries of improved information access without substantive engagement in project design or decision-making.

259. In conclusion, while stakeholder participation improved during implementation, the project faced challenges in engagement, with limited but effective efforts to promote stakeholder ownership. Consultation and communication with stakeholders were moderate, as was the support for collaboration and collective action between stakeholder groups. Additionally, the project did not adequately address the linkages to poverty alleviation or economic livelihoods. Enhancing participatory processes, conducting a deeper analysis of differentiated groups, and integrating diverse perspectives earlier on would have significantly strengthened stakeholder cooperation and ownership throughout the project.

Rating for Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation: Moderately Unsatisfactory

Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

260. The project demonstrated a mixed performance in addressing inequalities, vulnerabilities, and the role of disadvantaged groups in environmental management. While some efforts were made, significant gaps limited its overall impact. Gender-related inequalities were addressed through several targeted activities, notably under Output 5:

- I. In 2018, the project advanced gender mainstreaming at the national level in Lao PDR and Myanmar by integrating gender considerations and SDGs into the institutional arrangements for NBSAP implementation and monitoring. This resulted in a Gender Roadmap for Lao PDR and the identification of gender-responsive targets, actions, and indicators in Myanmar.
- II. In 2021, the project contributed to gender guidance shared during key meetings on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. A report by SCBD and IUCN, supported by UNEP and funded by Sweden, emphasized enhancing gender responsiveness in the framework's monitoring and implementation. The project integrated gender considerations into DaRT development by collaborating with the Women's Caucus, uploading the Gender Plan of Action of CBD into DaRT, and inviting two women representatives to participate in Bern II.
- III. In 2022, UNEP provided technical inputs to integrate gender considerations into the post-2020 biodiversity framework and relevant implementation documents discussed at CBD COP 15. UNEP-WCMC supported the drafting and review of the gender plan of action and collaborated with Lao PDR and Myanmar to identify gender-specific indicators for their NBSAPs. UNEP also contributed to the development of a CBD document on measuring a gender-responsive post-2020 biodiversity framework.

261. However, the project lacked a detailed analysis of the vulnerabilities faced by disadvantaged groups, particularly women, children, and indigenous peoples. Although the project document referenced human rights principles, there was no

systematic approach to incorporating these principles into implementation. Indigenous peoples, while recognized as biodiversity stewards and beneficiaries of improved information access, were not directly involved in project design or implementation. Moreover, the extent to which Indigenous knowledge was valued and integrated into the project's tools and outputs was neither systematically monitored nor explicitly addressed. According to the Mid-term review, efforts such as Cameroon's initiative to incorporate indigenous knowledge into the DaRT platform highlight potential opportunities for broader inclusivity but were not core outcomes of the project.

262. The role of disadvantaged groups in environmental protection and rehabilitation was addressed primarily through promoting gender equity in participation. The project consistently met or exceeded its target of at least 25% representation of men or women in activities. For instance, according to the mid-term review, women represented 66% of participants in the 2019 Gender Roadmap workshop in Lao P.D.R., 54% in the Myanmar workshop, and 54% in the regional workshop on MEA synergies in Cambodia. Furthermore, attendance records from the Steering Committee meeting minutes indicate that women's participation ranged between approximately 50% and 70%. These data indicate commendable progress in enhancing women's participation, although broader engagement of disadvantaged groups remained limited.
263. The commitments made during project design were partially realized during implementation. The gender score of 2a assigned at the design stage was appropriate, reflecting the mainstreaming of gender considerations across the project's context, implementation, and log frame. However, gender-disaggregated stakeholder needs and interests were not explicitly identified, and the project did not provide a clear justification for this score. While human rights principles were mentioned, their integration into implementation was minimal. Operating primarily at a policy level, the project lacked mechanisms to directly monitor or advance the realization of human rights, particularly for disadvantaged groups. However, at the project's inception, UNEP's policies on human rights integration were not yet fully developed, and financial constraints further restricted engagement, including the ability to involve MEAs or human rights officers directly. As UNEP's policies evolved through new UNEA and PPD guidelines, these were incorporated into subsequent project revisions by the PRC.
264. Despite these limitations, the project made important contributions to gender mainstreaming and awareness-raising at national and international levels. Its efforts to integrate gender considerations into policies and frameworks, though not exhaustive, represent a positive step forward. However, addressing inequalities and vulnerabilities requires a more comprehensive and systematic approach. Future projects should prioritize including disadvantaged groups, enhance monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and ensure that human rights and equity considerations are fully embedded in both design and implementation phases. This would strengthen the impact and inclusiveness of such initiatives, building on the lessons learned from this project.
265. Overall, evidence suggests that human rights and gender considerations were integrated into project implementation, result interpretation, and project expenditure. Moderate attention was given to human rights and gender in the project implementation, with these aspects consistently reflecting a score of 2a.

Rating for Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality: Satisfactory

266. The project demonstrated a thoughtful approach to risk management in its design and implementation phases, though there were areas where improvements could have been made to align more closely with UNEP's safeguarding standards and environmental goals.
267. Regarding project design, the ProDoc included a risk analysis and a table of risk management measures, but these focused solely on political, organizational, and administrative risks, without addressing environmental and social aspects (Prodoc Section 8). This review acknowledges that, since the project was not expected to generate any significant negative social or environmental impact, no major risks were identified during its risk analysis.
268. While the ProDoc stated that a broad suite of environmental and social safeguards had been considered, no detailed mechanisms or methodologies were provided to substantiate this claim. The Environmental, Social, and Economic Review Note (ESERN) completed during the project design stage (Prodoc Annex D) indicated that no significant environmental or social impacts were anticipated. However, the lack of clarity around what constituted "significant" impacts raises questions, especially given that cumulative environmental impacts, such as carbon emissions from travel, were not explicitly addressed. Including activities in Prodoc aimed at optimizing resource use to reduce the project's environmental footprint is commendable (e.g., use of existing UN Environment knowledge and country/regional resources), but more specific mechanisms for mitigation, particularly regarding UNEP's partners, would have strengthened the design.
269. During project implementation, the management demonstrated adaptability and a commitment to minimizing environmental impacts, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The shift to an online working modality for meetings and capacity-building workshops not only kept the project on track but also reduced the carbon footprint associated with air travel, a significant contributor to emissions in projects of this nature. These measures highlighted the potential for adaptive management to align project activities with broader environmental sustainability goals.
270. It is also worth noting that UNEP replaced the Environmental, Social, and Economic Review Note (ESERN) in 2019 with the Safeguard Risk Identification Form (SRIF) to enhance project design. While the SRIF does not apply to the project in question, as it was developed in 2017, SRIF improves upon the ESERN by incorporating more detailed standards related to carbon footprint. For example, Section 3, Safeguard Standard 2 on "Climate Change and Disaster Risks," explicitly asks whether a project increases greenhouse gas emissions, black carbon emissions, or other drivers of climate change. However, the mid-term review highlighted that a simple "yes" or "no" response is insufficient for effectively operationalizing UNEP's Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework. It emphasized the need for comprehensive and quantified assessments. The absence of quantified carbon emission estimates or a framework to evaluate the environmental footprint of project-supported activities, such as travel, suggests an area for improvement. Future projects provide an opportunity to integrate quantifiable data on carbon emissions into risk assessments and consider applying emission caps at the project level. These measures would strengthen UNEP's leadership in achieving net-zero emissions and promoting environmental responsibility within the UN system.
271. Overall, safeguarding considerations were addressed to a moderate level of quality and consistency in areas such as management, risk reviews, monitoring, response to issues, and reporting. Environmental and social impacts, especially on vulnerable

groups, were considered to a moderate extent. UNEP and its partners made frequent efforts to minimize the project's environmental footprint.

Rating for Environmental and Social Safeguards: Moderately Satisfactory

Country Ownership and Driven-ness

272. The engagement of government and public sector agencies in the project was variable, impacting the forward momentum of the intended project results, particularly in terms of moving from outputs to outcomes and from outcomes to intermediate states. While there were some positive efforts, there were significant weaknesses in country ownership, which affected the long-term sustainability and impact of the project.
273. According to the Mid-Term Review, one notable weakness was the absence of country-level representation on the project Steering Committee, as none of the institutions within the key stakeholder groups represented national-level entities. Additionally, the Steering Committee lacked representation from sectors beyond biodiversity, such as national development planning or other relevant ministries. This lack of diverse institutional representation led to a gap in strategic guidance for project delivery, limiting national ownership and reducing the potential for institutionalizing changes at the national level. However, while a global project does not necessarily require national government representation on the Steering Committee, early engagement of national governments through a working group, technical committee, or similar structure could have been planned. Such an initiative could have fostered a more interactive approach to developing and implementing project solutions, as well as improved cooperation among national sectors.
274. Despite these weaknesses, some positive aspects of government and public sector engagement were evident. For example, Output 1, which supported deliberations on the post-2020 GBF and the Bern process, played a significant role in supporting national-level stakeholders in their work. This activity fostered some ownership at the national level by directly engaging government representatives in crucial discussions and policy formation processes. Furthermore, the roll-out of the DaRT under Output 4, along with gender workshops and training under Output 5, provided direct support to national-level representatives and institutions. These efforts enabled government ministries and public sector agencies to take on a leadership role in advocating for change, endorsing project results, and initiating complementary activities that were critical to the forward momentum of the project. For example, government representatives from Parties were actively involved in the training activities for the DaRT tool, helping to ensure its integration into national decision-making processes. Additionally, gender training supported by the project helped national institutions consider gender equality in biodiversity-related policymaking, further fostering a sense of ownership over the project's outcomes.
275. However, despite these efforts, the project struggled to ensure comprehensive country ownership. Interview and survey feedback from countries suggested that some ministries demonstrated leadership through strategic planning, advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and aligning project goals with national policies, such as Cameroon's DaRT strategy. Some also allocated resources and initiated complementary activities to sustain project outcomes. Challenges included low prioritization, limited resources, reliance on external entities, and gaps in coordination, with some respondents reporting minimal involvement. Improved collaboration, inclusivity, and resource allocation are needed to enhance engagement and impact.

276. Additionally, the absence of data and monitoring on the engagement and ownership of marginalized groups limited the ability to fully assess whether their needs and interests were adequately represented and integrated into project activities. This gap highlights the need for more targeted efforts to ensure that marginalized groups are fully engaged, and their needs are addressed in future projects.
277. In conclusion, while several, though not all, government and public sector agencies played a leadership role in driving change, endorsing project results, and initiating complementary activities, the overall engagement was inconsistent. The lack of strategic representation and involvement of key ministries beyond the biodiversity sector, coupled with gaps in monitoring gender and marginalized group ownership, limited the project's country ownership and drivenness.

Rating for Country Ownership and Driven-ness: Moderately Unsatisfactory

Communication and Public Awareness

278. The project made substantial efforts to communicate and share experiences with partners and stakeholders. Key audiences were generally well-informed about the project's main messages. Communication activities were well-targeted, frequent, and responsive to feedback, fostering collaboration and knowledge dissemination. These efforts were adequately funded and effectively monitored for impact.
279. Throughout the project, significant experience sharing occurred, particularly in relation to Output 1. For example, the Bern II consultations advanced collaboration among MEAs, leading to the CBD COP15's endorsement of the Bern Process and UNEP's subsequent role. The outcomes of these consultations informed five intergovernmental meetings, including the CBD COP15, CITES COP19, Ramsar COP14, ITPGRFA-9, and CMS-STC53. The project also had a direct impact at the national level, where 44 countries used project outputs to align their MEAs, and two countries established national coordination mechanisms for MEA focal points.
280. Output 2 achieved good results in enhancing communication and outreach on biodiversity-related goals through collaboration with biodiversity convention secretariats. However, the lack of a dedicated communications specialist on the project team for this output may have hindered achieving a better impact.
281. Although a communication plan was implemented, it was somewhat limited in scope. The ProDoc outlined a communication strategy (Section 6.1) that differentiated actions based on partner and stakeholder types, but it lacked specific methods for engaging marginalized or gendered groups. For instance, while Output 5 included strategies for sharing project outcomes through existing channels and networks like workshops and meetings, it lacked clarity on how, when, or by whom lessons learned will be shared.
282. In general, stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the project's communication efforts. Stakeholder feedback highlights the success of the workshops, which fostered dialogue and collaboration among focal points of different conventions, contributing to the development of a culture of interinstitutional cooperation that emphasized communication and coordination. Efforts to enhance communication with stakeholders were also noted, such as revamping the homepage to better share information about workshops and technical improvements. However, some respondents pointed out the need to further strengthen communication with stakeholders, particularly regarding implementing feedback. Limited resources were also identified as a barrier to broader participation and engagement across divisions. Additionally, communication in certain areas, such as media outreach, was described

as less direct and largely confined to the national level, potentially limiting the project's reach and impact.

283. While communication slowed during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, no significant setbacks were reported. However, the project did not fully leverage existing communication channels to reach marginalized and gendered groups, aside from the gender-related activities under Output 5. For example, the project produced guidance materials to support CBD gender mainstreaming (e.g., CBD/WG2020/3/INF/10 (2022) and CBD/COP/15/INF/20 (2022)). However, limited feedback channels hindered the ability to assess the effectiveness of communication efforts, especially with marginalized groups. The project did not implement differentiated communication strategies to address their specific needs, resulting in a gap in its outreach.
284. The project's public awareness activities were somewhat effective in driving change, with traditional communication channels being used to publicize the project at side events and through publications. Nonetheless, the broader community and civil society were not fully engaged, particularly in the absence of a comprehensive strategy to address the needs of marginalized and gendered groups.
285. It is important to note that a key tool for knowledge sharing, the DaRT platform, has not been fully utilized. Only Switzerland has actively engaged with the tool, and the project's efforts to improve access to its resources have not been fully realized. The DaRT has potential as a central platform for knowledge dissemination, but its underuse raises concerns about its long-term sustainability. The platform's effectiveness hinges on institutional buy-in and sustained engagement from countries, which was not yet fully achieved. Additionally, the project faced challenges related to the socio-political, institutional, and financial sustainability of its communication strategy.
286. Overall, evidence suggests that communication efforts were moderately effective in driving change beyond outputs. Some key audiences had moderate awareness of the project's main messages, with targeted and frequent communication activities that were occasionally interactive and partially monitored for impact. Experience sharing between project partners and stakeholders was adequate, and a communication strategy, though limited, was prepared and partially implemented. Future efforts should prioritize inclusive communication strategies, particularly for marginalized groups, and strengthen the institutional commitment to platforms like the DaRT to ensure their continued relevance and impact.

Rating for Communication and Public Awareness: Moderately satisfactory

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance: Moderately Satisfactory

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

287. This MLTR presents the main conclusions from the assessment based on the five strategic questions outlined in its ToR, which were of interest to UNEP and aligned with the project's expected contributions.

288. Conclusion 1⁷⁹: The project supported global biodiversity governance and the cooperation and synergies agenda by facilitating collaboration between MEA secretariats and Parties (such as through the Bern Process), promoting the integrated implementation of biodiversity and chemicals agendas, and contributing to the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal GBF, including enhanced roles for the MEAs, while also organizing key workshops and fostering collaborative networks.

289. Key successes included increased awareness of synergies between conventions, significant contributions to the adoption of the GBF, and unified efforts among treaties and organizations. Workshops and events, particularly within the Party-led Bern process, were highly successful. The project achieved significant outcomes, including the adoption of decisions or resolutions by five conventions (CITES, ITPGRFA, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, CMS, and WHC) based on the 2022 Bern II report and the creation of collaborative networks between focal points. Notably, five conventions made decisions based on the 2022 Bern II report, demonstrating the commitment of MEA governing bodies to collaborative action. The project also helped advance discussions on synergies, which continued in subsequent multilateral processes⁸⁰. However, challenges included insufficient resources, tight deadlines, and communication issues, particularly regarding stakeholder feedback. Different processes/focus (e.g., reports, mandates, and systems) among secretariats hindering deeper collaboration.

290. Conclusion 2⁸¹: The project improved cooperation among biodiversity-related MEAs through constructive dialogues and tools but faced challenges in achieving higher levels of coherence and efficiency due to communication gaps, limited coordination, and the DaRT's interoperability and sustainability issues with other MEA reporting tools.

291. The project improved cooperation among biodiversity-related MEAs by promoting dialogue and developing tools like DaRT and the and 3 compendia of guidance (electronic version), leading to new decisions on cooperation, better MEA reports, and inclusion of MEA commitments in NBSAPs. DaRT showed promise in supporting reporting and data sharing. However, DaRT still had limitations, and the project struggled to achieve measurable coherence and efficiency, particularly at regional and national levels. While DaRT workshops did not lead to its practical use afterward, it brought together biodiversity-related MEA National Focal Points and other MEAs. Collaboration at the secretariat level has progressed through the BLG⁸² and existing

⁷⁹ This conclusion addresses the Strategic Question "How has the project supported or improved biodiversity governance and the cooperation and synergies agenda globally through support to the governing bodies of the MEAs and implementation of COP decisions in the biodiversity and chemicals thematic clusters of MEAs as well as UNEA?"

⁸⁰ Although UNEP/EA.6/Res.4 and UNEP/EA.6/Res.6 were adopted after Treaties I and are formally linked to Treaties II, evidence suggests that Treaties I played a structural role in fostering synergies and generating inputs that supported subsequent discussions and collaborations. While the formal adoption of these resolutions should be related to Treaties II, Treaties I served as a facilitator of these advancements.

⁸¹ This conclusion addresses the Strategic Question "Has the project improved cooperation among the biodiversity-related MEAs and improved measurable coherence and efficiency, avoiding duplication of efforts at the global, regional and national level?"

⁸² The Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG) or the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions is a coordination mechanism established in 2004 under CBD COP 7 Decision VII/26, that enhances collaboration among the secretariats of major biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). It promotes synergies, improves coherence in

bilateral MoUs, which address specific areas of common interest. Unfortunately, duplication of effort persisted. Key reasons for these shortcomings included the need for better communication and strategic planning between project management and stakeholders and ongoing initiatives, and DaRT's limited interoperability with other tools (e.g., ORS) and complexity to use. While the project raised awareness and engagement, it lacked focus on efficiency and the real impact of activities nationally, with limited feedback from countries on the DaRT's impact.

292. Conclusion 3⁸³: The project was welcomed by target countries, nevertheless had a limited impact on country-level implementation of MEAs conventions. It provided useful guidance and knowledge management tools but also faced challenges such as insufficient stakeholder engagement and uptake at the national level.

293. The project impacted on the implementation of biodiversity conventions at the national level, mostly by enhancing guidance and knowledge management for MEAs. It helped align national policies with the KM-GBF, supporting the integration of global goals into national strategies. By June 2023, 104 national workspaces were created on the DaRT platform, allowing countries to use it. However, the challenges faced by the project hindered the expected results, including delays in advancing planned activities due to postponed KM-GBF negotiations and global events, DaRT's limited recognition as a knowledge management platform, and its interoperability issues with other systems, considering the users' need for more practical procedures to harmonize reporting. Despite improvements in stakeholder engagement through workshops and training, the time and effort required to learn how to use DaRT effectively, along with the limited presence of structured national awareness strategies in most countries hindered wider adoption. Furthermore, measuring the project's impact at the country level was difficult, underscoring the need for better indicators. While outcome-level indicators were refined, assessing long-term impact remained challenging.

294. Conclusion 4⁸⁴: The roll-out of integrated approaches and tools, including DaRT, has been partially effective and efficient, While the platform gained recognition and exceeded its goals for training and outreach, it has faced challenges such as a complex user interface, insufficient stakeholder engagement, technical issues, and limited resources. As a result, the tool has not been adopted and used by countries.

295. The project exceeded targets in areas such as capacity building, training of NFPs, and promoting gender-responsive guidance. For instance, in 2023, DaRT was introduced to 30 new countries through workshops, reaching 120 focal points and government representatives. While training initiatives enhanced technical capacity and understanding, challenges included DaRT's complexity for new users, which required extensive training, and the limited implementation of structured national awareness strategies in most countries, hindering broader adoption. Limited resources and investments planned for Output 5 on national implementation, along with the absence of robust national databases, staff turnover, and integration challenges with existing systems, further hindered the full roll-out of DaRT.

implementation, and facilitates cooperation on biodiversity issues. The BLG includes secretariats from key conventions such as CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar, ITPGRFA, IPPC, and WHC, playing a vital role in aligning strategic plans and supporting global biodiversity targets, including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

⁸³ This conclusion addresses the Strategic Question "Has the project impacted country level implementation of biodiversity related conventions and goals through enhanced guidance, knowledge management and harmonized reporting to MEAs?"

⁸⁴ This conclusion addresses the Strategic Question "How effective and efficient has the roll-out of integrated approaches and tools been including the roll-out of the Data Reporting Tool (DaRT)?"

296. Conclusion 5⁸⁵: To adapt to the impact of COVID-19, the project transitioned to online meetings and activities, which expanded participation, maintained project timelines, and reduced carbon emissions. However, it also impacted engagement, learning, and tool implementation at the national level.

297. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the project, but the management team quickly adapted by shifting to online meetings and activities. This allowed continued internal work, virtual consultations, and broader stakeholder participation, including focal points who might have missed in-person events. While this shift helped meet CBD deadlines and supported UNEP's sustainability goals by reducing carbon emissions, the pandemic also caused significant delays, particularly at the national level. The lack of clarity in global timelines and delays in post-2020 framework negotiations hindered stakeholder engagement and DaRT adoption. The absence of in-person interactions affected learning, implementation, and the effectiveness of workshops, highlighting the irreplaceable role of face-to-face activities.

B. Summary of project findings and ratings

The overall assessment of the project was rated as Satisfactory, based on the 'weightings table for evaluation criteria rating' following the Evaluation Office of UNEP guidelines. The project performed well in areas such as Strategic Relevance, Financial Management, Efficiency, and Monitoring and Reporting. It received moderate ratings in Quality of Project Design, Effectiveness, Sustainability, and Factors Affecting Performance. The table below summarizes the ratings and key findings discussed in Chapter V.

UNEP Evaluation Office Validation of Performance Ratings:

The UNEP Evaluation Office formally quality assesses (see Annex XIII) management led Terminal Review reports and validates the performance ratings therein by ensuring that the performance judgments made are consistent with evidence presented in the Review report and in-line with the performance standards set out for independent evaluations.

The Evaluation Office assesses a Terminal Review report in the same way as it assesses the initial draft of a Terminal Evaluation report. It applies the following assumptions in its validation process:

- That what is being assessed is the contents of the report and the extent to which it makes a consistent and justifiable case for the performance ratings it records.
- That the consultant has, within the report, presented all the evidence that was made available to them.
- That the Review has been based on a robust Theory of Change, reconstructed where necessary, which reflects UNEP's definitions at all levels of results.
- That the project team and key stakeholders have already reviewed a draft version of the report and provided substantive comments and made factual corrections to the Review Consultant, who has responded to them. The Evaluation Office assumes, therefore, that it has received the Final (revised) version of the report.

In this instance the Evaluation Office validates the overall project performance rating at the '**Satisfactory**' level.

⁸⁵ This conclusion addresses the Strategic Question "What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance?"

Table 4: Summary of project findings and ratings⁸⁶

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
Strategic Relevance		S	The rating is validated.	S
1. Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and strategic priorities	The project's strategies and contributions were fully aligned with UNEP's MTS and PoWs (2018-2025), supporting UNEP's Capacity Building (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (S-SC) policies, while contributing to PoW's expected accomplishment and direct outcome indicators. Despite limited funding, Output 5 played a key role in advancing UNEP's objectives across these frameworks.	HS	The rating is validated.	HS
2. Alignment to Donor/Partner strategic priorities	The project was fully aligned with donor and partner priorities, with key financial partners (Switzerland, China, Sweden, the Nordic Council of Ministers, and the European Commission) playing a key role in effectively addressing needs and ensuring the project outcome, while allowing for necessary flexibility.	HS	The rating is validated.	HS

⁸⁶ Most criteria will be rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated, also on a six-point scale, from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU).

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
3. Relevance to global, regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities	The project's implementation strategies and contributions were aligned with global, regional, sub-regional, and national environmental priorities, although it focused more on cooperation at global level and less on implementing of decisions at national level. The project was indirectly aligned with the UN's "Leave No One Behind" policy by addressing development, human rights, and promoting an inclusive impact across different countries (LDCs).	S	The rating is validated.	S
4. Complementarity with relevant existing interventions/coherence	The project's design demonstrated moderate complementarity and awareness of related interventions. While the ProDoc mentioned alignment with the ACP-MEAs Phase III and InforMEA Phase II projects, it did not specify how this would be operationalized. Furthermore, there was no direct engagement with the National Focal Points of the Montevideo Environmental Law Programme, and the benefits of collaboration were not clearly anticipated, resulting in limited integration with other interventions during implementation.	MS	The rating is validated.	MS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
Quality of Project Design	The project design was strategically relevant, aligned with UNEP priorities, and focused on capacity building and support to the SDGs. The project design performed well in terms of Strategic Relevance, Logical Framework and Monitoring, Governance and Supervision Arrangements, Financial Planning / Budgeting, Efficiency, Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects, and Identified Project Design Weaknesses/Gaps. However, it lacked clear synergies with other UNEP initiatives, a detailed stakeholder analysis, and well-defined causal pathways in the Theory of Change. Governance and financial planning were strong, but monitoring lacked a dedicated budget. The project faced multiple extensions and had weaknesses in defining the problem and engaging key stakeholders.	MS	The rating is validated.	MS
Nature of External Context	The COVID-19 pandemic impacted project operations and led to a shift to online activities that enhanced inclusivity, broadened stakeholder participation, and reduced carbon emissions. However, the virtual format affected engagement and reduced the effectiveness of events, while limited in-person interactions hindered informal discussions and consensus-building. The postponement of key events affected the project's original timelines. Despite these challenges, the project demonstrated strong adaptive management.	MU	The rating is validated.	MU
Effectiveness		MS	The rating is validated.	MS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
1. Availability of outputs	Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project successfully delivered most planned activities within the adjusted timeframe and achieved all five outputs. Outputs 1, 3, and 4 were delivered with good quality and within the expected timeframe. Output 2 faced some challenges due to staffing constraints and the need for greater focus on communication efforts within UNEP but still made meaningful progress. Output 5 was constrained by a small budget for national implementation, and a methodology for implementing the DaRT tool that could have been more targeted and efficient. Despite successful outreach, its impact was limited due to poor adoption by NFP. Most outputs were delivered to the intended beneficiaries and deemed of good quality. The challenges highlighted the need for improvements in DaRT's strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, training, technical support, and integration of tools and processes. Nevertheless, key DaRT users actively participated in preparing the outputs, fostering good ownership levels.	S	The rating is validated.	S
2. Achievement of project outcomes	The most critical aspect for reaching the intermediate state was partially achieved, with some elements still pending to fully reach the desired state. Regarding outcome indicators', the project effectively engaged six intergovernmental forums and surpassed its target by reaching 30 countries (instead of 11) using project outputs for MEA implementation. Additionally, significant funding was mobilized for MEA-related activities. The assumptions for progress from project outputs to outcomes were partially met, while drivers to support the transition from outputs to outcomes were in place.	MS	The rating is validated.	MS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
3. Likelihood of impact	The project's intended impacts are moderately likely to be realized, as assessed using the "Likelihood of Impact Assessment Decision Tree". The project's outcomes that were most crucial for attaining the intermediate state were achieved. Other aspects of the project's outcomes were still in progress by the time of the project's conclusion. As noted in the previous sections, the assumptions and drivers to support the transition from outputs to project outcomes were partially in place, and the intermediate state had been partially achieved. Assumptions for the change process from the intermediate state to impact were partially met. Despite some setbacks in Output 5, national commitment was strong, with 30 countries engaged, coordination mechanisms established, and significant funding mobilized. The project played a significant catalytic role in promoting coherence among MEAs and contributing to the Kunming-Montreal GBF.	ML	The rating is validated.	ML
Financial Management		HS	The rating is validated.	HS
1. Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures	The project maintained strong financial management, ensuring timely cash advances, regular expenditure reporting, and adaptive budget revisions to address pandemic-related delays. No major financial issues impacted performance, and additional funding was mobilized through three of four project extensions.	HS	The rating is validated.	HS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
2. Completeness of project financial information	The project's financial documentation was generally complete, accurate, and accessible, with timely records maintained through systems like IPMR and PIMS. Gaps in standardized record keeping made document retrieval challenging.	HS	The rating is validated.	HS
3. Communication between finance and project management staff	Strong communication between the PM and FMO ensured effective financial oversight through regular meetings, joint reviews, proactive collaboration and sharing of financial reports. Despite minor COVID-19 disruptions, implementation remained on track. The approved no-cost extension complied with UNEP guidelines and donor requirements, demonstrating strong procedural adherence and adaptive management.	HS	The rating is validated.	HS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
Efficiency	The project successfully delivered its results with notable cost efficiency, optimizing resources through partnerships and in-kind contributions. It used cost-saving strategies such as remote activities, aligning with pre-scheduled events, and resource sharing. Despite four extensions, including one no-cost extension, these were well justified. Delays may have affected some national-level outcomes. Challenges also included initial funding uncertainties and limited early stakeholder engagement. Feedback from interviewees acknowledged efficiency but pointed out missed opportunities to engage with ongoing initiatives (e.g. ACP-MEA). Adaptive management and robust partnerships ensured most outputs were delivered on time, with efficiency enhanced by pre-existing networks.	S	The rating is validated.	S
Monitoring and Reporting		S	The rating is validated.	S
1. Monitoring design and budgeting	The project developed an M&R model based on UNEP standards with SMART indicators to track progress on outputs and outcomes. Over time, the indicator system was refined to better align with the project's scope. However, weaknesses were identified, such as gaps in outcome-related indicators, which hindered evaluation. The revised M&R plan tracked 20 indicators and effectively supported results-based management. Despite the challenges, the plan was comprehensive, covering data collection, budget monitoring, and gender disaggregation, and provided a robust framework for monitoring project progress.	S	The rating is validated.	S

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
2. Monitoring of project implementation	The project's monitoring system was operational and supported the tracking of progress towards objectives with a detailed plan and completed workplan. Substantial amounts of relevant and useful baseline and implementation data were collected, with data made available by indicator. While gender disaggregation was addressed, data for vulnerable or marginalized groups were not fully captured. Project implementation data were analyzed, but the approach could have been more effective, as it did not lead to meaningful discussions or actions for improvement. This limited the potential for timely adjustments and decision-making. An adequate, planned monitoring budget was reasonably spent, contributing to the system's operational efficiency.	S	The rating is validated at the 'Satisfactory'. However, some limitations in the monitoring system are noted: - Data was not disaggregated by vulnerable or marginalized groups, which would have been important for tracking inclusive participation (para 206), although this is balanced by the fact that there was a gender sensitive indicator. - There is no clear indication that the information generated by the monitoring plan was used to adapt and improve the project's execution and outcomes or ensure sustainability. While the monitoring system was effective in tracking progress, it seems that opportunities to use this information for timely adjustments or to inform decisions may have been missed (para 208), however, the project still shows a moderate likelihood of realizing enduring benefits - The project expenditure reports do not show that funds were explicitly allocated to monitoring activities. However, it can be inferred that the budget allocated for monitoring was reasonably well-spent, given the operational efficiency of the monitoring system and the regular updates provided by the project (para 209)	S

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
3. Project reporting	The project maintained detailed documentation through UNEP's PIMS and IPMR reporting systems, with timely and consistent reporting. However, challenges emerged in retrieving documents due to a lack of standardized naming and version control. Monitoring reports were gender-neutral, with some gender-sensitive actions reported separately. Despite some gaps, the reporting system effectively tracked project progress.	S	The rating is validated.	S
Sustainability		MU	The overall rating in the narrative section of Chapter V is Moderately Likely ML (4), and the ratings table 4 is Moderately Unlikely (3). The rating of ML is validated.	ML

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
1. Socio-political sustainability	The sustainability of the project's outcomes depends on political will, stakeholder ownership, and national integration. There is evidence of strong government and stakeholder commitment; however, political shifts and DaRT's voluntary nature pose challenges for long-term adoption. Strengthening adaptive mechanisms, developing tailored country models, providing incentives, and investing in capacity building is crucial to ensure sustainability. The continuation of initiatives under the Treaties II project has made progress in consolidating the tool's use, addressing behavioral and organizational change, and enhancing capacity building efforts.	ML	The rating is validated.	ML
2. Financial sustainability	The sustainability of the project outcomes relies on securing funding for its maintenance, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement. A significant portion of this funding has already been secured through the Treaties II project, marking substantial progress in addressing financial needs. While the project incorporated a comprehensive exit strategy during its design, the absence of a dedicated financial component could have limited its effectiveness in ensuring a smooth transition. However, financial sustainability has been strengthened by integrating the project's results into the Treaties II initiative.	ML	The rating is validated.	ML

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
3. Institutional sustainability	The sustainability of the project's outcomes depends on strong institutional support, with significant buy-in by biodiversity institutions but challenges in engaging other economic sectors, such as Ministries of Finance and Planning. Expanding institutional achievements at the national level is critical for long-term sustainability. The establishment of biodiversity committees can help maintain stakeholder engagement. Through capacity-building and UNEP's focus on international environmental law and MEAs, a robust mechanism for institutionalizing outcomes has been established,	ML	The rating is validated.	ML
Factors Affecting Performance		MS	The overall rating in the narrative section of Chapter V is Moderately Satisfactory MS (4). The rating of MS is validated.	MS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
1. Preparation and readiness	Although the lack of a more robust inception process limited the project's ability to fully seize opportunities and mitigate foreseeable risks from the outset, these weaknesses were addressed through initiatives such as the Project Deep Dive Review and the establishment of governance structures. Work plans, procurement plans, and stakeholder engagement strategies lacked sufficient detail, and the ProDoc's stakeholder analysis was superficial. Partnerships were not clearly defined. Governance arrangements were adequate but delays in starting activities for Output 4 and signing legal agreements posed challenges during implementation. Despite these issues, the project team effectively managed staffing mobilization and minimized disruptions.	MU	The rating is validated.	MU
2. Quality of project management and supervision		S	The rating is validated.	S

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
2.1 UNEP	Project management effectively guided the project, overcoming early challenges in planning, monitoring, and record organization. From 2019 onward, improved reporting, structured feedback, and adaptive management enhanced implementation. Good Steering Committee oversight and efficient team coordination minimized disruptions. Regular communication between UNEP and partners ensured alignment on objectives and activities, while resource reallocation and virtual strategies mitigated the impact of COVID-19. Stakeholders praised leadership and communication, but staff turnover within the partner team and occasional last-minute, centralized decision-making posed challenges. The project team remained resilient, meeting most deadlines and ensuring project success.	S	The rating is validated.	S
2.2 Partners	Project management and supervision were effective in achieving outcomes, fostering partnerships, and adapting to challenges. Strong team coordination ensured progress, though staff turnover at UNEP-WCMC delayed key activities, including DaRT-ORS interoperability. Regular communication and virtual adaptations minimized pandemic-related disruptions.	S	The rating is validated.	S

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
3. Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	While stakeholder participation improved during implementation, it was hindered by weak early engagement and limited consultation during project design. The Steering Committee facilitated coordination, primarily for information exchange, and communication was generally effective but inconsistent. Linkages to poverty alleviation, gender, and indigenous peoples were only moderately addressed, suggesting that stronger early participatory processes and deeper stakeholder integration would have enhanced collaboration and ownership.	U	The rating in the narrative section of Chapter V is Moderately Unsatisfactory MU (3), and in the ratings table 4 is Unsatisfactory (2). The rating validated at the level of MU.	MU
4. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	The project made progress in promoting gender equality, particularly through efforts in Lao PDR and Myanmar, and contributed to the gender guidance of the global biodiversity framework. However, it lacked a comprehensive approach to addressing the vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups, such as indigenous peoples, women, and children. Gender participation was prioritized, but human rights principles and indigenous knowledge were not fully integrated into the implementation. The project aspects consistently reflected a score of 2a.	S	The rating is adjusted to "Moderately Satisfactory (4)" as para 260 indicates that "The project demonstrated a mixed performance in addressing inequalities, vulnerabilities, and the role of disadvantaged groups in environmental management. While some efforts were made, significant gaps limited its overall impact".	MS
5. Environmental and social safeguards	The project adopted a moderate approach to risk management, particularly in environmental and social safeguards. The ProDoc's risk analysis focused primarily on political and organizational risks, as the project did not foresee significant environmental or social impacts (ESERN). Safeguarding considerations were consistently reviewed and monitored, leading to a moderate level of quality in addressing potential risks. Environmental and social impacts, particularly on vulnerable groups, were considered to a moderate extent.	MS	The rating is validated.	MS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
6. Country ownership and driven-ness	Outputs 4 and 5 empowered government ministries to lead advocacy, endorse results, and initiate complementary actions (Cameroon's DaRT strategy). Government representatives actively engaged in post-2020 GBF key discussions, the Bern Process, and the training activities for the DaRT tool. However, while some countries demonstrated leadership in driving change, endorsing project outcomes, initiating complementary activities, and providing in-kind or cash co-financing contributions, overall engagement was uneven. The absence of strategic involvement of key ministries outside the biodiversity sector, the lack of early government engagement through structured mechanisms (working group or technical committee), combined with gaps in monitoring the ownership by gender and marginalized groups, hindered the project's long-term national impact and sustainability.	MU	The rating is validated.	MU
7. Communication and public awareness	Communication efforts were moderately effective in driving change beyond outputs, with some key audiences having moderate awareness of the project's key messages. The project engaged in targeted, frequent communication activities that were occasionally interactive and partially monitored for impact. There was adequate sharing of experience between project partners and stakeholders, and a communication strategy, although limited, was developed and partially implemented. While the project was successful in raising awareness and driving change, particularly through Outputs 1 and 2, there was a need for improved stakeholder communication, particularly in implementing feedback.	MS	The rating is validated.	MS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating	Justification for any ratings' changes due to validation (to be completed by the UNEP Evaluation Office – EOU)	EOU Validated Rating
Overall Project Performance Rating		S	The overall project performance is validated at the 'Satisfactory' level.	S

C. Lessons learned

Lesson Learned #1:	Cooperation, collaboration, and alignment between MEA Secretariats are essential to advance global governance of biodiversity and chemicals, but the role of UNEP in facilitating cooperation remains limited to convening MEAs for dialogue and providing knowledge tools while respecting the independent mandates in the global environmental governance agenda.
Context/comment:	This lesson learned is related to Conclusion 1 and addresses the need for joint efforts in cooperation, collaboration, and alignment to achieve synergy. Synergy is not an action to be developed, but a result to be achieved. In this context, effective collaboration among MEA secretariats is essential to combine their efforts to surpass what they could achieve separately. Project evidence highlighted the organization of interactive events, with MEAs supporting the development and implementation of the KMGBF, such as the Bern Process, as a significant contribution to fostering synergies among MEAs. Key successes include increased awareness of synergies between conventions, and the joining of efforts between treaties and organizations on topics requiring collaboration such as strategic planning, knowledge management and reporting. The project also yielded important results, such as the incorporation of recommendations into intergovernmental decisions, recognition in UNEA resolutions, and the creation of collaborative networks among focal points. Five conventions (CITES, ITPGRFA, Ramsar, CMS, and WHC) took decisions based on the 2022 Bern II report, illustrating the willingness and mandate of treaty bodies to engage in collaborative actions. Project activities contributing to these results include six documented interactions on MEA synergies in the post-2020 GBF processes, two UNEP technical reports presented for review at CBD COP15, recognition of DaRT and the Bern Process at CBD and Ramsar COPs, and the availability of the Meltwater media monitoring tool at six international events (paras. 130, 131, 133, and 134). Despite the gradual progress in collaboration, challenges were identified in fully realizing this potential, mainly due to high expectations and the complexity of governance systems. While emphasizing synergies is important, there was often a lack of concrete follow-up, particularly in tracking the project's outcomes, raising concerns about practical implementation. Some MEA secretariat respondents indicated that the broad scope (beyond biodiversity) of the Bern Process may have affected its effectiveness⁸⁷. Additionally, different processes/focus (e.g., reports, mandates, and systems) between secretariats and eventual last-minute decisions hindered deeper collaboration (para. 135 and 136). Projects related to global governance of biodiversity and chemicals should prioritize resources and efforts to promote meaningful cooperation, collaboration, coordination and alignment between MEA Secretariats in order to achieve long lasting impact.

⁸⁷ Respondents referred to the Bern III conference (January 2024) after the Treaties I project ended. The scope expansion did not occur under Treaties I, which remained focused on biodiversity-related MEAs until its conclusion in June 2023. The recommendation to broaden the scope of UNEP's triple planetary agenda (climate, biodiversity, and pollution) emerged from the MTR. As this is being implemented under Treaties II, concerns about reduced effectiveness due to expansion should be linked to Treaties II activities.

Lesson Learned #2:	Overemphasis on process-focused indicators at the expense of impact-focused indicators undermines the project's ability to monitor the achievement of its broader objectives.
Context/comment:	Although the project promoted cooperation among MEAs, translating this cooperation into measurable and sustainable effects posed challenges. There was a need to create more effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to measure results and identify opportunities for improvement. While indicators were refined throughout the project, measuring their outcomes and short-term impacts remains difficult, as some of the strategic output-related indicators adopted lacked effectiveness (para. 163 and 164). Furthermore, even the outcome-related indicators considered to reflect the project's impact could have been reassessed and improved to better align with the project's objectives (paras. 162, 195 and 196). Although the indicators adopted are of good quality, clarity, and specificity, they have limitations in assessing their specific impact, particularly given the long-term nature of the project and the difficulty of measuring tangible outcomes, such as improvements in integrating synergistic approaches in participating countries (para. 203 and 204). The project promoted progress in collaboration and data sharing (e.g., increased decisions on cooperation and reporting within each MEA, enhanced quality of reporting by synergy knowledge, integration of MEA commitments into NBSAPs, and the development of tools such as DaRT and Compendia). As evidence of this progress, one interviewee highlighted that the project played a key role in improving data sharing, strengthening capacity-building efforts, and providing policy guidance. These efforts have contributed to progressively resolving discrepancies in national data submissions from different MEA focal points within the interviewee's country. However, the lack of appropriate indicators continues to hinder the ability to measure impact, particularly in terms of coordination between national focal points, more efficient use of data for reporting and planning, and tracking concrete changes. The project's impact at the national level remains uncertain. Measuring the exact impact of similar projects might remain a challenge if the proper indicators are not adopted. This highlights the need for robust indicators and continuous monitoring, reporting and evaluation. Incorporating a Theory of Change from the design phase can enhance strategic alignment and provide a clearer framework for defining objectives, outputs, outcomes, and impacts, with their related indicators, ultimately strengthening monitoring and evaluation efforts. This lesson is related to Conclusion 3.

Lesson Learned #3:	Digital knowledge management tools can enhance access and collaboration, but their widespread use and long-term sustainability depend on key factors such as their efficiency in processing and organizing new data, continued collaboration with other UNEP tools (in particular, InforMEA), and external partners, and rapid adaptability to new emerging IT technology.
Context/comment:	Digital knowledge management tools, such as DaRT, are highly valued for their ability to improve accessibility, facilitate information sharing, and streamline collaboration. However, their long-term usability and sustainability depend on their efficiency in processing and organizing new data, as well as their capacity to integrate with other platforms and systems. Avoiding the duplication of effort and ensuring a seamless flow of information are also critical factors for maximizing their effectiveness. In June 2023, the project had created 104 national workspaces in six languages on the DaRT platform, allowing countries to use the tool independently. Recognized in the COP15 decisions of the CBD, DaRT played an active role in the GEF Early Action Support Programme, collaborating with the CHM and with other organizations and MEAs. Moreover, DaRT facilitated the cross-analysis of biodiversity strategies and the identification of gaps in NBSAPs. The platform incorporated the KM-GBF Monitoring Framework, aligning the Aichi Targets, the SDGs, and the GBF Targets, thus contributing to the harmonization of NBSAPs with the KM-GBF (para. 143). Despite these achievements, there is a clear need for more efficient tools to support the implementation of the NBSAPs. Countries acknowledge that DaRT can centralize data and simplify reporting, reduce redundant efforts and promote greater integration among conventions (para. 144 and 146). However, challenges were identified with DaRT's interoperability with systems such as ORS, although integration with platforms such as InforMEA and the CBD's CHM has progressed (para. 145 and 148), as well as the issue of time-consuming manual data entry (para. 153). DaRT was originally designed to support national reporting for biodiversity conventions but has proven to be more useful as a comprehensive knowledge management tool for cooperation between MEAs. This in itself is of significant value. However, technical improvements that better meet user needs are essential for the successful and sustainable adoption of this tool. This includes integrating existing systems and streamlining processes to reduce the tool complexity and user workload, avoid redundant efforts, and increasing operational efficiency. The number of MEA reporting applications used by stakeholders in general should be streamlined, with a focus on enhancing interoperability with existing systems to minimize duplication of effort. MEA secretariats provide online reporting tools (e.g., ORT and ORS), while other platforms, such as the UNDP Target Similarity Assessment Tool and the UNEP-WCMC Target Tracker, offer similar data support, leading to duplication. From the outset, it would have been beneficial to integrate the system development with existing systems through discussions with stakeholders to identify a structure and functionalities better suited to the countries' needs, ensuring greater acceptance and avoiding redundant efforts. Although the MEA secretariats' reporting tools cannot be influenced, redundancies in other platforms could be addressed (para. 148 and 154). This lesson is related to Conclusions 2, 3, and 4.

Lesson Learned #4:	Some developing countries might need structured and continuous technical and institutional support to implement collaborative initiatives to effectively achieve synergies among MEAs.
Context/comment:	The project had an impact on the national implementation of the biodiversity conventions, particularly in training focal points and promoting DaRT. However, progress in applying and consolidating the tools and initiatives was limited due to the lack of structured technical and institutional support needed to effectively foster synergies at the national level. The project exceeded its training goals by introducing the DaRT tool to 30 new countries through workshops in Nairobi and Istanbul. Regional workshops, including those in Latin America and Africa further promoted the roll-out of DaRT. A total of 120 government representatives were trained, and five countries established national coordination entities. Cameroon implemented DaRT, while Rwanda developed a UNEP-supported system to strengthen MEA's effectiveness. The project also organized various outreach activities, including webinars and meetings, expanding its reach and fostering intersectoral collaboration (paras. 152 and 158). Despite these positive results, the lack of a structured national awareness approach has limited the adoption of the DaRT. The integration of DaRT into national monitoring mechanisms is promising but will require continuous technical support due to the initial complexity of using DaRT. The general perception among NFPs suggests that webinars and workshops have been effective in building technical capacity and improving data sharing. However, there were concerns about the DaRT training, with stakeholders requesting more tailored and frequent sessions. Issues such as accessibility, system maintenance, and lack of support for resource-limited countries hindered the uptake of the tool. Additionally, challenges in coordination between conventions and national entities emphasized the need for a more structured approach to synergies. Focusing on fewer countries with deeper engagement and selecting them based on surveys or assessments could optimize project impact. Strengthening collaboration with UNEP's regional offices would also enhance visibility and provide additional support, improving the project's overall outcomes. Encouraging the creation of national and regional DaRT committees could be an action to support this process and promote collaboration (paras. 153 and 154). To address these challenges, similar projects should therefore focus on providing more in-depth, context-specific training tailored to user needs, ensuring that both technical and political stakeholders are engaged. Training should focus not only on the adoption of tools but also on improving inter-institutional and intersectoral coordination. Additionally, engagement strategies should ensure that governments and institutions understand the benefits of these digital tools. This lesson is related to Conclusions 2, 3, and 4.

Lesson Learned #5:	Integrated strategic planning, early stakeholder engagement, and a stronger focus on national and regional implementation are essential to maximize the effectiveness, coordination, and impact of projects and initiatives to foster synergies in implementing MEAs at the national level.
Context/comment:	The project's findings highlight that effective strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and a stronger focus on national and regional project implementation are key to enhancing the effectiveness, coordination, and impact of initiatives that promote synergies in the implementation of MEAs at the national level. The findings highlighted that: • The Bern process showed the effectiveness of interactive meetings for alignment, collaboration and cooperation among MEAs (para. 133). • Lack of strategic planning and stakeholder engagement impacted the efficiency of project implementation and consolidation of results (paras. 155, 243). • A Theory of Change from the start of the design phase could have better aligned outputs with outcomes/impacts and improved management, monitoring, and sustainability (paras. 109 and 254). • Better planning and anticipation would have reduced last-minute decisions, improved process flow, and aligned activities with countries' capacities (paras. 250 and 251). • Greater involvement of MEA secretariats and the steering committee could have enhanced coordination, leveraged opportunities, and promoted effective collaboration (paras. 107, 115, 139, 192 and 254). • Early and structured engagement of national governments would have facilitated tool adaptation, increased ownership, and improved adoption (paras. 240 and 273). • Although global discussions and MEA tools were prioritized, a stronger focus on national and regional implementation would have expanded the practical impact (para. 128 and 155). • Lack of coordination among national focal points hindered synergy implementation. Structured institutional mechanisms for inter-ministry collaboration could have reduced obstacles (para. 164). Similar projects tend to face similar challenges and therefore should focus on strategic planning, addressing the issues mentioned above, and developing strategies to engage stakeholders from the outset, particularly those at the national level. This lesson is related to Conclusions 1 and 2.

Lesson Learned #6:	Similar projects must prioritize the diversification of funding sources and the integration of project activities into national institutional landscapes to ensure the long-term sustainability of outcomes.
Context/comment:	Project findings indicate that: • The sustainability of results, particularly Outputs 4 and 5, depends on continued funding for tools such as DaRT and continued stakeholder engagement. While the transition to an independent initiative demonstrated commitment from participating countries, long-term financial sustainability remains uncertain, with resources tied to the new project phase (paras. 223 and 224). • The heavy reliance on a major donor, despite the presence of other funding sources such as the EU, GEF, SIDA, Finland, and China, as well as independent projects such as the EU GPGC, ACP MEAs, and InforMEA, limits financial flexibility and restricts the capacity to adapt to new demands and opportunities (para. 72). A resource mobilization strategy that promotes the diversification of funding sources makes the project less vulnerable to budgetary uncertainties. On the other hand, fragmented funding impacts implementation efficiency, increasing administrative challenges and reducing agility in carrying out activities (para. 223 and 224). • To ensure the sustainability of the results achieved, future phases of the project must prioritize the diversification of funding sources, exploring strategic partnerships with donors, multilateral organizations, and private sector actors. Furthermore, the inclusion of national budget allocations to sustain initiatives like DaRT is essential for institutionalization and long-term continuity. Mobilizing internal resources within UNEP and collaborating with different divisions and agencies could have expanded the project's impact and strengthened its sustainability. Adopting synergies between projects to avoid duplication of efforts, putting in place cost-reduction approaches such as remote work and creating pooled funds to gather resources from different donors are strategies that could increase the volume of funds for the implementation of the project (paras. 225 and 226). To ensure a lasting impact, similar projects should more robust financial planning. This includes developing sustainable fundraising strategies to reduce dependence on a single donor, exploring strategic partnerships with donors, multilateral organizations, and private sector actors, and integrating co-financing mechanisms. Additionally, ensuring long-term continuity through national budget allocations and resource mobilization within UNEP and other divisions is crucial. By diversifying funding sources, creating pooled funds, and adopting cost-reduction strategies, projects can enhance financial sustainability, reduce vulnerabilities, and increase their resilience and impact over time. This lesson is related to Conclusions 1 and 4.

Lesson Learned #7:	Incorporating specific guidelines and establishing monitoring mechanisms for gender and social inclusion will increase the impact and effectiveness of projects dealing with biodiversity MEAs, while at the same time aligning with gender policy work under the MEAs.
Context/comment:	The integration of specific guidelines and monitoring mechanisms for gender equity and social inclusion can amplify the positive impacts of a project that focuses on the conservation, protection and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems, such as the one reviewed here. The project demonstrated progress in promoting gender equity, including the capacity building and development of gender-responsive tools. Initiatives such as the creation of the Gender Route in Laos and the establishment of specific indicators in Myanmar were highlights. Additionally, contributions to CBD strategic documents reinforced the importance of integrating gender in global biodiversity policies (para. 260). The project exceeded gender representation targets in several activities, but broader engagement of vulnerable groups remained limited. While human rights principles were mentioned, they were not implemented through a structured approach. Indigenous peoples were recognized as beneficiaries but were not directly involved in the design or execution of the project. The project could have benefited from the recognition and integration of indigenous traditional knowledge (para. 261). The gender rating assigned at the planning phase was partially justified, as there were no mechanisms to monitor actual impacts or to ensure an equitable and inclusive approach. While efforts were made to incorporate principles of equity and human rights, a more systematic, comprehensive approach could have further enhanced the impact of these initiatives. Future initiatives should adopt a more structured approach, including specific tools, to integrate cross-cutting issues such as gender, indigenous people and marginalized communities. Strengthening monitoring and ensuring the direct participation of vulnerable groups is essential to ensure broader and sustainable impacts (para. 264). This lesson is related to Conclusion 4.

Lesson Learned #8:	Balancing digital participation with in-person interactions is essential to enhancing the effectiveness of UNEP's global / multi-country project's implementation in the post-COVID era.
Context/comment:	To maximize the effectiveness of UNEP's global multi-country projects in the post-COVID era, it is crucial to find a balance between digital participation and in-person interactions. While digital tools enhance accessibility, streamline communication, facilitate data sharing across countries, and reduce carbon emissions, they cannot fully replace the value of direct engagement. In-person interactions remain vital for building trust, fostering collaboration, and ensuring deeper stakeholder engagement, particularly in regions with limited digital infrastructure. A hybrid approach that strategically combines virtual and physical engagement can improve project implementation, enhance knowledge sharing and exchange, and strengthen long-term impact. The transition to digital environments was a necessary and effective response to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project demonstrated resilience by adopting virtual meetings and workshops, to ensure continuity and expand participation from diverse stakeholders. The digital adaptation enabled remote engagement of actors who might not have been able to attend in-person events. Additionally, this shift aligned with UNEP's sustainability goals by reducing the carbon footprint associated with international travel (paras. 119, 124, 133, 186, 191, 192, 248, 250, 256, 269). However, replacing in-person interactions with virtual meetings posed challenges, particularly in processes that rely on negotiations, hands-on learning, and relationship-building to foster cooperation, collaboration, and alignment. The lack of informal, face-to-face discussions hindered the uptake and ownership of tools such as DaRT at the national level, affecting their implementation. Additionally, delays in global conferences and negotiations of the post-2020 framework reduced opportunities for engagement, undermining the project's effectiveness at the national level (paras. 120, 121, and 123). Thus, while digitalization enabled progress and resource optimization, in-person activities remain essential for productive interactions and effective adoption of processes and tools. Future projects could benefit from balancing digital and in-person approaches, acknowledging the limits of virtualization and integrating hybrid solutions for stakeholder engagement to maximize impact and inclusion. This lesson is related to Conclusion 5.

D. Recommendations

Recommendation #1:	Mobilizing funding to sustain the success of the Bern Process, implement its outcomes, strengthen global cooperation, and support national-level implementation
Challenge / problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The Bern Process has emerged as one of the most significant successes of the project, widely recognized by stakeholders for fostering collaboration among biodiversity-related conventions, treaty bodies, and governing bodies. Stakeholders acknowledged the Bern Process's role in shaping the GBF discussions, fostering collaboration among biodiversity conventions, and driving the emergence of Bern III as a key development beyond the project's initial scope. The Bern Process has contributed to stronger synergies between MEAs, enhanced national-level engagement, and informed key intergovernmental processes. Given its proven impact, it is critical to ensure the continuation and effective implementation of its outcomes (cross-mapping strategies, frameworks, documents, and tools) at both global and national levels. To sustain this momentum, this MLTR recommends UNEP to mobilize financial and technical resources to support the national implementation of the Bern Process through practical and targeted actions, including: • Strengthening national implementation: Focus on a smaller number of countries for deeper engagement, prioritizing those with the highest potential for replication and impact to ensure concrete progress. • Capacity building and knowledge sharing: Organize Party-led thematic webinars and training events to disseminate the outcomes of the Bern Process and support countries in adapting and implementing its recommendations. • Supporting country-led initiatives: Encourage and fund national activities such as workshops, meetings among MEA focal points, and the development and execution of specific implementation plans. • Integration into national policies: Develop practical guidelines to assist governments in incorporating the Bern Process recommendations into their biodiversity strategies and national action plans. • Promoting national leadership: Establish mechanisms to enable countries to take an active role in advancing the Bern Process, strengthening collaboration networks, and fostering long-term commitments. UNEP should act as a facilitator, promoting that the outcomes of the Bern Process are translated into concrete national-level actions.
Priority Level:	Critical Recommendation
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	Project Manager responsible for Treaties II project
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Up to one year after the publication of the Terminal Review.

1. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:
 - Section A. Strategic Relevance (para. 94 and 95)
 - Section D Effectiveness (para. 128, 134, and 170)
 - Section I. Factors Affecting Performance (para. 274 and 279)
 - Conclusion #5 (para. 288 and 289)
 - C Lessons learned #1

Recommendation #2:	Reinstate and institutionalize Quarterly Deep Dive reviews for enhanced financial oversight and strategic alignment
Challenge / problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project's financial management success was supported by structured risk monitoring, effective communication, and high-quality project oversight. The project's combination of bi-weekly financial meetings and quarterly deep dive reviews played a crucial role in maintaining financial transparency, proactively addressing risks, and ensuring strategic alignment. However, the Deep Dive sessions were discontinued, despite the recognition of their value. To strengthen financial oversight and project governance, it is recommended that quarterly deep dive reviews of the project be reinstated and institutionalized as a formalized mechanism for financial and risk management. These sessions should: - Conduct comprehensive reviews of financial data, including budget performance, expenditure trends, and risk assessments, to ensure alignment with financial and programmatic targets and enhance financial transparency - Analyze potential financial risks, delays, or inefficiencies and develop mitigation strategies in collaboration with key stakeholders. - Align financial management with project goals by integrating these deep dives into broader decision-making processes, ensuring that financial planning supports programmatic outcomes. - Involve representatives from finance, project management, and the UNEP Law Division Programme Delivery and Management Unit to ensure a multi-perspective approach to financial oversight. - Support standardized reporting and follow-up, establishing clear documentation procedures and follow-up mechanisms to track progress on identified actions and ensure accountability and continuous improvement.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for Improvement
Type of Recommendation	Agency
Responsibility:	Project Managers, Head of Unit and Head of the Programme Delivery and Support Unit (PDSU).
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Up to 3 months after the start of future projects following the publication of the Terminal Review.

2. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:
 - Section E. Financial Management (paras. 183)
 - Section I. Factors Affecting Performance (paras. 237 and 243)
 - Conclusion #2 (paras. 290 and 291)
 - C Lessons learned #5

Recommendation #3:	Strengthen existing monitoring mechanisms in follow-up projects (i.e., Treaties II) by establishing an impact-focused monitoring and evaluation system at project level to measure long-term results and enhance sustainability
Challenge / problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project faced difficulties in measuring long-term impacts and gaining clarity on the effectiveness of its activities, particularly at national and regional levels. While process indicators—such as participation in training sessions and workshops—provided insights into the efficiency of project implementation, they did not allow for a comprehensive assessment of tangible outcomes. This limitation reduced the ability to evaluate the project's outcome and impact on biodiversity governance and MEA cooperation. The lack of robust, impact-focused indicators at the outcome level and outcome-focused indicators at output level made it challenging to measure the effectiveness and sustainability of initiatives, to identify gaps or areas for improvement during implementation, and to capture the broader, long-term changes that the project aimed to achieve. This MLTR recommends that the Treaties II project establishes and maintains an impact-focused Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system to track the achievement of outcomes at the national level and within MEA Secretariats. A key component of this approach is the use of specific indicators that include both quantitative and qualitative analysis, allowing for the measurement of the use and uptake of the products and services provided by the project while also capturing changes related to the expected outcome or the expected impact. To ensure continuous assessment and adaptation: (1) Clear processes should be established for evaluating indicators during internal meetings and Steering Committee sessions; (2) Defined responsibilities and timelines should be established to ensure regular assessments; (3) Periodic evaluations should be conducted to monitor the implementation of recommendations and refine strategies as needed.
Priority Level:	Important Recommendation
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	Project Manager responsible for Treaties II project
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Up to one year after the publication of the Terminal Review.

3. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section D Effectiveness (para. 129, 135, and 171)
- Section G. Monitoring and Reporting (para. 195, 196, 203, 204, and 208)
- Conclusion #3 (para. 292 and 293)
- C Lessons learned #2

Recommendation #4:	Repositioning the DaRT Platform as an integrated platform for data sharing and collaboration on MEAs
Challenge / problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project faced challenges with the interoperability of the DaRT platform with existing biodiversity MEA reporting systems such as ORS and CBD ORT. Despite being recognized as a valuable tool, DaRT did not reduce duplication or improve reporting efficiency by the project's conclusion. This was due to technical limitations, including inadequate integration with other platforms and its complexity of use. These issues have hindered its adoption and negatively impacted its long-term sustainability. Additionally, the communication around DaRT did not clearly reflect its evolving knowledge management function, leading to misaligned user expectations. Some users anticipated that the platform would address challenges beyond its scope (e.g., preparing and submitting a report to all MEA Secretariats), which could lead to dissatisfaction (among users and MEA Secretariats) and underutilization. While DaRT offers functionalities that show potential for synergies and effectively support cooperation among national users in planning and knowledge management, it has not proven useful for its original purpose—reporting—during training sessions. It needs to be refocused on synergies and enhanced with AI tools (Recommendation #5) to better align with emerging technological advancements and stakeholder needs. DaRT is a secure, private platform designed to facilitate cooperation among country MEA NFP experts and knowledge manage, focusing primarily on policy-related information for the implementation of NBSAPs. It allows user countries to control access to their workspaces (private country dashboard), ensuring that information is not shared with external entities and remains confidential. DaRT supports the management of national strategies, policies, legal frameworks, targets, indicators, success stories, and relevant documents, while also providing links to global strategies, goals and targets of MEAs and SDGs, online databases and multimedia resources. It helps build institutional knowledge for reporting on MEAs, promotes communication and collaboration across various sectors, retains knowledge within institutions even when key personnel change, supports transitions between strategic plans, and assists in the onboarding and training of new staff. Repositioning DaRT as an integrated platform for data sharing and collaboration on MEAs—potentially under a new name (e.g., DaRT – Data and Resource-sharing Tool for synergies)— will reinforce its evolving purpose of harmonizing and facilitating data exchange to support synergies in reporting processes. This strategic repositioning will help align user expectations, emphasizing that DaRT complements rather than replaces other existing tools. To ensure effective repositioning, the projects related to DaRT should: (1) Revise DaRT branding, key messages and official communication to emphasize DaRT's role as a synergy facilitator for data and resource-sharing, avoiding perceptions of it as a standalone reporting solution; (2) Develop clear revised sustainability strategy and user guidelines explaining how to efficiently integrate DaRT into existing workflows.
Priority Level:	Critical Recommendation
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	Project Manager responsible for DaRT platform
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Up to one year after the publication of the Terminal Review.

4. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:
- Section D Effectiveness 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, and 154)
 - Section H. Sustainability (para. 218)
 - Conclusions #3 e #4 (para. 292, 293, 294 and 295)

- C Lessons Learned #3

Recommendation #5:	Mobilize and pool resources to enhance the interoperability and usability of the DaRT tool to maximize its effectiveness, utilizing Artificial Intelligence when possible
Challenge / problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project faced significant challenges regarding the interoperability of the DaRT platform with existing systems and tools, such as the Online Reporting System (ORS) and the CBD Online Reporting Tool (ORT). While DaRT has been recognized as a valuable tool for knowledge management, it has yet to improve efficiency due to technical limitations, including poor integration with other platforms and complexity of use. These challenges have hindered full adoption and negatively impacted the long-term sustainability of the tool. Although DaRT has features that foster synergies and support collaboration among national users for planning and knowledge management, it has not effectively served its original purpose—reporting—during training sessions. To maximize its value, it should be reoriented toward enhancing synergies (Recommendation #4) and integrated with Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to better align with technological advancements and the evolving needs of stakeholders. Ensuring DaRT’s seamless integration with existing systems is crucial to reducing redundancy and improving the overall efficiency of the reporting process. Stakeholders should not have to use multiple applications to perform similar tasks. To facilitate wider adoption and effective use by countries, it is essential to: (1) Improve interoperability by enhancing technical integration with existing systems, allowing automatic information exchange and eliminating redundant reporting processes; (2) Enhance usability by improving the user interface, making the tool more intuitive and accessible for different user profiles. DaRT can benefit significantly from AI integration, particularly given its Drupal-based backend technology. AI-driven enhancements could include: (1) Smart APIs to enable automatic data synchronization with other systems, reducing redundancies; (2) Chatbots with Natural Language Processing (NLP) (e.g., Rasa or Dialogflow) to help users in navigating the tool; (3) Machine learning models to personalize the user interface and optimize the user experience; (4) AI-driven automation for report generation and data validation, ensuring accuracy and reliability. These AI solutions, implemented as custom Drupal modules, would substantially improve the interoperability and usability of the platform. Resources should be sought to complement or adjust existing funds to align with the proposed activities. This may involve exploring alternative funding sources, establishing strategic partnerships, or reallocating budgets to ensure that financial constraints do not hinder implementation.
Priority Level:	Important Recommendation
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	Project Manager responsible for DaRT platform
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Up to 2 years after the publication of the Terminal Review.

5. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:
 - Section D Effectiveness (para. 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, and 154)
 - Section H. Sustainability (para. 219)
 - Conclusions #2, #3 and #4 (para. 290, 291, 292, 293, 294 and 295)
 - C Lessons learned #3

Recommendation #6:	Develop and implement a structured capacity building program based on active learning with continuous technical support to ensure effective adoption of the tools promoted by the project, particularly DaRT
Challenge / problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Despite capacity building efforts, the adoption of DaRT remained limited due to its complexity, resource constraints, and staff turnover. Strengthening continued technical support, institutional engagement, and ongoing training – particularly for NFPs and those involved in NBSAP implementation – is essential. Training should focus on simplifying processes and providing hands-on demonstrations to enhance usability. A structured capacity-building program should integrate continuous mentoring and a "learning by doing" approach, allowing for real-time application and feedback. Training must be tailored to country-specific needs and supported by ongoing technical assistance to ensure DaRT's adoption. Prioritizing fewer countries with deeper engagement, selected through assessments, can enhance impact and replicability. This capacity-building program should follow a Project-Based Learning (PBL) methodology⁸⁸, incorporating both synchronous and asynchronous components. Participants should work on real-world challenges, applying their knowledge directly to their national contexts. The program should be supported by a responsive technical support system that provides ongoing assistance to users and collects feedback for continuous improvements. The implementation of the program could include the following actions: (1) Needs Assessment and Country Selection – Conduct a readiness assessment to identify countries with the strongest commitment, existing infrastructure, and capacity gaps. Prioritize a manageable number of countries to ensure deeper engagement and maximize impact and scalability. (2) Training Curriculum Development – Structure the training into concise, targeted modules covering key aspects of DaRT use, such as data entry, storage, and use protocols, as well as integration with NBSAP processes. The curriculum should be tailored to meet the specific needs of each country. (3) Training Implementation – This phase should include: live demonstrations and interactive training, featuring virtual workshops with hands-on demonstrations by technical experts; self-paced learning, providing online tutorials, videos, and written manuals accessible via a learning platform, with materials available for on-demand consultation; regional or national discussion groups to facilitate experience sharing; practical application in national projects, where participants apply DaRT to develop a national report through a "learning by doing" approach; and ongoing technical support and feedback mechanisms, including a helpdesk for immediate assistance, regular follow-up sessions to ensure engagement and problem solving, and continuous collection of feedback to refine training and improve DaRT's usability. Furthermore, the training should include: (1) Clear guidelines for the use of digital tools, that ensure standardization and alignment with national needs, including well-defined protocols for data entry, storage, and usage; (2) Adaptable guidelines for broader contexts, which can be shared with individuals beyond the primary training group. The entire training can be delivered online, with the goal of adopting a cost-effective approach. If needed, additional resources should be sought to supplement or adjust existing funding to align with the proposed activities, ensuring a continuous flow of funds throughout DaRT's lifetime. This may involve exploring alternative funding sources, establishing strategic partnerships, or reallocating budgets to prevent financial constraints from hindering implementation.

⁸⁸ Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a capacity building methodology that emphasizes learning through active engagement in real-world, complex projects. Rather than relying on passive knowledge transfer, PBL focuses on hands-on, inquiry-driven experiences where participants explore challenges, develop solutions, and apply knowledge in practical contexts.

	The project manager can explore the possibility of linking the DaRT capacity-building program to global initiatives such as the Paris Committee on Capacity-building (PCCB) Hub under the UNFCCC, leveraging existing networks, resources, and best practices. The PCCB's approach to peer-to-peer learning, institutional embedding, and continuous technical support aligns with DaRT's structured training model. Integrating DaRT into the Capacity Building Hub could enhance visibility, facilitate cross-sectoral synergies between biodiversity and climate reporting, and provide access to funding opportunities. This collaboration could strengthen countries' capacity to integrate biodiversity data into national planning while ensuring long-term sustainability through established global frameworks.
Priority Level:	Critical Recommendation
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	Project Manager responsible for Treaties II project
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Up to 1 year after the publication of the Terminal Review.

6. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:
- Section D Effectiveness (paras. 152, 153, 154, and 158)
 - Conclusions #2, #3 and #4 (paras. 290, 291, 292, 293, 294 and 295)
 - C Lessons learned #3

Recommendation #7:	Support / motivate the creation of National MEA working groups as a pathway to institutionalized committees to enhance national engagement and strengthen support, cooperation, collaboration, and alignment
Challenge / problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Although the project implemented capacity-building initiatives such as workshops and training sessions, the practical application of its results remained limited. Despite fostering global discussions and tools, the project's impact was by a lack of focus on national and regional implementation, resulting in missed opportunities for broader engagement and adoption. The sustainability of project outcomes relies on strong political will and stakeholder ownership, as government commitment is crucial for embedding tools such as DaRT into national systems. These tools must clearly demonstrate their value in reducing reporting burdens and fostering collaboration. Political shifts and changing government priorities can disrupt progress, underscoring the need for institutional integration and sustained support to ensure long-term impact. A more structured approach to stakeholder involvement is essential to increase the uptake of the tools developed by the project. The project's success depends on collaboration among stakeholders. To address this issue, it is recommended to strengthen stakeholder engagement by supporting / motivating the creation of national and regional MEA working groups as a first step. Supporting these informal but structured spaces for regular interaction and collaboration would promote a more integrated approach, and enable efficient information sharing, decision-making, and joint actions. These working groups could serve as platforms for discussion, experience sharing, and co-development of strategies for the adoption of tools such as DaRT, thus fostering greater inter-institutional and cross-sectoral collaboration. By integrating key stakeholders, such as representatives from ministries and conventions, these groups would help build stronger national commitments to use the project's tools like DaRT. Through these groups, it would be possible to: (1) Quickly identify challenges and propose collaborative solutions; (2) Ensure that local needs are addressed; (3) Facilitate the implementation of more effective policies and strategies. The groups would also act as support mechanisms for NFPs, helping them to integrate DaRT into existing national systems. The discussion groups established through the capacity-building program (Recommendation #6) can act as drivers for the formation of the MEA working groups, ensuring that the knowledge-sharing and collaboration initiated during the training translate into long-term institutional engagement. These groups will provide a space for stakeholders to identify challenges, discuss solutions, and establish working relationships that can evolve into structured national committees. This integration would make the tools more accessible and relevant, facilitating adoption and data sharing, while ensuring that stakeholders understand the value of DaRT and other tools and feel empowered to use it within their national contexts. To ensure the long-term sustainability of these structures beyond the capacity building program's lifespan, a phased exit strategy is proposed. Governments should be encouraged to formally recognize MEA Committees within national biodiversity governance frameworks, embedding them into existing environmental and data management structures. Capacity building efforts will equip members with governance, resource mobilization, and strategic planning skills to operate independently, supported by clear guidelines for sustainability and knowledge transfer. The project will support the working groups in developing clear guidelines and terms of reference (ToR) to define roles, responsibilities, and reporting mechanisms, ensuring alignment with national and international frameworks. UNEP regional offices, UN Country Teams and UN Resident Coordinators can also play a pivotal role in

	fostering multi-stakeholder engagement by promoting collaboration with regional organizations, NGOs, academia, and the private sector. This would help strengthen working groups and support their transition into formal committees. To enhance financial sustainability, future projects can explore opportunities to integrate MEA governance structures into donor-funded programs and assist in establishing funding partnerships with international organizations such as GEF and bilateral donors.
Priority Level:	Important Recommendation
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	Project Manager responsible for Treaties II project
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Up to 1 year after the publication of the Terminal Review.

7. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section D Effectiveness (para. 152, 153, 154, 155, 158, and 170)
- Section H. Sustainability (para. 216, 217, and 218)
- Section I. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues (para. 240, 243, 250, and 273)
- Conclusions #2, #3 and #4 (para. 290, 291, 292, 293, 294 and 295)
- C Lessons learned #4, #5, and #7

Recommendation #8:	Enhancing collaboration, strategic focus, alignment, and phased implementation between InforMEA and DaRT for greater MEA mainstreaming and implementation support and efficiency in environmental governance
Challenge / problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	InforMEA and DaRT both play crucial roles in supporting countries with knowledge management and reporting under MEAs. As both digital solutions offer similar resources and functionality but different target audiences, there is an opportunity to strengthen their collaboration to further streamline processes, improve access to information, and reduce the administrative burden of national reporting. Moving forward on multiple fronts without a clear prioritization strategy created challenges in aligning efforts with country needs and capacities. A more structured approach to collaboration would ensure that both platforms complement rather than overlap, ultimately improving their impact and user-friendliness. They would benefit from stronger coordination to increase efficiency, streamline processes, and reduce the administrative burden of national reporting. To improve the effectiveness of InforMEA and DaRT, future projects for MEA synergies should implement a strategic and coordinated approach that enhances collaboration and prioritizes key activities. This includes: - Establishing a coordination framework: Set up a structured mechanism for regular collaboration between InforMEA and DaRT teams, to ensure better alignment of priorities, work plans, and technical developments. - Enhancing prioritization and planning: Develop a detailed work plan that clearly defines timelines and strategic priorities for both platforms, mapping regional and national needs to ensure a more focused and phased approach to implementation. - Interoperability and data sharing: Explore technical solutions to facilitate data exchange between InforMEA and DaRT, ensuring seamless access to relevant MEA information while maintaining clear distinctions in their respective functions. - Aligning support with national needs: Conduct regular stakeholder engagement to better understand reporting challenges and ensure that both platforms provide targeted, complementary support that is aligned with country capacities and priorities. - Joint capacity building and outreach: Develop training programs to help national stakeholders effectively use both platforms, reinforcing their role in enhancing environmental governance. - Developing a long-term collaboration strategy: Establish a joint roadmap outlining clear milestones, roles, and responsibilities, to ensure that the collaboration between InforMEA and DaRT remains effective, well-prioritized, and sustainable over time. One potential enhancement is integrating DaRT into InforMEA. While this may require significant investment—since DaRT was developed as a separate platform using InforMEA’s servers/URL—such integration could streamline operations and improve overall functionality. This would create a more cohesive platform for data sharing, collaboration, and reporting.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for Improvement
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	Project Managers responsible for DaRT and InforMEA platform
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Up to one year after the publication of the Terminal Review.

8. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:
- Section D Effectiveness (para. 251)
 - Conclusions #2 (para. 290 and 291)

- C Lessons learned #5

Recommendation #9:	Enhance early, comprehensive and inclusive stakeholder engagement to strengthen project implementation, proactive collaboration with MEA Secretariats, and sustainability in future projects
Challenge / problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The project faced challenges related to stakeholder engagement and the integration of tools such as DaRT into national systems. While the project succeeded in building capacity and promoting gender-sensitive guidelines, the lack of awareness among national stakeholders and technical limitations hindered broader adoption. Additionally, evidence indicated that engagement with MEA Secretariats was often reactive rather than proactive, with UNEP primarily receiving information for dissemination rather than actively shaping communication strategies and fostering collaborative dialogue. This recommendation aims to address the lack of early stakeholder engagement and ensure that national and regional implementation is prioritized from the outset. A more structured approach to stakeholder engagement, including national governments, MEA secretariats, and other relevant institutions, would have promoted greater ownership of the present project and ensured that tools and solutions were better adapted to local contexts. For future projects of the UNEP Law Division, it is essential to develop a comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy from the outset. A well-structured engagement plan will ensure that key national stakeholders are not only informed about the tools and initiatives but also actively involved in their design and implementation. The early establishment of technical working groups or similar structures can be an effective strategy to promote the adoption and use of proposed initiatives. To specifically strengthen collaboration with MEA Secretariats future projects could establish proactive communication channels that go beyond information dissemination. The development of joint workstreams, regular coordination meetings, and shared strategic planning efforts would help ensure that UNEP and MEA Secretariats effectively co-create and align initiatives. Encouraging MEA Secretariats to actively participate in the design of communication and capacity-building activities can further enhance the adoption of tools such as DaRT and support long-term sustainability. Engaging all relevant stakeholders from the beginning, combined with a clear strategic plan, would help minimize implementation challenges and create the conditions for more effective collaboration.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for Improvement
Type of Recommendation	Agency
Responsibility:	Project Managers and Head of Unit
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Up to 3 months after the start of future projects following the publication of the Terminal Review.

9. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section D Effectiveness (para. 139, 152, 153, 154, 155, 158, and 170)
- Section I. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues (para. 240, 243, 250, and 273)
- Conclusions #2, #3 and #4 (para. 290, 291, 292, 293, 294 and 295)
- C Lessons learned #4 and #5

Recommendation #10:	Enhance engagement of vulnerable groups and strengthen social inclusion monitoring for greater equity and impact in global synergies-focused projects
Challenge / problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	While the project made progress in promoting gender equity, there were limitations in engaging other vulnerable groups, which hindered the effective and transversal integration of gender issues and social inclusion. A more detailed analysis, including disaggregated gender data and profiles of participant in capacity building activities, would have helped to assess whether these groups were meaningfully involved. The project could particularly benefit from the traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples by integrating their ecological insights, resource management practices, and environmental monitoring techniques into biodiversity and ecosystem assessments. Indigenous communities often possess deep-rooted knowledge of local ecosystems, species behavior, climate patterns, and sustainable land-use practices that have been passed down through generations. Recognizing and incorporating this knowledge into the project initiatives would improve the accuracy, cultural relevance, and effectiveness of environmental policies and reporting under MEAs. Future initiatives, including a possible Treaties III project, must adopt a more structured and systematic approach to the engagement of vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples and other marginalized communities, by explicitly defining marginalized groups in the context of MEAs and ensuring their representation in decision-making processes and national consultations. This can be achieved by actively involving these groups from the early stages of the project cycle and ensuring that their voices are heard in the design and implementation of activities. Setting clear expectations, with targets or indicators, could help track and promote meaningful participation. However, this should be adapted to national contexts and aligned with existing frameworks. Rather than imposing rigid requirements, future initiatives can encourage partners to adopt inclusive approaches by offering guidance on identifying marginalized stakeholders, ensuring their representation in consultations, and documenting their involvement in decision-making processes. This MLTR recommends the use of two indicators, both of which can be tailored, to track progress in the participation of vulnerable groups in capacity-building activities. One indicator can measure the percentage of project activities in which women, Indigenous Peoples, and other marginalized groups are directly involved in decision-making roles, to monitor whether these groups are actively involved in governance and implementation. Additionally, another indicator can measure the percentage of training sessions that include gender-responsive content and social inclusion principles, ensuring that capacity-building efforts address equity considerations.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for Improvement
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	Project Manager
Proposed implementation time-frame:	When a new project is designed by the Project Manager.

10. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section I. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues (para. 260, 261, and 264)
- Conclusion #4 (para. 294 and 295)
- C Lessons learned #7

Recommendation #11:	Adopt a hybrid work model to strengthen collaboration, cooperation, and alignment in subsequent projects (i.e., Treaties II), maximizing inclusion, efficiency, and impact
Challenge / problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The shift to virtual activities brought significant benefits, including greater stakeholder engagement, reduced operational costs, and a lower carbon footprint. Online trainings and meetings reached a broader audience and facilitated the engagement of stakeholders who might have struggled to attend in-person events. However, the lack of physical interactions hindered processes that require in-depth negotiations, hands-on learning, and consensus building. To maximize the project's impact, it is essential to strike a balance between digital tools and in-person meetings, ensuring that each format is used efficiently and strategically. To ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of global, synergy-focused initiatives, projects like Treaties II should adopt a structured hybrid model that preserves the benefits of digitalization while maintaining strategic in-person interactions. Virtual meetings should remain the primary format for routine activities, initial training, and wide consultations, maximizing inclusion and optimizing resources. This format allows for broader stakeholder participation and reduces logistical and financial barriers. Additionally, the reduced need for travel contributes to lowering carbon emissions, in line with UNEP's environmental goals. However, in-person activities should be maintained for strategic moments, such as high-level negotiations, and workshops requiring consensus-building and intensive collaboration. These in-person meetings should be carefully planned to ensure they add value to the process. Defining which activities require physical interaction will enable better resource allocation and avoid unnecessary costs. The project manager should strategically adapt the current work structure to incorporate a hybrid approach by: (1) defining specific times and places for in-person meetings, when possible, ensuring that all parties involved, including stakeholders from different locations, can participate equitably; (2) using digital platforms that facilitate continuous communication, resource sharing, and real-time collaboration for online interactions; (3) ensuring that the tools and technologies adopted are accessible and intuitive for everyone.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for Improvement
Type of Recommendation	Project
Responsibility:	Project Manager responsible for Treaties II project
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Up to 1 year after the publication of the Terminal Review.

11. Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions:

- Section C. Nature of the External Context (para. 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, and 124)
- Section F. Efficiency (para. 186, 191, and 192)
- Section I. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues (para. 248, 250, 256, and 269)
- Conclusion #5 (para. 296 and 297)
- C Lessons learned #8

ANNEX I. RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

Table 5: Response to stakeholder comments received but not (fully) accepted by the reviewers, where appropriate

Page Ref	Stakeholder comment	Reviewer Response
	Not applied	Not applied

ANNEX II. REVIEW FRAMEWORK/MATRIX

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
Strategic Questions		
How has the project supported or improved biodiversity governance and the cooperation and synergies agenda globally through support to the governing bodies of the MEAs and implementation of COP decisions in the biodiversity and chemicals thematic clusters of MEAs as well as UNEA?	In-depth documentary review (IDR): MTR, progress and final reports, Steering Committee (SC) minutes Interviews	Implementing agency (UPM and team) MEAs secretariats members Others (Steering Committee members)
Has the project improved cooperation among the biodiversity-related MEAs and improved measurable coherence and efficiency, avoiding duplication of efforts at the global, regional and national level?	In-depth documentary review (IDR): MTR, progress and final reports, Steering Committee (SC) minutes Interviews	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implement partners (UNEP-WCMC) MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
Has the project impacted country level implementation of biodiversity related conventions and goals through enhanced guidance, knowledge management and harmonized reporting to MEAs?	In-depth documentary review (IDR): MTR, progress and final reports, Steering Committee (SC) minutes Interviews	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
How effective and efficient has the roll-out of integrated approaches and tools been including the roll-out of the Data Reporting Tool (DaRT)?	In-depth documentary review (IDR): MTR, progress and final reports, Steering Committee (SC) minutes, DaRT Reports Interviews	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implement partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point
What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance?	In-depth documentary review (IDR): MTR, progress and final reports, Bern II workshop reports, Steering Committee (SC) minutes Interviews	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implement partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point
A. Strategic Relevance		
To what extent were the project implementation strategies and expected contributions (results) aligned with the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (PoW) and Strategic Priorities?	IDR: ProDoc, UNEP MTS and PoW Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implement partners
To what extent were the project implementation strategies and expected contributions (results) aligned with the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building (BSP) ⁸⁹ and South-South Cooperation (S-SC) ⁹⁰ ?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, BSP and S-SC decisions Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implement partners

⁸⁹ The BSP relates to the capacity of governments to comply with international agreements and obligations at the national level; promote, facilitate and finance environmentally sound technologies and to strengthen frameworks for developing coherent international environmental policies.

⁹⁰ S-SC is regarded as the exchange of resources, technology and knowledge between developing countries.

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
A. Strategic Relevance		
To what extent were the project implementation strategies and expected contributions (results) aligned with Donor/Partner strategic priorities?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, Steering Committee (SC) minutes Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Funding partner / donor members Others (Steering Committee members)
To what extent were the project implementation strategies and expected contributions (results) suited, or responding to, the stated environmental concerns and needs of the country where it is being implemented?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, National and regional policies/documents Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
To what extent was the project aligned with global priorities such as the Agenda 2030 and its SDGs?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, Agenda 2030 Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
How well did the project (either at design or inception) consider any ongoing and planned initiatives that address similar problems/issues?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Others (Steering Committee members)
To what extent did the project (either at design or inception) ensure it was complementary to other interventions, optimized synergies and avoided duplication of efforts?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Others (Steering Committee members)
To what extent was the project (either at design or inception) aware of, or in dialogue/engagement with, other ongoing or planned interventions on the same problem/issue (including UN Strategic Development Cooperation Framework or One UN programming for the country)?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, UN Strategic Development Cooperation Framework Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Others (Steering Committee members)
B. Quality of Project Design		
To what extent was the approach adopted by the project the best possible to “increase coherent implementation of environmental treaties and contributes to biodiversity goals and targets and the Sustainable Development Goals”?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports Interviews	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implement partners Others (Steering Committee members)
Were project objectives realistic, given the time and budget allocated to the project, the baseline situation, and institutional context?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports Interviews	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implement partners Others (Steering Committee members)

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
C. Nature of External Context		
To what extent was project performance affected by political disruption, natural disasters, security situation, and health and economic changes (i.e. COVID-19) and/or an unfavorable operating environment?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implement partners Government officials / national focal point
D. Effectiveness		
D1. Availability of Outputs		
To what extent were the planned output made available for the intended users? Note: this question will be divided in sub-questions according to the ToC (5 outputs), targeting distinct respondent groups/stakeholders.	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, Online websites, MEA COP websites, decisions, workshop reports, resources in the Compendia of guidance, Bern II and Bern III websites, Bogis Bossey website, DaRT Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implement partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
To what extent were the most important outputs to achieve outcomes delivered in time and fulfilled their intended use?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implement partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
How do users and reviewers rate (or consider) the quality and utility of the most important delivered outputs, i) poor, ii) good, or iii) excellent quality and utility?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implement partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point (users) Others (Steering Committee members)
What was the level of ownership of the intended users of key outputs? To what extent were the intended users of key outputs involved in / party to preparation of key outputs: i) not involved, ii) only peripherally involved, iii) partially and unevenly involved, iv) somewhat involved, v) meaningfully involved, or vi) closely involved?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implement partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
D2. Achievement of Outcome		
To what extent were the project outcome achieved?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, DaRT Tool Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implement partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
To what extent were the assumptions for progress from project outputs to project outcome held?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, DaRT Tool Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implement partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
To what extent were the drivers to support transition from outputs to project outcomes in place?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, DaRT Tool Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implement partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
D3. Likelihood of Impact		
What is the likelihood that the intended impact become a reality? Intended impact: Coherent implementation of environmental treaties contributes to the achievement of the SDGs and environmental goals.	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, DaRT Tool Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
Is there already any evidence that indicates that the project expected intermediated state has been or will be achieved soon? What is the likelihood that the project intermediated state will be achieved? Expected intermediate state: Parties to the MEAS implement the MEAs collectively and coherently	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, DaRT Tool Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
To what extent were the assumptions for progress from projects outcomes through intermediate state towards the expected impact held?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, DaRT Tool Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
To what extent were the drivers to support transition from projects outcomes through intermediate state towards the expected impact in place?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, DaRT Tool Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
D3. Likelihood of Impact		
Were there any unintended negative effects as a result of the project? What is the likelihood that the intervention may lead, or contribute to, unintended negative effects?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, DaRT Tool Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
To what extent has the project played a catalytic role or has promoted scaling up and/or replication ⁹¹ ? How these are likely to contribute to long-term impact?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, DaRT Tool Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
What is the likelihood of the project to make a substantive contribution to the long-lasting changes represented by the SDGs, and/or the intermediate-level result reflected in the Expected Accomplishments?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, DaRT Tool Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
E. Financial Management		
E1. Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures		
To what extent has the project applied proper financial management standards and adhered to UNEP's financial management policies? With what frequency was the cash advance to partners timely approved and disbursed? With what frequency was regular analysis of actual expenditure against budget and workplan done? How many regular expenditure reports (six-monthly and annual) were timely submitted? Were expenditures within the approved annual budget? If it was the case, were timely revision submitted/approved? Were regular budget revisions made when relevant and for expenditure variations of 10% and above?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, financial reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, FMO, UPM and team)
Were there any financial management issues that have affected the timely delivery of the project or the quality of its performance	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, financial reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, FMO, UPM and team)

⁹¹ Scaling up refers to approaches being adopted on a much larger scale, but in a very similar context. Scaling up is often the longer-term objective of pilot initiatives. Replication refers to approaches being repeated or lessons being explicitly applied in new/different contexts e.g. other geographic areas, different target group etc. Effective replication typically requires some form of revision or adaptation to the new context. It is possible to replicate at either the same or a different scale.

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
E2. Completeness of Financial Information		
To what extent was the financial information complete, accurate and made available to evaluation, considering the following criteria/items? High level project budget (costs) for secured and unsecured funds. High level project budget by funding source(s) for secured and unsecured funds. Disbursement (funds transfer) document from funding source(s) to UNEP. Project expenditure sheet by output/outcome (to-date). Detailed project budget (by output/outcome) for secured funds. Proof/report of delivery of in-kind contributions. Partner legal agreements and documentation for all amendments exist. Where applicable: Re-approved project budget by budget line for project extensions (both cost and no-cost extension). Disbursement (Funds Transfer) documents (cash statement) from UNEP to partners.	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, financial reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, FMO, UPM and team)
E3. Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff		
How frequent, fluid and useful were communications between the project manager and FMO? Is there documentation to confirm it?	IDR: E-mails and other proof of communications	Implementing agency (FMO and UPM)
What was the level of awareness of the project manager regarding the ongoing financial status of project during its implementation: i) no awareness, ii) little awareness, iii) moderate awareness, and iv) strong awareness?	IDR: Financial reports Surveys	Implementing agency (FMO and UPM)
What was the level of awareness of the FMO regarding overall project progress when financial disbursements were made (i.e. disbursements made against good quality financial and technical progress reports): i) no awareness, ii) little awareness, iii) moderate awareness, and iv) strong awareness?	IDR: Financial reports Surveys	Implementing agency (FMO and UPM)

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
E3. Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff		
Which of the following options better describe the project regarding how the communication affected project implementation? i) the lack of communication between financial and project staff members had negatively affected project implementation, or ii) good communication between financial and project staff members had positively affected project implementation (i.e. within budget, no extensions, more outputs than planned etc.).	IDR: MTR, progress, financial and final reports, and e-mails and other proof of communications Surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, FMO, UPM and team)
Which of the following options better describe the project regarding raising and resolving financial issues/problems? i) financial issues/problems were only addressed retrospectively when identified by senior management/staff external to the project team, or ii) PM or FMO were proactive in raising and resolving financial issues.	IDR: MTR, progress, financial and final reports, and e-mails and other proof of communications Surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, FMO, UPM and team)
Which of the following options better describe the project regarding reviewing narrative and financial reports? i) Narrative reports were only reviewed by project manager and financial reports only by the FMO, or ii) All narrative and financial reports are reviewed by both finance and project staff members prior to submission.	IDR: MTR, progress, financial and final reports, and e-mails and other proof of communications Surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, FMO, UPM and team)
F. Efficiency		
To what extent the project delivered maximum results from the given resources? To what extent has the project achieved its results at the lowest possible cost? How could the project be more efficient in the use of resources (time, funds, staff, partnerships, etc.)?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress, financial and final reports, and SC minutes Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, UPM and team) Others (Steering Committee members)
What were the major reasons to require the no-cost extension?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress, and final reports, and SC minutes Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Others (Steering Committee members)
To what extent were the project extension justified ⁹² or could they have been avoided through stronger project management?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, and SC minutes Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Others (Steering Committee members)

⁹² 'Justifications' for no cost extensions should involve increases in identified benefits and could include: changes in the timing or sequencing of activities to realize greater results (i.e. to take advantage of positive opportunities; donor-requested changes to better align with, or contribute to, their strategic results; re-scheduling of events to increase country-level ownership or leadership etc.).

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
F. Efficiency		
To what extent did the delays/extensions in project implementation affect the achievement of the project outcomes? What were the major implications of these delays/extensions?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, and SC minutes Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Others (Steering Committee members)
To what extent has the project applied any time or cost-saving mechanisms or cost-effective approaches to achieve results within the approved timeframe and budget? If yes, to what extent these mechanisms or approaches supported the achievement of project targets? If no, to what extent the lack of these mechanisms or approaches undermined the achievement of project targets?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress, financial and final reports, and SC minutes Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, FMO, UPM and team) Others (Steering Committee members)
Did the project face any obstacles (financial, administrative, managerial) and to what extent they affected output delivery and overall efficiency?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress, financial and final reports, and SC minutes Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, FMO, UPM and team) Others (Steering Committee members)
How frequently were project outputs delivered according to expected timeframes? How frequently were project activities/events sequenced efficiently?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress, financial and final reports, and SC minutes Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, FMO, UPM and team)
Which of the following options better describe the project regarding operation within existing roles or institutions? i) The project established unnecessarily duplicative roles, mechanisms, or institutions ii) The project operated within existing roles, mechanisms, institutions or expanded them in an efficient and effective manner	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress, financial and final reports, and SC minutes Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Others (Steering Committee members)
To what extent the project, during its implementation, made use of/built upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programs and projects? To what extent this contributed to increase project efficiency?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, agreements, and SC minutes Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
To what extent the management of the project, or the method of carrying out activities by partners, minimized UNEP's carbon footprint?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, agreements, and SC minutes Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (FMO, UPM and team) Implement partners

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
G. Monitoring and Reporting		
G1. Monitoring Design and Budgeting		
To what extent were the indicators of M&E Plan (at project launch) specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-oriented (SMART)? To what extent were the methods designed for tracking progress against the indicators adherent with results-based management?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team)
At project launch, to what extent the project's M&E Plan: a. Covered all indicators appropriately in the logical framework b. Had data sources and data collection methods clearly defined c. Had appropriated data collection instruments in place d. Data collection frequency was appropriate e. Had a dedicated budget per monitoring activity f. Person responsible for monitoring progress against each indicator was identified g. Was disaggregated by relevant stakeholder groups including gender and minority/disadvantaged groups h. Additional gender specific indicators, if necessary, were developed i. Funds for mid-term and terminal evaluations/reviews were considered adequate by the UNEP Evaluation Office and were available to the evaluation	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team)
G2. Monitoring of Project Implementation		
To what extent was the monitoring system operational throughout the project implementation period? Did it facilitate the timely tracking of results and progress towards projects objectives?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, and progress and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, FMO, UPM and team)
To what extent was baseline data collected and used to contribute to the project monitoring, knowledge management and final reporting?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, and progress and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, FMO, UPM and team)
To what extent was monitoring data collected regularly in accordance with a monitoring plan and workplan? To what extent was it complete, relevant, and properly detailed?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, and progress and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, FMO, UPM and team)

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
G2. Monitoring of Project Implementation		
To what extent was monitoring data analyzed and shared with appropriate project managers and steering partners?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, progress and final reports, and SC minutes Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Others (Steering Committee members)
What was the level of detail of the M&E data made available to the evaluators?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, and progress and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, FMO, UPM and team)
To what extent was M&E data collected disaggregate by vulnerable/marginalized groups, including gender?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, and progress and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, FMO, UPM and team)
To what extent were the tools and methodologies utilized during monitoring responsive to the needs of different stakeholder groups?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, and progress and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, FMO, UPM and team)
How well were funds spent on monitoring in accordance with the planned expenditures or against budget lines identified for monitoring?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, and financial reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (FMO, UPM and team)
To what extent was the information generated by the M&E used during the life of the project to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of outcomes and to ensure sustainability?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, and progress and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Others (Steering Committee members)
Was there a M&E Implementation Plan? What tools were used by the project to conduct M&E (i.e. indicators profile sheet, indicator dashboard, etc.)?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, monitoring and data collection tools, and progress and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, FMO, UPM and team)
G3. Project Reporting		
To what extent had both UNEP and donor reporting commitments been fulfilled?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, and progress, financial, and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, UPM and team) Funding Partner/donor Implementing partners
How complete and with what quality was documentation of project progress made available?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, and progress, financial, and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, UPM and team) Implementing partners

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
What is the evidence available of collaboration and communication with appropriate UNEP colleagues ⁹³ ? How efficient was this collaboration and communication?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, and progress, financial, and final reports, and communication evidence (e-mails, meeting minutes) Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners
Were there any gaps in PIMS/donor reporting?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, and progress, financial, and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, UPM and team) Funding Partner/donor
How well does the official records in PIMS/donor reports match available evidence?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, and progress, financial, and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, UPM and team) Funding Partner/donor
To what extent did the PIMS/donor reporting adequately reflect the project scope of work?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, and progress, financial, and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Project Director, UPM and team) Funding Partner/donor
To what extent were monitoring reports gender neutral (ie. reflecting gendered experiences equally) and/or, if appropriate, gender sensitive (ie. reporting experiences differentiated by gender groups)?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, and progress, financial, and final reports Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Others (Steering Committee members)
H. Sustainability		
H1. Socio-political Sustainability		
To what extent does the maintenance and further development of project outcomes after the closure of the project depend on social/political factors (i.e. changes in social-political context, interest and commitment among government representatives and other stakeholders to use the DaRT tool)?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, SC minutes, TC minutes, project's technical documents, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
What is the level of ownership, interest, and commitment among government representatives and other stakeholders to take the project achievements forwards?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, SC minutes, TC minutes, project's technical documents, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
What mechanisms are in place to adapt/respond to changes in the social/political context that may jeopardize the sustainability of the project outcomes?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, SC minutes, TC minutes, project's technical documents, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)

⁹³ Appropriate UNEP colleagues mean other staff working on complementary projects or in the same sector/on the same topic/in the same country. The aim is to recognize efforts to work outside 'silos'.

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
H2. Financial Sustainability		
To what extent does the maintenance and further development of project outcomes after the closure of the project depend on future funding / financial flows (i.e. maintenance of DaRT Tool, continuous capacity building, engagement with end users to promote DaRT Tool wewwweweweewbbbuse for decision making)?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, SC minutes, TC minutes, project's technical documents, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
To what extent has the required future funding been secured?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, SC minutes, TC minutes, project's technical documents, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
Has an exit strategy with a financial component been developed? Has it been initiated already?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, SC minutes, TC minutes, project's technical documents, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
H3. Sustainability of the Institutional Framework		
To what extent is the maintenance and further development of project outcomes after the closure of the project depend on / sensible to institutional support?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, SC minutes, TC minutes, project's technical documents, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
What mechanisms are in place to sustain/support the institutionalization of the project outcome (i.e. governance structures and processes, policies, partnership agreements, legal and accountability frameworks are in place favoring Parties to use synergies tools including DaRT Tool to support decision making processes)? Is the institutional framework solid enough to guarantee that Parties will use synergies tools including DaRT?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, SC minutes, TC minutes, project's technical documents, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
To what extent has the capacity of relevant individuals been enhanced? What is the likelihood that these relevant individuals will stay in their position or in a position where they can continue to support the project outcome?	IDR: ProDoc, MTR, progress and final reports, SC minutes, TC minutes, project's technical documents, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
Has an exit strategy (with an institutional component) been developed? Has it been or will be discussed in the SC and agreed among project partners? Are the activities, roles and responsibilities clearly described and agreed upon? Does the exit strategy include timeframes and any mechanism to monitor its implementation? Has it been initiated already?	IDR: Final report, SC minutes, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
I. Factors affecting Project Performance		
I1. Preparation and Readiness		
To what extent were appropriate measures taken to address weaknesses in project design or respond to changes that took place between project approval, securing funds and project mobilisation?	IDR: ProDoc, Inception Report, 1st Work Plan, MTR, SC minutes, and TC minutes. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Others (Steering Committee members)
During the inception or mobilization stage of the project (i.e. the time between project approval and first disbursement) which of the following actions were done aiming at achieving a proper startup of the project: a. A comprehensive inception meeting was held and reported on. b. An annual, costed workplan was developed with appropriate detail c. A detailed and compliant procurement plan was developed. d. A Steering Committee was established with full, appropriate representation. e. A good ESE safeguards assessment was carried out, with stakeholder participation. f. Comprehensive and relevant stakeholder analysis was undertaken (complementing the one from ProDoc). g. All partner's capacity was confirmed/addressed. h. Legal agreements were signed with partners in a timely manner. i. Staffing mobilization was undertaken in a timely manner. j. Appropriate and adequate governance arrangements were established. k. All necessary measures were taken to respond to contextual changes that took place during the inception period. These were timely and of good quality. l. The period between project approval and first disbursement is 6 months or less. m. Measures were taken during the inception period that noticeably strengthened the project design (i.e. design of Communication Strategy and Plan, Stakeholder Engagement Plan. KM Strategy, Replication and Scaling-up Plan, etc.).	IDR: ProDoc, Inception Report, 1st Work Plan, MTR, SC minutes, TC minutes, procurement plans, ESS documents, communication strategy / plan, stakeholder engagement plan. KM strategy, replication and scaling-up plan, and agreements. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Others (Steering Committee members)

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
I2. Quality of Project Management and Supervision		
How effective was the project management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping and supervision provided by UNEP?	IDR: ProDoc, progress reports, MTR, SC minutes, and TC minutes. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (FMO, UPM and team) Implementing partners Others (Steering Committee members)
How well was the Steering Committee functioning (frequent meetings, relevant issues discussed, leadership provided)?	IDR: SC minutes Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Others (Steering Committee members)
How well managed were the teams involved in the implementation of the project?	IDR: ProDoc, progress and final reports, MTR, SC minutes, and TC minutes. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (FMO, UPM and team) Implementing partners Others (Steering Committee members)
To what extent the working relationship between the PM/TM and project partners has been constructive and/or effective?	IDR: ProDoc, progress and final reports, MTR, SC minutes, and TC minutes. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners Others (Steering Committee members)
How well were the turnover of staff handled? To what extent were there effective (i.e. systematized, complete and ensured smooth transition) handover processes and information exchange (supported by good documentation) between outgoing and incoming staff?	IDR: Handover notes Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Director, FMO, UPM and team) Implementing partners
To what extent the capacity of project staff, including some key members, was aligned with project requirements?	IDR: ProDoc, ToRs for the project staff, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Director, FMO, UPM and team) Implementing partners
To what extent were project staff, including some key members, located appropriately for efficient project implementation?	IDR: ProDoc, progress and final reports, MTR, and project's technical documents Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Director, FMO, UPM and team) Implementing partners
How regular and constructive information exchange between project team, PM/TM and UNEP colleagues had taken place?	IDR: ProDoc, progress and final reports, MTR, project's technical documents, and TC minutes. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners
To what extent had the Implementation Agency and/or Executing Agency provided strategic, timely and effectively leadership towards achieving the planned outcomes?	IDR: ProDoc, progress and final reports, MTR, project's technical documents, SC minutes, TC minutes, and exit strategy. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (Director, FMO, UPM and team) Implementing partners Others (Steering Committee members)
How fast and effective were the responses of project team to execution challenges or contextual changes? (adaptative management)	IDR: MTR, progress reports, SC minutes, TC minutes, email correspondence. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (FMO, UPM and team) Implementing partners Others (Steering Committee members)

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
I2. Quality of Project Management and Supervision		
How adequate was the management response to any financial shortfalls, changes and unforeseen situations (i.e. response shows clear prioritization and movement of funds to meet implementation and accountability requirements)? (adaptative management)	IDR: ProDoc, progress and financial reports, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (FMO, UPM and team) Implementing partners Others (Steering Committee members)
How relevant and timely was the advice provided by PM/TM to deal with known problems, risks or challenges? (adaptative management)	IDR: MTR, progress and final reports, TC minutes, email correspondence. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (FMO, UPM and team) Implementing partners
I3. Stakeholders⁹⁴ Participation and Cooperation		
To what extent did the implementation begin, and was undertaken, with a relevant and useful analysis of stakeholder groups?	IDR: ProDoc, inception and progress reports, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
What efforts were made by project team to promote stakeholder ownership (specially by government bodies / NFP) of processes and outcomes of the project? How effective were these efforts?	IDR: ProDoc, progress and final reports, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Communication Strategy, technical reports, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
How effective, regular, and timely were consultations and communication made with stakeholder groups during the life of the project?	IDR: ProDoc, progress and final reports, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Communication Strategy, technical reports, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
How adequate (or relevant) was the support given by the project to maximize collaboration or collective action between stakeholder groups (e.g. sharing plans, pooling resources, exchanging learning and expertise)?	IDR: ProDoc, progress and final reports, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Communication Strategy, technical reports, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)

⁹⁴ Here the term 'stakeholder' should be considered in a broad sense, encompassing all project partners, duty bearers with a role in delivering project outputs and target users of project outputs and any other collaborating agents external to UNEP

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
I3. Stakeholders⁹⁵ Participation and Cooperation		
To what extent linkages to poverty alleviation or impact on economic livelihoods have been considered and addressed in the project to assess and mitigate negative effects on sustainability of livelihoods, equity of opportunities and the protection of human rights for populations directly or indirectly affected by the project	IDR: ProDoc, progress and final reports, Stakeholder Engagement, technical reports, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
I4. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equity		
To what extent has the project, during its implementation, applied the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People?	IDR: ProDoc, progress and final reports, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Gender Strategy, Communication Strategy, technical reports, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
To what extent the project adheres to UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment (2015)?	IDR: ProDoc, progress and final reports, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Gender Strategy, Communication Strategy, technical reports, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners Others (Steering Committee members)
To what extent the project takes into consideration possible inequalities (especially disadvantaged groups - i.e. women, and indigenous people) in its implementation?	IDR: ProDoc, progress and final reports, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Gender Strategy, Communication Strategy, technical reports, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
I5. Environmental and Social Safeguard		
To what extent safeguarding considerations are demonstrated in the items below regarding quality, detail and consistency: a. management plan for addressing safeguarding b. review(s) of risk ratings c. monitoring of project implementation for safeguarding issues d. response (where relevant) to safeguarding issues e. reporting on safeguarding issues/reporting that no safeguarding issues arose	IDR: ProDoc, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, ESS documents, technical reports, MTR, and Final Report. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners Others (Steering Committee members)

⁹⁵ Here the term 'stakeholder' should be considered in a broad sense, encompassing all project partners, duty bearers with a role in delivering project outputs and target users of project outputs and any other collaborating agents external to UNEP

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
I5. Environmental and Social Safeguard		
To what extent the project considered and/or addressed environmental, social and economic impacts to the key stakeholders and, in particular, to the most vulnerable groups?	IDR: ProDoc, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, ESS documents, technical reports, MTR, and Final Report. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners Others (Steering Committee members)
I6. Country Ownership and Driven-ness		
To what extent did government ministries / public sector agencies that were essential for moving from outputs to direct outcomes or from direct outcomes to intermediate states took a leadership role in: a. Strategic guidance of project delivery b. Driving or advocating for change to achieve higher level results c. Endorsing / accepting project results d. Initiating non-cost complementary or additional activities e. Provision of in-kind and / or cash co-financing contributions; making provisions in forward-looking budgetary plans or securing additional external resources	IDR: ProDoc, agreements, formal commitments from partners, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, progress and final reports, SC minutes, TC minutes, technical reports, and MTR. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point Others (Steering Committee members)
I7. Communication and Public Awareness		
What was the level of awareness that the key audiences (the ones driving desired change from outputs to impact) had about the project, its main messages and goals?	IDR: Prodoc, Communication Strategy, communication materials, papers and reports, MTR, and progress and final reports. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point
To what extent were communication activities and channels: a. Well-targeted towards all key audiences b. Continuous over the life of the project c. Always interactive / responsive to audience feedback d. Very well monitored for evidence of effect e. Fully budgeted/financed	IDR: Prodoc, Communication Strategy, communication materials, papers and reports, MTR, and progress and final reports. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point
How effectively were communication/public awareness efforts in driving change towards results beyond outputs?	IDR: Prodoc, Communication Strategy, communication materials, papers and reports, MTR, and progress and final reports. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point

REVIEW CRITERIA & GUIDING QUESTIONS	INFORMATION SOURCES	TARGETED RESPONDENTS / FOCUS GROUP
17. Communication and Public Awareness		
How effective was the project in the communication of learning and experience sharing between project partners and interested groups?	IDR: Prodoc, Communication Strategy, communication materials, papers and reports, MTR, and progress and final reports. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point
How solid and comprehensive was the communication plan/strategy? Was it fully financed, implemented and monitored during the life of the project?	IDR: Prodoc, Communication Strategy, communication materials, papers and reports, MTR, and progress and final reports. Interviews and/or surveys	Implementing agency (UPM and team) Implementing partners MEAs secretariats members Government officials / national focal point

ANNEX III. PEOPLE CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW

Table 6: People consulted during the Review

Organisation	Name	Position	Role in the project	Gender
UNEP / UN Environmental Programme	Tita Korvenoja	Chief of Branch, programme	Chief of Environmental Conventions and Policy Branch (ECP)	F
UNEP / UN Environmental Programme	Diane Klaimi	Global policy advisor	Project Manager / ECP - MEAs Support Unit	F
UNEP / UN Environmental Programme	Emilie Vauchel	Associate Project Manager	Project team member, Implementing agency	F
UNEP / UN Environmental Programme	Yassin Ahmed	Senior programme management officer	Environmental Governance Sub-programme Coordinator	M
UNEP / UN Environmental Programme	Marieta Sakalian	Senior programme management officer	Nature Action Sub-programme coordinator	F
UNEP / UN Environmental Programme	Kazuhiko Seriu	Associate Programme Officer	Project team member, Implementing agency	M
UNEP / UN Environmental Programme	Yannik Friedli	Associate Programme Management Officer	Project team member, Implementing agency	M
UNEP / Fund Management Officer (FMO)	Reem Al-Qawas	Administrative Officer, Programme Delivery and Management Unit	Financial management, Implementing agency	F
UNEP / Fund Management Officer (FMO)	Catherine Karuiru	Senior Budget and Finance Assistant	Financial management, Implementing agency	F
UNEP / Fund Management Officer (FMO)	Bernard Koech	Senior Budget and Finance Assistant	Financial management, Implementing agency	M
UNEP / Fund Management Officer (FMO)	Aini Aini	Head / senior programme management officer	Financial management, Implementing agency	F
UNEP / InforMEA / Law Division / Collective Intelligence Unit	Kelly Kabiru	Programme Management Officer	Implementing Partner	M
UNEP / ECP Branch	Joyce Jelagat	National UNV, Chemicals and Waste Cluster	Implementing agency	F

Organisation	Name	Position	Role in the project	Gender
UNEP / ACP-MEAs Programme / ECP Branch	Balakrishna Pisupati	Head of Biodiversity, Land and Governance Programme	Implementing Partner (internal UNEP)	M
UNEP / ECP Branch	Haddy Guisse	Programme Officer for Chemicals and Waste Cluster	Implementing Partner (UNEP center)	F
Nature consult	Eric Wiedmer	Consultant Treaties Programme / DaRT team	Implementing Partner (Nature consult)	M
UNEP-WCMC / UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre	Jerry Harrison	Principal Technical Specialist, Conventions and Policy Support	Steering Committee Member, Implementing Partner (UNEP center)	M
Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) / International Affairs Division	Niklaus Wagner	Senior Policy Advisor	Steering Committee Member, Donor	M
CBD / Convention on Biological Diversity	Chantal Robichaud	Associate programme management officer	Steering Committee Member, Implementing Partner	F
CBD / Convention on Biological Diversity	Jillian Campbell	Head of Monitoring, Review and Reporting at UN Convention on Biological Diversity	MEA Secretariat	F
FAO (ITPGRFA) / International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture	Francisco López	Treaty Technical Officer	Steering Committee Member, MEA Secretariat	M
CITES / Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora	Sofie Hermann Flensburg	Programme Officer in the Outreach and Projects Unit	MEA Secretariat	F
CMS / Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals	Laura Cerasi	Programme Management Officer	Steering Committee Member, MEA Secretariat	F
UNESCO / United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Susanna Kari	Project Officer, Natural Heritage Unit	MEA Secretariat	F
IWC / International Whaling Commission	Imogen Webster	Lead for Program Development	MEA Secretariat	M
Ramsar Convention on Wetlands	Manuel Kern	IT Officer	MEA Secretariat	M
UNESCO / United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Guy Debonnet	MEA Secretariat	MEA Secretariat	M

Organisation	Name	Position	Role in the project	Gender
AEWA / African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement	Florian Keil	Communications Officer	Steering Committee Member, Regional Convention	M
MINIPED / Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development of Cameroon	Stanislaus Lebaga	Government officials and NFP	DaRT Focal Point in Cameroon	M
MINIPED / Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development of Cameroon	Madame Angele Wadou	Government officials and NFP	DaRT Focal Point in Cameroon	F
Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development / Cammeron	Jean-François Moussa	Additional delegate Node manager	Government official and NFP / DaRT Focal Point in Cameroon	M
Biodiversity Directorate / Ministry of Climate Change / Pakistan	Rizwan Irshad	Deputy Directo	Government official and NFP / DaRT Workshop in Pakistan	M
Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development / Colombia	Laura C Bermudez	Resource Mobilization FP	Government official and NFP / DaRT Workshop in Colombia	F
Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic and Fisheries Resources / Tunisia	Ezzeddine Taghouti	Director of Forest Conservation	Government official and NFP / DaRT Workshop in Tunisia	M

ANNEX IV. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED**Project and related documents:**

- UNEP. (2017). Project document. Project ID 413.4 (PIMS no. 01988 / IPMR no. 35480). Environmental Treaties Programme – realizing synergies for biodiversity.
- UNEP. (2020). Project Revision #1. Project ID 413.4 (PIMS no. 01988). Environmental Treaties Programme – realizing synergies for biodiversity.
- UNEP. (2021). Project Revision #2. Project ID 413.4 (PIMS no. 01988). Environmental Treaties Programme – realizing synergies for biodiversity.
- UNEP. (2021). Project Revision #3. Project ID 413.4 (PIMS no. 01988). Environmental Treaties Programme – realizing synergies for biodiversity.
- UNEP. (2022). Mid-term Review. Project ID 413.4 (PIMS no. 01988). Environmental Treaties Programme - Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity (November 2017 – December 2021).
- Klaimi. D. (2022, October). Various email communications [Workplace communication].
- Programme Coherence and Assurance Unit. (2022). Note to File – extension of projects closing 31 December 2022.
- UNEP / Policy and Programme Division (2022). Memorandum. Exceptional Clearance of Projects Ending 31 December 2022.
- UNEP / PIMS (2024). Project Performance Highlights. Project ID 413.4 (PIMS no. 01988). Environmental Treaties Programme – realizing synergies for biodiversity.
- UNEP / IPRM (2024). Operational Project Closure Report. Project ID 413.4 (IPMR no. 35480). Environmental Treaties Programme – realizing synergies for biodiversity.
- UNEP (2024). Terms of Reference. Terminal Review. Project ID 413.4 (PIMS no. 01988 / IPMR no. 35480). Environmental Treaties Programme – realizing synergies for biodiversity.
- UNEP PIMS 01988. Documents Repository. (2017-2022). Project design documents, including project design review meeting minutes at approval, annual work plans and budgets, revisions, and the logical framework and budget.
- UNEP PIMS 01988. Documents Repository. (2017-2022). Project reports (Inception Report, Quarterly Expenditure Reports, Half Yearly Progress Reports, Half-Yearly Expenditures Reports, Project Implementation Reviews, Technical reports, Workshop/ training reports), including six-month progress and financial reports, and progress reports from collaborating partners and donors.
- UNEP PIMS 01988. Documents Repository. (2017-2022). Project communications and agreements (Steering Committee meeting minutes, Technical Committee meeting minutes, Endorsement and Cooperation documents, relevant correspondence, and any other monitoring materials).
- UNEP PIMS 01988. Documents Repository. (2017-2022). Project deliverables and publications, including MEAs Decisions and Resolutions on DaRT, background documents of Bern II, MEAs Cross-Mapping documents, Bogis-Bossey Expert Meeting Planning Note, DaRT PowerPoint and Flyer side-event for CBD COP15.

- UNEP IPMR 35480. Documents Repository. (Jan-June 2023). Project design documents, including project design review meeting minutes at approval, annual work plans and budgets, revisions, and the logical framework and budget.
- UNEP IPMR 35480. Documents Repository. (Jan-June 2023). Project reports (Inception Report, Quarterly Expenditure Reports, Half Yearly Progress Reports, Half-Yearly Expenditures Reports, Project Implementation Reviews, Technical reports, Workshop/ training reports), including six-month progress and financial reports, and progress reports from collaborating partners and donors.
- UNEP IPMR 35480. Documents Repository. (Jan-June 2023). Project communications and agreements (Steering Committee meeting minutes, Technical Committee meeting minutes, Endorsement and Cooperation documents, relevant correspondence, and any other monitoring materials).
- UNEP IPMR 35480. Documents Repository. (Jan-June 2023). Project deliverables and publications, including MEAs Decisions and Resolutions on DaRT, background documents of Bern II, MEAs Cross-Mapping documents, Bogis-Bossey Expert Meeting Planning Note, DaRT PowerPoint and Flyer side-event for CBD COP15.
- UNEP. (2024, October 25). DaRT: Facilitating synergies and cooperation with the MEAs. UNEP. <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/environmental-rights-and-governance/what-we-do/meeting-international-environmental-1>
- UNEP. (2024, October 25). Data Reporting Tool for MEAS - DaRT. UNEP. <https://dart.informea.org>
- UNEP, InforMEA, CBD, UN WCMC. (2020). Handbook for the DaRT “Data Reporting Tool for MEAs”. Swiss Confederation (Supporter). https://dart.informea.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/DaRT_Handbook_200626_3.pdf
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- African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement. (2018). *African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement* (AEWA). UNEP/AEWA Secretariat. <https://www.unep-aewa.org/>
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- International Union for Conservation of Nature. (2021). *International Union for Conservation of Nature* (IUCN) [Updated]. <https://www.iucn.org/>
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change & Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2023). *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (IPCC). <https://www.ipcc.ch/>
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2022). *International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (ITPGRFA). <https://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/>
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. (2022). *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora* (CITES). CITES Secretariat. <https://www.cites.org/>
- Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians. (2020). *Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable*

Development of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention). UNEP/Carpathian Convention Secretariat. <https://www.carpathianconvention.org/>

Evaluation Documents:

- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 00e TR Main TR Report Template (FOR USE BY CONSULTANTS). <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 02 TR Review Criteria Ratings Table. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 03 TR Criterion Rating Descriptions Matrix. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 04 TR Weighted Ratings Table. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 06 TR Main Review Report Guidance Note. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 11 TR Addressing Gender Guidance Note. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 13 TR Use of Theory of Change in Reviews Guidance Note. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 14 TR Financial Tables – these go into the main review report and will guide you on the evidence to look for under Financial Management Criteria. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 15 TR Likelihood of Impact Flow Chart. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 15a TR Likelihood of Impact Flow Chart Test Case. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 16 Recommendations Quality Guidance Note. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 16a TR Presenting Recs and LL Template– use these to formulate the recommendations and lessons learned. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>
- UNEP / Evaluation Office (2024, October 01). 17 TR Recommendation Impl Plan Template. <https://communities.unep.org/display/EOU/MANAGEMENT-LED+REVIEW+TOOLS>

ANNEX V. REVIEW ITINERARY

No field missions were conducted. All interviews were carried out through online meetings. The list of interviewees is provided in Annex III.

ANNEX VI. PROJECT BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES

Table 7: Project Funding Sources Table⁹⁶

Funding source	Planned funding	% of planned funding	Secured funding	% of secured funding
All figures as USD				
Cash				
Funds from the Environment Fund	222.880	10,71%	237.747	10,18%
Funds from the Regular Budget				0,00%
Extra-budgetary funding (listed per donor):				0,00%
1. Switzerland	708.790	34,07%	707.746	30,30%
2. China	295.173	14,19%	380.274	16,28%
3. Counterpart contributions (various)	351.245	16,89%	339.168	14,52%
4. European Commission	236.691	11,38%	234.028	10,02%
5. Sweden (SIDA)		0,00%	157.208	6,73%
6. Norway	100.000	4,81%	150.000	6,42%
7. Germany (GIZ)	97.850	4,70%	97.850	4,19%
8. Nordic Council of Ministers	22.522	1,08%	22.523	0,96%
9. Finland	45.045	2,17%	9.489	0,41%
Sub-total: Cash contributions	2.080.196	100%	2.336.033	100%
In-kind				
Environment Fund staff-post costs	465.473	92,75%	430.046	92,20%
Regular Budget staff-post costs	36.378	7,25%	36.378	7,80%
Extra-budgetary funding for staff-posts (listed per donor):				
1. Switzerland	1	-	-	-
2. Japan	1	-	-	-
Sub-total: In-kind contributions	501.851	100%	466.424	100%
Co-financing*				
Co-financing cash contribution (listed by source):				
1. Switzerland			85.462,47	49,24%
2. Japan			44.475,27	25,63%
3. Switzerland (IUNV)			43.609,00	25,13%
Co-financing in-kind contribution				
Sub-total: Co-financing contributions			173.547	100%
Total	2.582.047		2.976.004	

*Funding from a donor to a partner which is not received into UNEP accounts, but is used by a UNEP partner or collaborating centre to deliver the results in a UNEP – approved project.

⁹⁶ Source: UNEP (2024) Project ID 413.4 (01988) Environmental Treaties Programme – Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity. Approved project closure report.

Table 8: Expenditure by Outcome/Output⁹⁷

Component/sub-component/output All figures as USD	Estimated cost at design	Actual Cost/ expenditure
Output 1: Engagement with the global synergies	625.122	629.503
Output 2: Cooperation with public information officers	59.268	58.836
Output 3: Tools related to synergies	120.794	92.271
Output 4: Data and reporting tool DaRT	909.502	825.790
Output 5: National-level work	598.133	596.744
Evaluation	23.212	23.212
Total	2.336.031	2.226.356

⁹⁷ Source: UNEP (2024) Project ID 413.4 (01988) Environmental Treaties Programme – Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity. Approved project closure report.

ANNEX VII. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Table 9: Financial Management Table

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
1. Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures:		HS	
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence ⁹⁸ to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules		No	Evidence from project revisions, the mid-term review, financial reports, the operational closure report, and interviews highlights strong financial management and policy adherence, with expenditures aligned to plans despite COVID-19 delays. Regular budget reviews, timely revisions, and additional funding mobilized during three project extensions enhanced outcomes and ensured adaptability.
2. Completeness of project financial information⁹⁹:			
Provision of key documents to the reviewer (based on the responses to A-H below)		HS	
A.	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	Yes	The tables highlighted in the ProDoc, project revisions, and OCR presented the co-financing and project costs at the design stage, broken down by type of funding (cash or in kind) and source.
B.	Revisions to the budget	Yes	All budget revisions were properly presented and detailed in the applicable project revisions (Revisions 1, 2, and 3), with narrative explanations provided.
C.	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	Yes	Several project legal agreements were identified in the PIMS. However, it was not possible to confirm whether all agreements were available in the repository, as no standardized system for record-keeping or file naming was identified to facilitate this verification.
D.	Proof of fund transfers	Yes	Proofs of fund transfers (donor agreements) were identified in the PIMS, indicating generally accurate and accessible financial documentation. However, it was not possible to confirm the availability of all transfer proofs in the repository due to the lack of a standardized record-keeping or file naming system. Bank receipts were not requested.
E.	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	Yes	Co-financing (cash and in-kind) is adequately detailed in the budget spreadsheets of the project revisions and the OCR.
F.	A summary report on the project's expenditures during the life of the project (by budget lines, project components and/or annual level)	Yes	The OCR presented a summary report on the project's expenditures throughout its duration, detailing funding by source and co-financing (cash and in-kind contributions).
G.	Copies of any completed audits and management responses (<i>where applicable</i>)	N/A	-
H.	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):	No	-
3. Communication between finance and project management staff		HS	

⁹⁸ If the review raises concerns over adherence with policies or standard procedures, a recommendation maybe given to cover the topic in an upcoming audit, or similar financial oversight exercise.

⁹⁹ See also document 'Criterion Rating Description' for reference

Project Manager and/or Task Manager's level of awareness of the project's financial status.	HS	Steering Committee 128s and interviews clearly show that the Project Manager has a strong awareness of the project's financial status.
Fund Management Officer's knowledge of project progress/status when disbursements are done.	HS	Emails and interviews showed that FMO used to be well-informed of project progress and disbursements, as funds were released based on detailed financial and technical reports, ensuring alignment between financial and project status.
Level of addressing and resolving financial management issues among Fund Management Officer and Project Manager/Task Manager.	HS	Communications, interviews and Mid-term review findings indicated that FMO and PM collaborated effectively to identify and resolve financial issues through proactive communication, including regular meetings to monitor financial risks and corrective actions.
Contact/communication between by Fund Management Officer, Project Manager/Task Manager during the preparation of financial and progress reports.	HS	Interviews indicated FMO and PM maintain frequent communication during the preparation of reports, ensuring that both financial and project progress are accurately tracked and aligned.
Project Manager, Task Manager and Fund Management Officer responsiveness to financial requests during the review process	HS	Interviews and Mid-term review findings indicated the project team and FMO used to respond promptly to financial requests, with regular and in-depth meetings ensuring swift identification and resolution of financial issues.
Overall rating	HS	

ANNEX VIII. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH TOOLS



“Environmental Treaties Programme – Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity” PIMS no. 01988 2017 – 2023

Management-led Terminal
Review – Preliminary Findings
and Recommendations
January 2025

Summary

- Objective & Methods
- **Preliminary Findings**
- Conclusions, Lessons Learned & Recommendations
- The way forward
- Discussions

Objective



To support the participatory approach of the review



To share emerging findings with project stakeholders



To ensure access to all relevant information sources



To provide an opportunity to verify emerging findings before finalizing the draft report

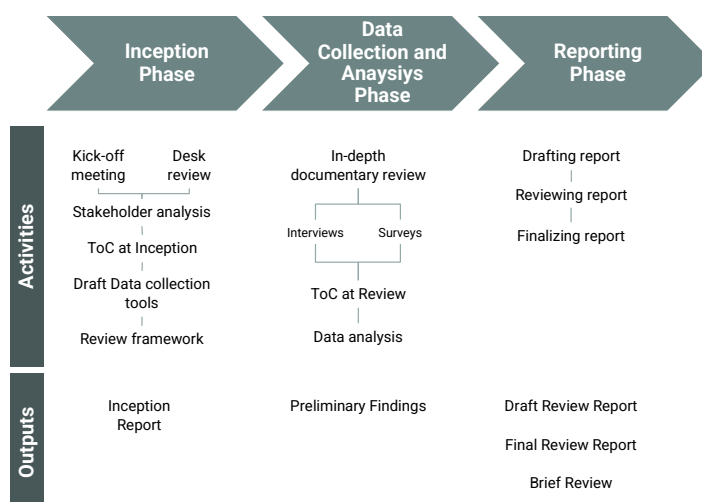


To enable project stakeholders to engage with lessons learned and contribute to recommendations

Method

- Based on the guidelines, criteria, methods, and tools presented by the UNEP Evaluation Office
- Participatory approach
- 32 responses (interviews and surveys) with key stakeholders (Implementing agency, partners, donor, MEAs secretariats, and government officials / NFP)

♂ 56% ♀ 44%



Preliminary Findings

A. Strategic Relevance

- Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW, and strategic priorities
- Alignment to Donor/Partner strategic priorities
- Relevance to global, regional, sub-regional, and national environmental priorities
- Complementarity with relevant existing interventions/coherence

B. Quality of Project Design

C. Nature of External Context

D. Effectiveness

- Availability of outputs
- Achievement of project outcomes
- Likelihood of impact

E. Financial Management

- Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures
- Completeness of project financial information
- Communication between finance and project management staff

F. Efficiency

G. Monitoring & Reporting

- Monitoring design and budgeting
- Monitoring of project implementation
- Project reporting

H. Sustainability

- Socio-political sustainability
- Financial sustainability
- Institutional sustainability

I. Factors Affecting Performance

- Preparation and readiness
- Quality of project management and supervision
- Stakeholders' participation and cooperation
- Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality
- Environmental and social safeguards
- Country ownership and driven-ness
- Communication and public awareness

A. Strategic relevance

- Fully aligned with UNEP's mandate and thematic priorities (MTS 2018-2021 and 2022-2025) and corresponding PoWs (2018-2019, 2020-2021, and 2022-2023), supporting Capacity Building (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (S-SC).
- Addressed donor and partner priorities by tackling national environmental challenges and promoting biodiversity conservation.
- Key financial support from Switzerland, China, Sweden, the Nordic Council, and the EU.
- Strategies aligned with global, regional, sub-regional, and national environmental priorities, though activities focused more on global cooperation than national-level implementation.
- Indirectly aligned with the UN's "Leave No One Behind" policy by promoting an inclusive impact across different countries, including Least Developed Countries (LDCs).
- Demonstrated moderate complementarity with related projects, though stronger integration strategies could have enhanced synergy (e.g. ACP-MEAs).

B. Quality of Project Design

- Aligned with UNEP priorities, focusing on capacity building and supporting the SDGs.
- Good performance in several review criteria (e.g.; Logical Framework and Monitoring, Governance and Supervision Arrangements, Financial Planning / Budgeting, Efficiency, and Sustainability / Replication and Catalytic Effects).
- Opportunities for Improvement: greater clarity needed in defining the problem, more detailed descriptions of roles and responsibilities for internal and external partners, a comprehensive stakeholder analysis, and well-defined causal pathways in the Theory of Change.
- Governance and Financial Planning: Strong overall, though the project lacked a dedicated budget for monitoring.

C. Nature of External Context



The COVID-19 pandemic moderately impacted project operations. The transition to online activities (e.g., Bern II) enhanced inclusivity, expanded stakeholder participation, and reduced carbon emissions.

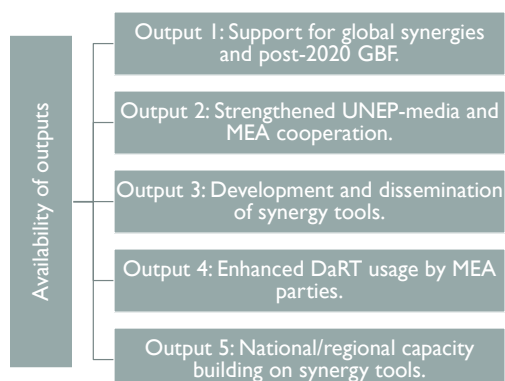


Virtual formats reduced engagement and event effectiveness, while delays in CBD COP-15 and limited in-person interactions impacted timelines and consensus-building.



Demonstrated strong adaptive management by securing additional funding and adjusting to the new reality with rescheduled key events.

D. Effectiveness (1/3)



- Output performance against indicators: Most activities were successfully completed within the adjusted timeframes, exceeding targets and achieving all five outputs.
- Outputs 1, 3, and 4 were delivered on time and with good quality.
- Output 2 faced staffing and communication challenges but made meaningful progress.
- Output 5 was fully delivered despite budget limitations, personnel shortages, and limited DaRT adoption.
- Opportunities for improvement in strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, training, technical support, and the integration of tools and processes.
- Key users actively participated, fostering strong ownership.

D. Effectiveness (2/3)

Achievement of outcome

“Increasingly coherent implementation of environmental treaties contributes to biodiversity goals and targets and the SDGs”

- Exceeded targets: Engaged with 6 intergovernmental forums*, created 30 country working spaces (vs. 11 planned), mobilized significant funding for MEA-related activities, and established 5 National Coordination Entities (vs. 2 planned) - Cameroon, Pakistan, Tanzania, Colombia, and Rwanda.
- Key assumptions for the output-to-outcome transition and drivers were successfully set in place.
- Partial success in achieving the planned outcome: greater synergy at the national level is still needed.

*15th CBD COP in Montreal, the 9th ITPGRFA Governing Body Session in New Delhi, the 53rd CMS Standing Committee Meeting in Bonn, the 14th Ramsar COP in Wuhan/Geneva, the 19th CITES COP in Panama City, and the Extended 44th World Heritage Committee Session in Fuzhou/Online.

D. Effectiveness (3/3)

Likelihood of impact

Intermediate State

Parties are collectively implementing environmental treaties with enhanced coherence, taking steps toward aligning with global biodiversity targets and SDGs.

- Project impact is likely to be realized with the necessary drivers and assumptions for success in place.
- The intermediate state was partially achieved: shortcomings identified in Output 5 hindered the likelihood of reaching it in the near term.
- No unintended negative effects resulting from the project.
- The project played a significant catalytic role by promoting cooperation & coherence in implementing MEAs and contributing to Kunming-Montreal GBF.

E. Financial Management



Strong financial management ensured timely cash advances, regular expenditure reporting, and adaptive budget revisions to address pandemic-related delays



No major financial issues impacted performance; additional funding was mobilized through 3 project extensions.



Financial documentation was generally complete, accurate, and accessible, with timely records maintained through systems like PIMS & IPMR.



Effective financial oversight through regular meetings and proactive collaboration between PM and FMO and sharing financial reports.



Approved no-cost extension complied with UNEP guidelines and donor requirements, demonstrating strong procedural adherence and adaptive management.

F. Efficiency

- Successfully delivered outputs with notable cost efficiency through partnerships, in-kind contributions, and pre-existing networks.
- Adopted several time and cost-saving mechanisms: remote activities, event alignment, and resource-sharing.
- Design challenges included initial funding uncertainties and limited early stakeholder engagement.
- Pandemic-related delays affected national-level results (e.g., 2-year delay in global biodiversity negotiations, particularly those related to the post-2020 GBF).
- Four extensions, including one no-cost extension: project revisions addressed these challenges as much as possible
- Interview feedback highlighted efficiency but noted missed opportunities to engage effectively with ongoing initiatives (e.g., ACP-MEA).
- Demonstrated strong adaptive management.

G. Monitoring & Reporting

- **Successes:**
 - Developed an M&E model based on UNEP standards with SMART indicators, refined over time.
 - The revised M&E plan tracked 20 indicators and supported output delivery.
 - The operational monitoring system ensured efficient data collection and operational effectiveness.
 - Maintained detailed documentation through UNEP's PIMS and IPMR systems, with timely reporting.
 - The monitoring budget was adequate and effectively used, contributing to system efficiency.
- **Opportunities for Improvement:**
 - Gaps in outcome-oriented indicators limited the effectiveness of measuring higher-level results/impacts. Indicators should measure not only the number of actions but also their impact and effectiveness.
 - For example, instead of counting the "Number of National Coordination Entities Created that Include MEA Focal Points," measure the "Number of established and operational national coordination entities with regular meetings, dedicated budgets, and integrated actions among MEAs."
 - The project performance data analysis approach could have been more effective in producing meaningful discussions and timely adjustments.

H. Sustainability



Socio-political sustainability

- Depends on political will, stakeholder ownership, and national integration.
- Evidence showed government and stakeholder commitment.
- Political shifts and DaRT's voluntary nature challenge long-term adoption.
- Enhancing adaptive mechanisms, tailored country models, incentives, and capacity-building are key to sustainability.
- The continuation of initiatives under the Treaties II project marked progress (consolidated tool use, addressing behavioral/organizational change, and capacity building.).



Financial sustainability

- Depends on funding for DaRT maintenance, capacity building, and engagement
- Treaties II brings financial sustainability and shows the interest of participating countries
- Uncertainty regarding long-term financial sustainability, with limited diversification of funding sources.
- The exit strategy on design lacked a financial component.
- Opportunities for future funding through collaborations with other projects or donors, and continue adopting low-cost approaches.



Institutional sustainability

- Relies on institutional support, with strong adoption by biodiversity institutions in target countries, but challenges in engaging other economic sectors (e.g., Ministry of Finance/Planning).
- Strengthening institutional sustainability at the national level is crucial. Establishing biodiversity committees can ensure ongoing stakeholder engagement.
- A robust mechanism for institutionalizing outcomes was established through capacity-building, and UNEP's focus on international environmental law and MEAs.

I. Factors Affecting Performance (1/3)

Preparation and readiness

- **Successes:** comprehensive inception meetings (Project Deep Dive Review); establishment of governance structures, and effective staffing mobilization that minimized disruptions.
- **Challenges:** Work/procurement plans and stakeholder engagement lacked detail; partnerships were not clearly defined; some initial delays affecting the start of activities (i.e., Output 4, legal agreements).

Quality of project management and supervision

- **Successes:** Strong leadership and adaptive management (UNEP and partners). Regular and constructive communication between manager, team, colleagues, and partners. Good oversight by the Steering Committee.
- **Challenges:** Staff turnover (UNEP-WCMC); Eventual need for better alignment and strategic planning to prioritize activities and avoid last-minute decision-making.

Stakeholders' participation and cooperation

- **Successes:** Stakeholder engagement (MEA secretariat and countries) improved over time with workshops and events, and with the Steering Committee serving as a key participation platform. Effective collaboration was supported, including sharing plans and pooling resources.
- **Challenges:** Stakeholder consultation, analysis, and engagement could have been further strengthened.

I. Factors Affecting Performance (2/3)

Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality

- **Successes:** Gender mainstreaming efforts in Lao PDR & Myanmar; gender guidance shared during key meetings and technical inputs on the post-2020 GBF; gender equity in participation.
- **Challenges:** More comprehensive approach for vulnerable groups. Human rights and Indigenous knowledge were not fully integrated.

Environmental and social safeguards

- **Successes:** Thoughtful approach to risk management in its design and implementation phases.
- **Comment:** Risk management focused mainly on political/organizational aspects because the project was not expected to generate any significant negative environmental and social impact.

I. Factors Affecting Performance (3/3)

Country ownership and driven-ness

- **Successes:** Outputs 4 and 5 empowered government ministries to lead advocacy, endorse results, and initiate complementary actions (Cameroon's DaRT strategy). Government representatives actively engaged in post-2020 GBF crucial discussions and the training activities for the DaRT tool and Bern Process.
- **Challenges:** Inconsistent country ownership, limited involvement from non-biodiversity ministries, and lack of early government engagement through structured mechanisms (working group or technical committee).

Communication and public awareness

- **Successes:** Targeted, interactive, well-funded communication efforts effectively raised awareness and drove change. A communication plan/strategy was developed and implemented, and Outputs 1 and 2 facilitated collaboration at national and international levels.
- **Challenges:** There was a need for further strengthened communication with stakeholders, particularly regarding implementing feedback.

Conclusions

MLTR Strategic Questions:

1. “How has the project supported or improved biodiversity governance and the cooperation and synergies agenda globally through support to the governing bodies of the MEAs and implementation of COP decisions in the biodiversity and chemicals thematic clusters of MEAs as well as UNEA?”
2. “Has the project improved cooperation among the biodiversity-related MEAs and improved measurable coherence and efficiency, avoiding duplication of efforts at the global, regional and national level?”
3. “Has the project impacted country level implementation of biodiversity related conventions and goals through enhanced guidance, knowledge management and harmonized reporting to MEAs?”
4. “How effective and efficient has the roll-out of integrated approaches and tools been including the roll-out of the Data Reporting Tool (DaRT)?”
5. “What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project’s performance?”

Conclusion I: The project supported biodiversity governance and the cooperation and synergies agenda globally by facilitating collaboration between MEA secretariats, promoting the integrated implementation of the MEAs’ agendas, and contributing to the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, while also organizing key workshops and fostering collaborative networks.

- Increased awareness of synergies between conventions, and unified efforts among treaties and organizations.
- Successful workshops and events, especially within the BERN process.
- Challenges faced: Insufficient resources and tight deadlines; communication issues, particularly around stakeholder feedback; broad scope (beyond biodiversity) in the BERN process; and different processes/focus (e.g., reports, mandates, and systems) among secretariats hindering deeper collaboration.
- Key results: Incorporation of recommendations in government decisions; adoption of UNEA resolution 6/4 on promoting synergies for MEA implementation; creation of collaborative networks between focal points; and five conventions (CITES, ITPGRFA, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, CMS, and WHC) adopted decisions or resolutions based on the 2022 Bern II report, highlighting commitment to collaborative action.

Conclusion 2: The project improved cooperation among biodiversity-related MEAs through constructive dialogues and tools but faced challenges in achieving higher levels of coherence and efficiency due to communication gaps, limited coordination, and the DaRT's interoperability issues.

- Improved cooperation among biodiversity-related MEAs, promoted dialogue, and developed tools such as DaRT and 3 compendia of guidance (electronic version).
- DaRT showed promise in supporting reporting and data sharing in a few countries, being a private working space under Parties control.
- Challenges faced: Difficulty in achieving measurable coherence and efficiency, especially at regional and national levels (Lack of focus on the real impact of activities nationally); DaRT workshop did not translate into practical cooperation afterward; and duplication of efforts persisted due to DaRT's limited interoperability with other tools (e.g., ORS).
- Supported the inclusion of MEA commitments in National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).
- Led to new decisions on cooperation and improvement of MEA reports.

Conclusion 3: The project was welcomed by target countries but nevertheless had a limited impact on country-level implementation of MEAs conventions. It provided useful guidance and knowledge management tools but faced challenges like insufficient stakeholder engagement at the national level.

- Enhanced guidance and knowledge management for MEAs at the national level and helped align national policies with the KM-GBF, integrating global goals into national strategies.
- Challenges faced: DaRT's limited recognition as a knowledge management platform beyond a reporting tool; DaRT needs to be more practical to aid its broader use; pandemic-related delays in DaRT's alignment with the KM-GBF; and limited presence of structured national awareness strategies in many countries.
- Improved stakeholder engagement through workshops and training.
- Created 104 national workspaces on the DaRT platform by June 2023, enabling countries to use it.

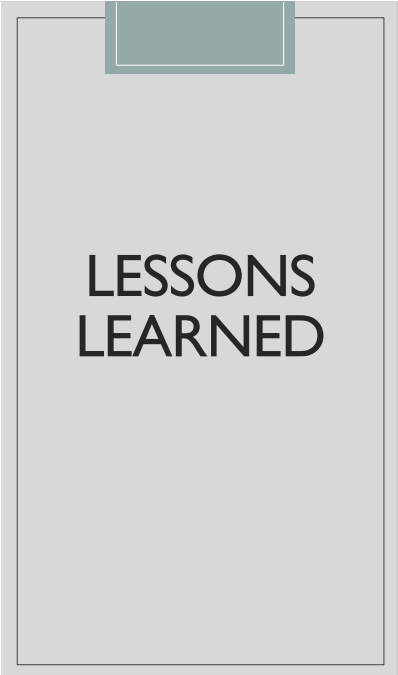
Conclusion 4: The roll-out of DaRT was partially effective and efficient, achieving recognition and exceeding the proposed goals. However, it has faced challenges such as a complex user interface, insufficient stakeholder engagement, technical issues, and limited resources.

- Exceeded targets in capacity building, training NFPs, and promoting gender-responsive guidance: Introduced DaRT to 30 new countries in 2023 through workshops, reaching 120 focal points and government representatives.
- Challenges faced: Limited resources and investment planned for Output 5 on national implementation; absence of robust national databases; challenges with national staff turnover; DaRT interoperability issues with existing systems; DaRT's complexity for new users, requiring extensive training; and limited structured national awareness strategies in most countries, hindering broader adoption.
- National coordination entities in 5 countries (Cameroon, Pakistan, Tanzania, Colombia, and Rwanda).
- Cameroon created an implementation mechanism through DaRT, and Rwanda developed a UNEP-supported mechanism to enhance MEA effectiveness.

Conclusion 5: To adapt to the effects of COVID-19, the project transitioned to online meetings and activities, which expanded participation, maintained project timelines, and reduced carbon emissions. However, the effects of COVID-19 impacted engagement, learning, and tool implementation at the national level.

- Adapted quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic by shifting to online meetings and activities, promoting broader stakeholder participation, including focal points who might not have attended in-person events.
- Challenges faced: The lack of clarity in global timelines and delays in post-2020 framework negotiations hindered national stakeholder engagement and DaRT adoption, and the lack of in-person interactions hindered learning, implementation, and the effectiveness of workshops and discussions, emphasizing the essential role of face-to-face activities for promoting actions to foster synergies.
- Adaptations helped meet CBD deadlines and supported UNEP's sustainability goals by reducing carbon emissions.

		Conclusions				
Lessons learned		C1	C2	C3	C4	C5
	L1	X				
	L2			X		
	L3		X	X	X	
	L4		X	X	X	
	L5	X	X			
	L6	X			X	
	L7				X	
	L8					X



LESSONS
LEARNED

Lessons learned (1/4)

- 1** Cooperation, collaboration, and alignment between MEA Secretariats are essential for advancing global governance of biodiversity and chemicals.
- 2** Overemphasis on process indicators at the expense of impact indicators undermines the project's ability to monitor the achievement of its broader objectives.

e.g., the number of outreach activities that disseminate the tool vs. the percentage of target users who adopt and effectively use the tool after outreach activities demonstrating improved data sharing, collaboration, and decision-making

Lessons learned (2/4)

- 3** Digital knowledge management tools can enhance access and collaboration, but their widespread use and long-term sustainability depend on key factors such their efficiency in processing and organizing new data.
- 4** Some countries might need structured and continuous technical and institutional support to effectively implement collaborative initiatives to achieve synergies among MEAs.

Lessons learned (3/4)

- 5** Integrated strategic planning, stakeholder engagement at early stage, and a stronger focus on national and regional implementation are essential to maximize the effectiveness, coordination, and impact of projects and initiatives aimed at fostering synergies in implementing MEAs at the national level.
- 6** Similar projects must prioritize the diversification of funding sources and the integration of project activities with national systems, strategies and projects, and UN Country Teams to ensure the long-term sustainability of outcomes.

Lessons learned (4/4)

- 7** Incorporating specific guidelines and establishing monitoring mechanisms for gender and social inclusion enhance the impact and effectiveness of projects dealing with biodiversity MEAs.
- 8** Balancing digital participation with in-person interactions is essential to enhancing the effectiveness of UNEP's global / multi-country projects' implementation in the post-COVID era.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

Conclusions

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5
R1			X		
R2			X	X	
R3		X	X	X	
R4		X	X	X	
R5		X	X	X	
R6	X	X	X	X	
R7				X	
R8					X

Recommendations (1/3)

- 1** Strengthen existing monitoring mechanisms in follow-up projects (i.e.: Treaties II) by establishing an impact-focused monitoring and evaluation system at the project level to measure long-term results and enhance sustainability.
- 2** Reposition the DaRT Platform as an integrated platform for data sharing and collaboration on MEAs at the national level.
- 3** Mobilize resources to enhance the interoperability and usability of the DaRT tool to maximize its effectiveness, utilizing Artificial Intelligence when possible.

Recommendations (2/3)

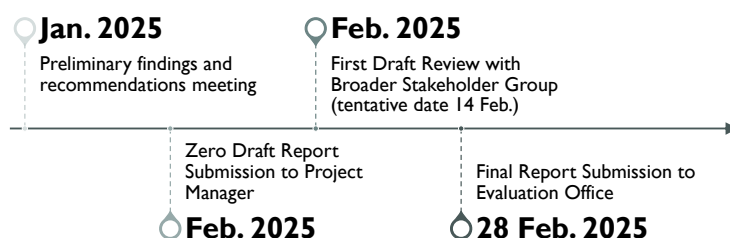
- 4** Under Treaties II and/or follow-up projects, develop and implement a structured capacity-building program based on active learning* with continuous technical support to ensure effective adoption of the tools promoted by the project, especially DaRT.
- 5** Under Treaties II and/or follow-up projects, support National DaRT Committees to enhance engagement at the national level and strengthen support, cooperation, collaboration, and alignment.
- 6** Enhance early and inclusive stakeholder engagement to strengthen project implementation and sustainability in future projects.

* "Learning by doing" approach using, for instance, Project-Based Learning (PBL) methodology and tools

Recommendations (3/3)

- 7** Enhance engagement of vulnerable groups and strengthen social inclusion monitoring for greater equity and impact in future global synergies-focused projects.
- 8** Adopt a hybrid work model to strengthen collaboration, cooperation, and alignment in follow-up projects (i.e.: Treaties II), maximizing inclusion, efficiency, and impact.

The way forward



Thank you

Elaine P. Varela Alberte
Evaluation Consultant
UNEP Law Division



ANNEX IX. BRIEF CV OF THE REVIEWER



Elaine P. Varela Albarte

Profession	Enviromental specialist / civil engineer
Nationality	Brazilian / Spanish
Country experience	• Europe: Spain • Africa: Kenya • Americas: Brasil, Colombia, and Canada
Education	• Doctor of Philosophy – PhD, Enviromental Engineering • Postgrade - Recovery of Degraded Areas • Bachelor of Science – BS, Civil Engineering

Dr. Elaine Varela is an independent evaluator with a Ph.D. in Environmental Engineering and over 20 years of experience in developing and evaluating complex environmental projects and programs across multiple countries. She has conducted in-depth analyses and evaluations using methodologies aligned with OECD-DAC evaluation criteria and UNEP Evaluation Policy, including the Theory of Change, sustainability indicators, and multi-criteria matrices. Her expertise spans designing quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods, managing risks and results, and coordinating strategic plans and partnerships. She has authored multiple review reports, assessed over 150 project documents, and published more than 80 knowledge products.

Currently, she is a professor at the Federal University of Bahia, a board member and senior researcher at the UNESCO Chair on Sustainability, the Head of Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation at a Kenyan community-based organization, and an independent international consultant.

With a proven track record of leading over 30 environmental, development, engineering, and technology projects, as well as extensive collaboration with governments and international organizations, she brings professionalism, strong analytical and communication skills, and fluency in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

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ANNEX X. REVIEW TORS (WITHOUT ANNEXES)

Terminal Review of the UNEP project

“Environmental Treaties Programme – Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity”

Project ID 413.4

Section 1: PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

(This section describes what is to be reviewed. Key parameters are: project timeframe, funding envelope, results framework and geographic scope)

1. Project General Information

Table 1. Project summary

(This is a generic table to summarise a project. Integrate the information below with the standard ‘project summary’ table of the relevant donor e.g. Adaptation Fund, GCF, GEF).

UNEP PIMS/SMA¹⁰⁰ ID:	WBSE: SB-008884	SMA ID: 35480	PIMS no. 01988 IPMR no. 35480
Donor ID:			
Implementing Partners:	UNEP-WCMC Other Divisions/Regional Offices (and the regional information officers) are regularly consulted: - Regional Offices: Asia Pacific, Africa, Europe, Latin America & Caribbean and West Asia. - Divisions: Ecosystems, Policy and Programmes, Communications Division; and other divisions as appropriate.		
SDG(s) and indicator(s)	Mainly 15.9, 16.8 and 17.14 but the project ‘realizing synergies for biodiversity’ is also contributing in varying extent to other biodiversity-related goals and targets. Indicators: 15.9.1, 17.14.1		
Sub-programme:	Environmental Governance	Expected Accomplishment(s):	EA (a): The international community increasingly converges on common and integrated approaches to achieve environmental objectives and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development EA (b): Institutional capacities and policy and/or legal frameworks enhanced to achieve internationally agreed environmental goals, including 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals

¹⁰⁰ Acronym for ID assigned by the Integrated Planning, Monitoring and Reporting (IPMR) system.

"UNEP approval date:		Programme of Work Output(s):	PoW 2022-2023
Expected start date:	11/2017	Actual start date:	11/2017
Planned operational completion date:	11/2020	Actual operational completion date:	06/2023
Planned total project budget at approval (show breakdown of individual sources/grants):	2,080,196	Actual total expenditures reported as of June 2023:	2,223,360
Expected co-financing:	501,852	Secured co-financing¹⁰¹:	639,971
First disbursement:	12/2017	Planned date of financial closure:	06/2023
No. of project revisions:	4	Date of last approved project revision:	16/12/2022
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	6	Date of last/next Steering Committee meeting:	Last: 23/08/2022 Next: 06/2023
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation¹⁰² (planned date):	N/A as per footnote, the project was planned for 3 years initially	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):	12/2021 (05/2022 for the final MTR report) following 4 project extensions
Terminal Review (planned date):	12/2023	Terminal Review (actual date):	N/A
Coverage - Country(ies):	Global	Coverage - Region(s):	Asia Pacific, Africa, Europe, Latin America & Caribbean and West Asia
Dates of previous project phases:	14 January 2014 to June 2016	Status of future project phases:	"Leveraging transformational change through coherent and synergistic implementation of Environmental Treaties (Treaties II)", approved on 30.06.2023

2. Project Rationale¹⁰³

[Describe project context and justification]

The project (and Programme) "*Environmental Treaties Programme – Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity*" was designed to address the issue of the proliferation and diversification of MEAs over the past 50 or so years and the need to assist Member States and Parties to these treaties in their efforts to coordinate, collaborate, cooperate, and build synergies among these MEAs leading to their more coherent implementation. The logic is that this would accelerate progress towards environmental and biodiversity targets and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Of note is CBD decision XIII/24 ('Cooperation with other conventions and international organizations') which was based, in part, on the regionally representative workshop held in Geneva in February 2016 on promoting synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions⁵. It identified options for enhancing synergies among

¹⁰¹ State whether co-financing amounts are cash or in-kind.

¹⁰² UNEP policies require projects with planned implementation periods of 4 or more years to have a mid-point assessment of performance. For projects under 4 years, this should be marked as N/A.

¹⁰³ Grey = Info to be added

the biodiversity-related conventions at the national level and a detailed roadmap for enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions at the international level 2017-2020.

3. Project Results Framework

[Present the project objective(s), components, outputs, outcomes and long-lasting impacts as per the Project Document (i.e. the results framework). Include the Theory of Change diagram, where available. Use tables as appropriate.]

3.1 Results Framework Table from the Project Document

Project logical framework updated, as per the third project revision approved on 16.12.2021.

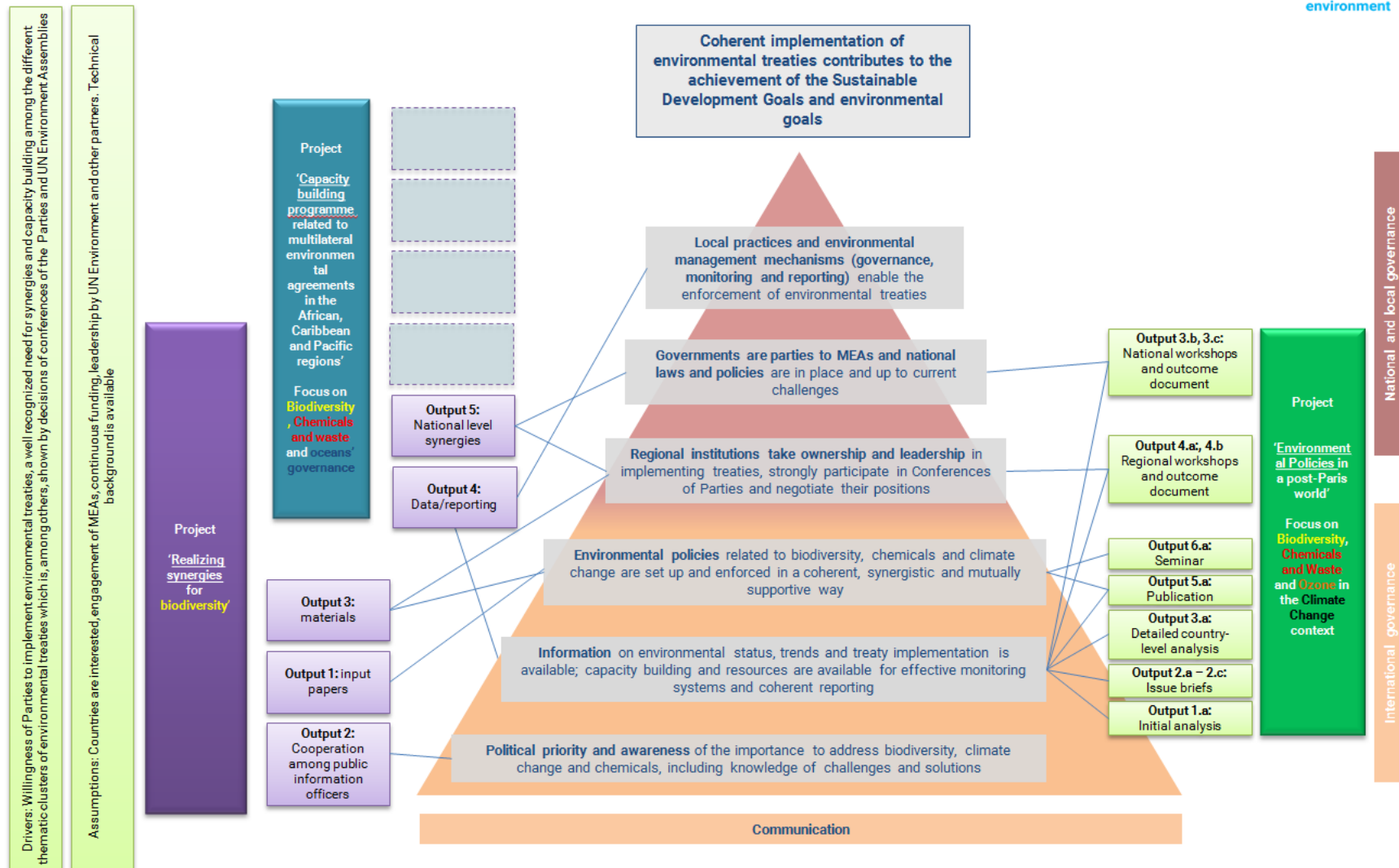
Project Objective			Relevant Programme of Work Outcomes	Subprogramme: Environmental Governance
1. Project Outcome	Indicators	Relevant PoW Outcome(s) and indicator(s)	Relevant SDG target(s) and indicators	Outcome risks
Increasingly coherent implementation of environmental treaties contributes to biodiversity goals and targets and the Sustainable Development Goals SP4: Environmental Governance Subprogramme EA: Expected Accomplishment as per the Programme of Work of UN Environment	Outcome Indicator 1 Number of intergovernmental forums at the global level that take into account outputs of this project [Baseline: 6; Target: 2]. Outcome Indicator 2 Number of implementation mechanisms for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework that integrate elements of synergies between biodiversity-related MEAs [Baseline: 0; Target: 2].	Nature 2CX: iii EG iv	15.9.1, 16.8 and 17.14.1	- failure to adopt the GBF - socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 - insufficient political will by MEAs to adopt integrated tools
Project outcome milestones		Milestone attainment date		
M1 Partners have conveyed their input to the inception of the project		12/2017		
M2 UN Environment has provided input to the preparations of the of post-2020 global biodiversity framework		6/2018		
M3 Stocktaking together with UN Environment regional offices and Secretariats of the biodiversity-related		12/2018		
M4 Outputs of this project are reflected by at least one governing body of at least one of the biodiversity related MEAs		6/2019		
M5 A second stocktaking together with UN Environment regional offices and Secretariats of the biodiversity- related MEAs has been undertaken on the uptake of the work of UN Environment related to synergies among biodiversity-related MEAs		12/2019		

M6 Outputs of this project are reflected by at least one governing body each of at least two of the biodiversity related MEAs		6/2020		
M7 The draft post-2020 global biodiversity framework integrates MEAs synergies elements		12/2020		
M8 The updated draft post-2020 global biodiversity framework integrates MEAs synergies elements with UNEP support		6/2021		
M9 New resources are mobilized to support post-2020 global biodiversity framework implementation with regards to scaling up synergies among MEAs		12/2021		
M10 National coordination mechanisms created that include MEA focal points (outcome indicator 1)		6/2022		
M11 The adopted post-2020 global biodiversity framework integrates MEAs synergies elements prompted by UNEP (outcome indicator 2)		12/2022		
2. Project Outputs	Indicators	Relevant PoW Direct Outcome(s)	Relevant SDG target(s) and indicators	Output risks
1) Support is provided to the MEAs for the global synergies discussions and inputs provided to the post 2020 global biodiversity framework	Number of interactions with the MEAs synergies on the post 2020 global biodiversity framework processes [Baseline 6, Target +1] Number of UNEP technical submission to the post 2020 global biodiversity framework made available to the Parties [Baseline 6, Target +1]	Nature 2CX: iii EG iv	5.9.1, 16.8 and 17.14.1	Failure to adopt the GBF -Socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 -Insufficient political will by MEAs to adopt integrated tool
2) Cooperation between UNEP and public information officers of the media and MEAs	Information on major knowledge products and events are shared with a broad audience relevant to biodiversity through United Nations channels and networks [Baseline 6; Target +2]	Nature 2C: iii EG iv	5.9.1, 16.8 and 17.14.1	Failure to adopt the GBF -Socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 -Insufficient political will by MEAs to adopt integrated tools
3) Tools related to synergies are made available and are disseminated to Parties of the MEAs	Tools (e.g. Sourcebook on synergies) are made available [Baseline 2; Target +0] and disseminated [Baseline 4; Target +3] Number of beneficiaries that acknowledge having access to the tools [Baseline 2,500; Target +500]	Nature 2C: iii EG iv	5.9.1, 16.8 and 17.14.1	Failure to adopt the GBF -Socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 -Insufficient political will by MEAs to adopt integrated tools

4) MEA parties use and become familiar with the enhanced, gender sensitive and interoperable DaRT	Number of national working spaces established in DaRT [Baseline 5, Target + 15] Number of outreach activities that disseminate the tool [Baseline: 20 Target: +10] Number of beneficiaries that participate in the outreach activities [Baseline: 350 Target: + 400]	Nature 2C: iii EG iv	5.9.1, 16.8 and 17.14.1	Failure to adopt the GBF: -Socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 -Insufficient political will by MEAs to adopt integrated tools
5) National and regional level capacity building service on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the use of the synergies' tools provided	Country-level or regional-level activity [Baseline 5, Target +3] Number of capacity building activities implemented [Baseline 4, Target +5] Number of trained national MEA focal points and government representatives involved in national policies on MEAs [Baseline 80, Target +40] Number of gender responsive guidance documents made available to Parties and stakeholders to the CBD, and to other biodiversity-related MEAs [Baseline 0, Target +1]	Nature 2C: iii EG iv	5.9.1, 16.8 and 17.14.1	Failure to adopt the GBF: -Socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 -Insufficient political will by MEAs to adopt integrated tools

3.1 Theory of Change Diagram from the Project Document

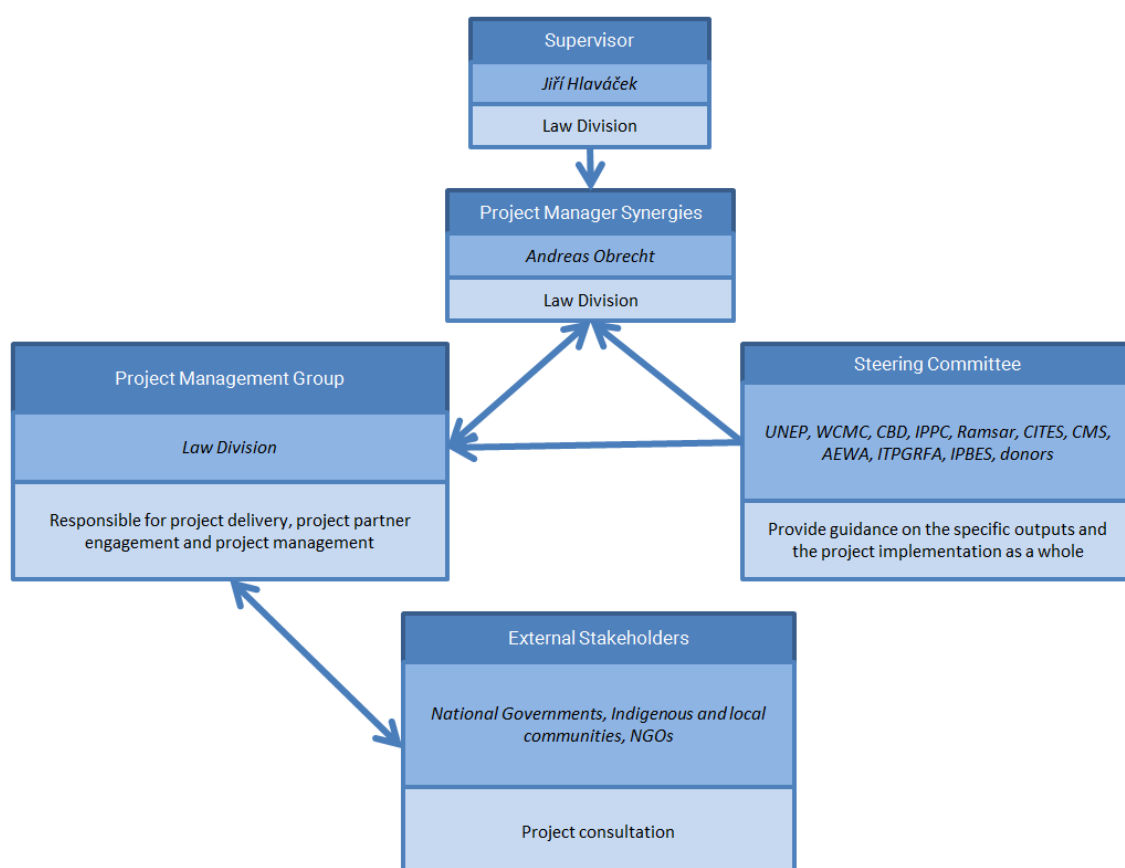
Environmental Treaties Programme – Theory of change



4. Executing Arrangements

[Specify UNEP Branch and Unit responsible for project implementation and project execution partners. Briefly describe role and composition of management and supervision structures of the project. Use table or diagram as appropriate. NOTE: For GEF-funded projects highlight internally executed projects, providing details on reporting lines for implementation and execution.]

The delivery of this project was facilitated by an internal project management group within UNEP Law Division, Environmental Conventions and Policy Branch (former Environmental Governance and Conventions Branch¹⁰⁴). This group consists of Diane Klaimi, project manager, her supervisor and Chief of the Environmental Conventions and Policy Branch, Tita Korvenoja, and other support staff and representatives of other divisions of UNEP as appropriate. A steering committee was established, consisting of representatives of the secretariats of the biodiversity-related conventions, donors, as well as other affiliated international organizations or processes. The project management group met at least twice a year, via teleconference or a physical meeting. The steering committee normally convened at least twice a year, usually via teleconference. For each output, specific subgroups at technical level were created. These subgroups could involve external members as well.



5. Project Cost and Financing

[Present total project budget at design, broken down per component and per funding source. Use tables as appropriate. Present most recent figures on disbursement.]

¹⁰⁴ Name of UNEP Law Division's branch at the beginning of the project (in the Project Document).

Total project budget at design, broken down per component and per funding source

TYPE OF FUNDING	SOURCE OF FUNDING	Details	Year 1 (2017)	Year 2 ¹⁰⁵ (2018)	Year 3 (2019)	Year 4 (2020)	Year 5 Jan – Mar 2021	Year 5 Apr – Oct 2021	Total
CASH	Environment Fund (EF) activity budget	0	0	0	82,123	0	28,400	112,357	222,800
	Regular Budget (RB) activity budget	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Extra Budgetary Funding (XB) (posts + non-post + Programme Support Cost (PSC))	Secured (European Commission, GPGC) for outputs 1,2, and 3 ¹⁰⁶	156,919	0	47812	13,678	0	2,798	221,207
		Programme Support Cost on Secured funds (EC GPGC)	11,811	0	3,599	1029	0	-955	15,484
		Secured (Swiss Federal Office for the Environment)	78,300	87,000	87,000	190,347	174,000	0	616,647
		Programme Support Cost on Secured funds (FOEN)	11,700	13,000	13,000	28,443	26,000		92,143
		Secured (GIZ)	0	86,593					86,593
		Programme Support Cost on Secured funds (GIZ)	0	11,257					11,257
		Secured (China)					256,801		256,801
		Programme Support Cost on secured funds (China)					38,372		38,372
		Law Division co-funding	90,818		0	25,000	165,000	30,117	310,836
		Programme Support Cost on Law Division co-funding	11,793	0	0	3,250	21,650	3,716	40,409
		Secured Norway 2021						92,593	92,593
		Programme support Cost on secured funds (Norway 2021)						7,407	7,407
		Secured Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM)						19,931	19,931
		Programme support Cost on secured funds (NCM)						2,591	2,591
		Secured Government of Finland						39,863	39,863

¹⁰⁵ Number of years/columns will be defined by the project extension/ budget template

¹⁰⁶ See the detailed description of the Outputs in chapter 4.1. The precise allocation per output will be guided by the Steering Committee. It is foreseen that output 3 will include at least one product/material with focus on biodiversity and gender.

		Programme Support on secured Funds(Govt of Finland)						5,182	5,182
		UnSecured (EC GPGC)					564,320	-564,320	0
		PSC on unsecured fund EC GPGC)					42,276	-42,276	0
		XB Sub-total (Secured +unsecured)	361,241	197,850	69,280	261,747	1,288,419	-403,352	1,857,316
	SUB- TOTAL		361,241	197,850	151,4111	261,747	1,288,419	-290,995	2,080,196
IN-KIND			0	0	0				0
	SUB- TOTAL		0	0	0				0
TOTAL PROJECT PLANNED BUDGET (without EF & RB posts' costs)			361,241	197,850	151,411	261,747	1,316,819	-290,995	2,080,196
In Kind EF & RB Posts	Environment Fund post costs	Staff time (2017: 0.25; 2018: 1; 2019: 1)	17,981	112,401	128,036	112,117	18,639	112,678	501,852
	Regular Budget post costs		0	0	0				0
TOTAL PROJECT PLANNED BUDGET			379,223	310251	361,750	373,864	1,335,458	-178,317	2,582,047
	Funding secured	Years 2017-2019	100%	100%	100% ¹⁰⁷				100%

¹⁰⁷ The current project manager post is only secured until the end of 2018

6. Implementation Issues

[Describe any important issues emerging from Mid-Term Review/ Mid-Term Evaluation, important revisions to logframe or funds allocations, significant delays, changes in partners, implementing countries, risks mentioned in project reports during project implementation etc. Note the dates when such changes have been approved and who by]

The main, unanticipated, external challenge faced by the project across its outputs and highlighted in the project's Mid-Term Review from May 2022 (section 4.5.1), was the COVID-19 pandemic that impacted operations at UNEP but also among stakeholders including delaying important intergovernmental meetings upon which project activities depended and resulted in being reviewed and adjusted. The project responded well to this challenge and adapted with alternative ways in holding meetings and capacity building workshops to keep the project afloat. Part of the reason for the second revision of the project (ProDoc Rev. 2) was to cater for changing timelines of associated activities and funding. The *modus operandi* shifted work mainly to on-line platforms. Despite the enormity of the impacts of COVID-19 worldwide the project was mostly able to achieve most of the milestones with eventual delays, with only minor exceptions.

The third revision of the project, signed on 16 December 2021 (ProDoc Rev.3), extended the project for one year until December 2022 to align activities with the new timelines of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF) and related intergovernmental meetings, that support its development and implementation include the subsidiary body meetings, the Open-Ended Working Group on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and COP-15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity which were postponed several times until 2022 due to the impacts of the pandemic. These postponements had major impacts on the project logical framework, however, the outcome level indicators were systematically improved to measure increasing coherent implementation of environmental treaties that contributes to biodiversity goals and targets and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The third revision of the project also accounted for follow-up activities based on new secured funding mobilized to support the implementation of outputs 1, 4 and 5. The project secured new funding of USD 236,000, including USD136,000 from UNEP and USD 100,000 from Norway; in addition, pledges of USD 22,523 by the Nordic Council of Ministers, and EUR 45,045 by Finland were received to support several aspects of the MEA-effectiveness work to be carried out in 2021-2022. Additionally, the new Law Division Director resumed her position, and there were already some organizational changes in the branch and restructuring in the Law Division to adjust with including the hiring of a consultant to support the future strategic branch work including the future of this Treaties Synergies project. Another significant change was the unstable staffing for the DaRT tool/website helpdesk underlined by unexpected staff changes, where a JPO, a UNV and national expert who were trained as trainers since 2019 to continue DaRT work moved to other locations.

Finally, a no-cost extension was granted in October 2022 by the PRC to extend the project from December 2022 to June 2023. The reasons for this extension were to complete the activities of the project uninterrupted, that support the CBD COP15 negotiations taking place in Montreal in December and extend the contract of the DaRT consultant who is responsible for the technical aspects of the tool and rolling out the tool trainings with eligible CBD countries using the remaining funds from Switzerland. The Swiss Donor was consulted and expressed no objection with extending the remaining budget until June 2023.

Section 2. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

(Apart from section 9, where you could insert up to 3 strategic questions that are in addition to the review criteria, this section is standard and does not need to be revised for each project)

7. Objective of the Review

In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy¹⁰⁸ and the UNEP Programme Manual¹⁰⁹, the Terminal Review (TR) is undertaken at operational completion of the project to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The Review has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, UNEP-WCMC and the MEAs, J. Therefore, the Review will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation, especially for future phases of the project, where applicable.

8. Key Review principles

Review findings and judgements will be based on **sound evidence and analysis**, clearly documented in the Review Report. Information will be triangulated (i.e. verified from different sources) as far as possible, and when verification is not possible, the single source will be mentioned (whilst anonymity is still protected). Analysis leading to evaluative judgements should always be clearly spelled out.

The “Why?” Question. As this is a Terminal Review and a follow-up project is likely [or similar interventions are envisaged for the future], particular attention will be given to learning from the experience. Therefore, the “why?” question should be at the front of the consultant(s)’ minds all through the review exercise and is supported by the use of a theory of change approach. This means that the consultant(s) need to go beyond the assessment of “what” the project performance was and make a serious effort to provide a deeper understanding of “why” the performance was as it was (i.e. what contributed to the achievement of the project’s results). This should provide the basis for the lessons that can be drawn from the project.

Attribution, Contribution and Credible Association: In order to *attribute* any outcomes and impacts to a project intervention, one needs to consider the difference between what has happened with, and what would have happened without, the project (i.e. take account of changes over time and between contexts in order to isolate the effects of an intervention). This requires appropriate baseline data and the identification of a relevant counterfactual, both of which are frequently not available for reviews. Establishing the *contribution* made by a project in a complex change process relies heavily on prior intentionality (e.g. approved project design documentation, logical framework) and the articulation of causality (e.g. narrative and/or illustration of the Theory of Change). Robust evidence that a project was delivered as designed and that the expected causal pathways developed supports claims of contribution and this is strengthened where an alternative theory of change can be excluded. A *credible association* between the implementation of a project and observed positive effects can be made where a strong causal narrative, although not explicitly articulated, can be inferred by the chronological sequence of events, active involvement of key actors and engagement in critical processes.

Communicating Review Results. A key aim of the Review is to encourage reflection and learning by UNEP staff and key project stakeholders. The consultant should consider how reflection and learning can be promoted, both through the review process and in the communication of review findings and key lessons. Clear and concise writing is required on all review deliverables. Draft and final versions of the main review report will be shared with key stakeholders by the UNEP Project Manager¹¹⁰. There may, however, be several intended audiences, each with different interests and needs regarding the report. The consultant will plan with the UNEP Project Manager which audiences to target and the easiest and clearest way to communicate the key review findings and lessons to them. This may

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/policies-and-strategies>

¹⁰⁹ <https://wecollaborate.unep.org>

¹¹⁰ For GEF funded projects, UNEP Project Manager refers to the Task Manager.

include some or all of the following: a webinar, conference calls with relevant stakeholders, the preparation of a review brief or interactive presentation.

9. Key Strategic Questions

In addition to the review criteria outlined in Section 10 below, the Review will address the **strategic questions**¹¹¹ listed below (no more than 3 questions are recommended). These are questions of interest to UNEP and to which the project is believed to be able to make a substantive contribution:

- (a) [List up to 3 key review questions or topics to which the consultant(s) should pay particular attention.] Taking into consideration, that the project mid-term review conducted and reported, led to the second phase of the Treaties Programme “Leveraging Transformational Change through coherent and synergistic implementation of Environmental Treaties (Treaties II)”, approved on 30.06.2023.
 - (i) How has the project supported or improved biodiversity governance and the cooperation and synergies agenda globally through support to the governing bodies of the MEAs and implementation of COP decisions in the biodiversity and chemicals thematic clusters of MEAs as well as UNEA?
 - (ii) Has the project improved cooperation among the biodiversity-related MEAs and improved measurable coherence and efficiency, avoiding duplication of efforts at the global, regional and national level?
 - (iii) Has the project impacted country level implementation of biodiversity related conventions and goals through enhanced guidance, knowledge management and harmonized reporting to MEAs ?
 - (iv) How effective and efficient has the roll-out of integrated approaches and tools been including the roll-out of the Data Reporting Tool (DaRT).
- (b) (Where relevant) What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project’s performance?

During Covid-19 pandemic period, in 2020-2021, DaRT webinars were organized in place of in-person national and regional workshops, while the latter essentially took place in 2022. While the webinars were generally informative, the impact was visibly negative on the training of national experts due to the unreliable online platforms in developing countries. On the other hand related to global negotiations, the Bern II Consultation on synergies among multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), initially planned as an in-person conference, was shifted to an online process including knowledge briefings and webinars and discussion forum that parties contributed to in written online formats and the actual final workshop was held online after being postponed to January 2021. This proved that negotiations can be implemented online despite few objections from some countries. The project performance was impacted forcibly because its deliverables depended on the global negotiations’ agenda.

~~For GEF-funded projects there are a series of questions that need to be uploaded to the GEF Portal. The consultant should complete the table in Annex 5 of these TOR and append it to the Final Review report.~~

10. Review Criteria

All review criteria will be rated on a six-point scale. Sections A-I below, outline the scope of the review criteria. The set of review criteria are grouped in nine categories: (A) Strategic Relevance; (B) Quality of Project Design; (C) Nature of External Context; (D) Effectiveness, which comprises assessments of the availability of outputs, achievement of outcomes and likelihood of impact; (E) Financial Management;

¹¹¹ The strategic questions should not duplicate questions that will be addressed under the standard review criteria described in section 10.

(F) Efficiency; (G) Monitoring and Reporting; (H) Sustainability; and (I) Factors Affecting Project Performance.

Where UNEP funding partners have areas of specific interest, these are noted, below.

A suite of various tools, templates and guidelines that can help Review Consultant(s) to follow a thorough review process that meets all of UNEP's needs is available via the UNEP Project Manager.

A. Strategic Relevance

The Review will assess the extent to which the activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the donors, implementing regions/countries and the target beneficiaries. The Review will include an assessment of the project's relevance in relation to UNEP's mandate and its alignment with UNEP's policies and strategies at the time of project approval. Under strategic relevance an assessment of the complementarity of the project with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups will be made. This criterion comprises four elements:

i. Alignment to the UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy¹¹² (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities

The Review should assess the project's alignment with the MTS and POW under which the project was approved and include, in its narrative, reflections on the scale and scope of any contributions made to the planned results reflected in the relevant MTS and POW. UNEP strategic priorities include the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building¹¹³ (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (S-SC). The BSP relates to the capacity of governments to: comply with international agreements and obligations at the national level; promote, facilitate and finance environmentally sound technologies and to strengthen frameworks for developing coherent international environmental policies. S-SC is regarded as the exchange of resources, technology and knowledge between developing countries.

ii. Alignment to Donor/Partner Strategic Priorities

Donor strategic priorities will vary across interventions. The Review will assess the extent to which the project is suited to, or responding to, donor priorities. In some cases, alignment with donor priorities may be a fundamental part of project design and grant approval processes while in others, for example, instances of 'softly-earmarked' funding, such alignment may be more of an assumption that should be assessed.

iii. Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities

The Review will assess the alignment of the project with global priorities such as the SDGs and Agenda 2030. The extent to which the intervention is suited, or responding to, the stated environmental concerns and needs of the countries, sub-regions or regions where it is being implemented will also be considered. Examples may include: UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF) or, national or sub-national development plans, poverty reduction strategies or Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) plans or regional agreements etc. Within this section consideration will be given to whether the needs of all beneficiary groups are being met and reflects the current policy priority to leave no-one behind.

iv. Complementarity with Relevant Existing Interventions/Coherence¹¹⁴

¹¹² UNEP's Medium Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UNEP's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UNEP's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs), of the Sub-programmes. <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach/un-environment-documents>

¹¹³ <http://www.unep.fr/ozonaction/about/bsp.htm>

¹¹⁴ This sub-category is consistent with the new criterion of 'Coherence' introduced by the OECD-DAC in 2019.

An assessment will be made of how well the project, either at design stage or during the project inception or mobilization¹¹⁵, took account of ongoing and planned initiatives (under the same sub-programme, other UNEP sub-programmes, or being implemented by other agencies within the same country, sector or institution) that address similar needs of the same target groups. The Review will consider if the project team, in collaboration with Regional Offices and Sub-Programme Coordinators, made efforts to ensure their own intervention was complementary to other interventions, optimized any synergies and avoided duplication of effort. Examples may include work within Cooperation Frameworks or One UN programming. Linkages with other interventions should be described and instances where UNEP's comparative advantage has been particularly well applied should be highlighted.

Adaptation Fund	To encourage utilization, each evaluation should optimize <u>relevance</u> by ensuring (i) that the primary intended users of the evaluation and their intended uses are clearly identified and engaged at the beginning of the evaluation process; (ii) that "intended users" include funding, implementing, and beneficiary stakeholders; and (iii) that evaluators ensure these intended users contribute to decisions about the evaluation process.
Green Climate Fund	<u>Coherence</u> in climate finance delivery with other multilateral entities.

B. Quality of Project Design

The quality of project design is assessed using an agreed template during the review inception phase. Ratings are attributed to identified criteria and an overall Project Design Quality rating is established. The complete Project Design Quality template should be annexed in the Review Inception Report. Later, the overall Project Design Quality rating¹¹⁶ should be entered in the final review ratings table (as item B) in the Main Review Report and a summary of the project's strengths and weaknesses at design stage should be included within the body of the Main Review Report.

C. Nature of External Context

At review inception stage a rating is established for the project's external operating context (considering the prevalence of conflict, natural disasters and political upheaval¹¹⁷). This rating is entered in the final review ratings table as item C. Where a project has been rated as facing either an *Unfavourable* or *Highly Unfavourable* external operating context, and/or a negative external event has occurred during project implementation, the ratings for Effectiveness, Efficiency and/or Sustainability may be increased at the discretion of the Review Consultant and UNEP Project Manager together. A justification for such an increase must be given.

D. Effectiveness

i. Availability of Outputs¹¹⁸

The Review will assess the project's success in producing the programmed outputs and making them available to the intended beneficiaries as well as its success in achieving milestones as per the project design document (ProDoc). Any formal modifications/revisions made during project implementation

¹¹⁵ A project's inception or mobilization period is understood as the time between project approval and first disbursement. Complementarity during project implementation is considered under Efficiency, see below.

¹¹⁶ In some instances, based on data collected during the review process, the assessment of the project's design quality may change from Inception Report to Main Review Report.

¹¹⁷ Note that 'political upheaval' does not include regular national election cycles, but unanticipated unrest or prolonged disruption. The potential delays or changes in political support that are often associated with the regular national election cycle should be part of the project's design and addressed through adaptive management of the project team. From March 2020 this should include the effects of COVID-19.

¹¹⁸ Outputs are the availability (for intended beneficiaries/users) of new products and services and/or gains in knowledge, abilities and awareness of individuals or within institutions (UNEP, 2019)

will be considered part of the project design. Where the project outputs are inappropriately or inaccurately stated in the ProDoc, reformulations may be necessary in the reconstruction of the Theory of Change (TOC). In such cases a table should be provided showing the original and the reformulation of the outputs for transparency. The availability of outputs will be assessed in terms of both quantity and quality, and the assessment will consider their ownership by, and usefulness to, intended beneficiaries and the timeliness of their provision. It is noted that emphasis is placed on the performance of those outputs that are most important to achieve outcomes. The Review will briefly explain the reasons behind the success or shortcomings of the project in delivering its programmed outputs and meeting expected quality standards.

ii. Achievement of Project Outcomes¹¹⁹

The achievement of project outcomes is assessed as performance against the outcomes as defined in the reconstructed¹²⁰ Theory of Change. These are outcomes that are intended to be achieved by the end of the project timeframe and within the project's resource envelope. Emphasis is placed on the achievement of project outcomes that are most important for attaining intermediate states. As with outputs, a table can be used to show where substantive amendments to the formulation of project outcomes is necessary to allow for an assessment of performance. The Review should report evidence of attribution between UNEP's intervention and the project outcomes. In cases of normative work or where several actors are collaborating to achieve common outcomes, evidence of the nature and magnitude of UNEP's 'substantive contribution' should be included and/or 'credible association' established between project efforts and the project outcomes realised.

iii. Likelihood of Impact

Based on the articulation of long-lasting effects in the reconstructed TOC (*i.e. from project outcomes, via intermediate states, to impact*), the Review will assess the likelihood of the intended, positive impacts becoming a reality. Project objectives or goals should be incorporated in the TOC, possibly as intermediate states or long-lasting impacts. The Evaluation Office's approach to the use of TOC in project reviews is outlined in a guidance note and is supported by an excel-based flow chart, 'Likelihood of Impact Assessment Decision Tree'. Essentially the approach follows a 'likelihood tree' from project outcomes to impacts, taking account of whether the assumptions and drivers identified in the reconstructed TOC held. Any unintended positive effects should also be identified and their causal linkages to the intended impact described.

The Review will also consider the likelihood that the intervention may lead, or contribute to, unintended negative effects (e.g. will vulnerable groups such as those living with disabilities and/or women and children, be disproportionately affected by the project?). Some of these potential negative effects may have been identified in the project design as risks or as part of the analysis of Environmental and Social Safeguards.

The Review will consider the extent to which the project has played a catalytic role¹²¹ or has promoted scaling up and/or replication as part of its Theory of Change (either explicitly as in a project with a

¹¹⁹ Outcomes are the use (i.e. uptake, adoption, application) of an output by intended beneficiaries, observed as changes in institutions or behavior, attitude or condition (UNEP, 2019)

¹²⁰ UNEP staff are currently required to submit a Theory of Change with all submitted project designs. The level of 'reconstruction' needed during an review will depend on the quality of this initial TOC, the time that has lapsed between project design and implementation (which may be related to securing and disbursing funds) and the level of any changes made to the project design. In the case of projects pre-dating 2013 the intervention logic is often represented in a logical framework and a TOC will need to be constructed in the inception stage of the review.

¹²¹ The terms catalytic effect, scaling up and replication are inter-related and generally refer to extending the coverage or magnitude of the effects of a project. Catalytic effect is associated with triggering additional actions that are not directly funded by the project – these effects can be both concrete or less tangible, can be intentionally caused by the project or implied in the design and reflected in the TOC drivers, or can be unintentional and can rely on funding from another source or have no financial requirements. Scaling up and Replication require more intentionality for projects, or individual components and approaches, to be reproduced in other similar contexts. Scaling up suggests a substantive increase in the number of new beneficiaries reached/involved and may require adapted delivery mechanisms while Replication suggests the repetition of an approach or component at a similar scale but among different beneficiaries. Even with highly technical work, where scaling up or replication involves working with a new community, some consideration of the new context should take place and adjustments made as necessary.

demonstration component or implicitly as expressed in the drivers required to move to outcome levels) and as factors that are likely to contribute to greater or long-lasting impact.

Ultimately UNEP and all its partners aim to bring about benefits to the environment and human well-being. Few projects are likely to have impact statements that reflect such long-lasting or broad-based changes. However, the Review will assess the likelihood of the project to make a substantive contribution to the long-lasting changes represented by the Sustainable Development Goals, and/or the intermediate-level results reflected in UNEP's Expected Accomplishments and the strategic priorities of funding partner(s).

Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the extent to which the evaluand is reaching Strategic Results Framework indicator targets.
Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the extent to which the intervention demonstrates that Climate Change Adaptation can be increased or replicated at a broader scale, as well as in other contexts.
Green Climate Fund	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the project's <u>Innovativeness</u> in result areas – the extent to which interventions may lead to paradigm shift towards low-emission and climate-resilient development pathways.
Global Environment Facility	The Review should consider, under Effectiveness, the extent to which the evaluand is reaching Core Indicator targets (from GEF-6 onwards).
Global Environment Facility	The Review will determine, under Effectiveness, the project's <u>additionality</u> by comparing the benefits of GEF support to a scenario without GEF support. It will identify specific areas where GEF support has contributed additional results and what these additional results were. It will provide quantitative and qualitative evidence to support the findings.

E. Financial Management

Financial management will be assessed under three themes: *adherence* to UNEP's financial policies and procedures, *completeness* of financial information and *communication* between financial and project management staff. The Review will establish the actual spend across the life of the project of funds secured from all donors. This expenditure will be reported, where possible, at output/component level and will be compared with the approved budget. The Review will verify the application of proper financial management standards and adherence to UNEP's financial management policies. Any financial management issues that have affected the timely delivery of the project or the quality of its performance will be highlighted. The Review will record where standard financial documentation is missing, inaccurate, incomplete or unavailable in a timely manner. The Review will assess the level of communication between the UNEP Project Manager and the Fund Management Officer as it relates to the effective delivery of the planned project and the needs of a responsive, adaptive management approach.

Global Environment Facility	The Review will determine, under Financial Management, i) time from CEO endorsement (FSP) / CEO approval (MSP) to first disbursement; ii) disbursement balance; iii) whether the project has secured co-financing higher than 35% and iv) time between CEO Endorsement and (likely) end of Terminal Review.
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F. Efficiency

Under the efficiency criterion, the Review will assess the extent to which the project delivered maximum results from the given resources. This will include an assessment of the cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution.

Focusing on the translation of inputs into outputs, *cost-effectiveness* is the extent to which an intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its results at the lowest possible cost. *Timeliness* refers to whether planned activities were delivered according to expected timeframes as well as whether events were sequenced efficiently. The Review will also assess to what extent any project

extension could have been avoided through stronger project management and identify any negative impacts caused by project delays or extensions. The Review will describe any cost or time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe and consider whether the project was implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternative interventions or approaches.

The Review will give special attention to efforts made by the project teams during project implementation to make use of/build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities¹²² with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency.

The factors underpinning the need for any project extensions will also be explored and discussed. Consultants should note that as management or project support costs cannot be increased in cases of 'no cost extensions', such extensions represent an increase in unstated costs to UNEP and implementing parties.

G. Monitoring and Reporting

The Review will assess monitoring and reporting across three sub-categories: monitoring design and budgeting, monitoring implementation and project reporting.

i. Monitoring Design and Budgeting

Each project should be supported by a sound monitoring plan that is designed to track progress against SMART¹²³ results towards the achievement of the project's outputs and outcomes, including at a level disaggregated by gender, marginalisation or vulnerability, including those living with disabilities. In particular, the Review will assess the relevance and appropriateness of the project indicators as well as the methods used for tracking progress against them as part of conscious results-based management. The Review will assess the quality of the design of the monitoring plan as well as the funds allocated for its implementation. The adequacy of resources for Mid-Term and Terminal Evaluation/Review should be discussed, where applicable.

ii. Monitoring of Project Implementation

The Review will assess whether the monitoring system was operational and facilitated the timely tracking of results and progress towards project objectives throughout the project implementation period. This assessment will include consideration of whether the project gathered relevant and good quality baseline data that is accurately and appropriately documented. This should include monitoring the representation and participation of disaggregated groups, including gendered, marginalised or vulnerable groups, such as those living with disabilities, in project activities. It will also consider the quality of the information generated by the monitoring system during project implementation and how it was used to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of outcomes and ensure sustainability. The Review should confirm that funds allocated for monitoring were used to support this activity.

iii. Project Reporting

UNEP has a centralised Project Information Management System (PIMS) in which project managers upload six-monthly progress reports against agreed project milestones. This information will be provided to the Review Consultant(s) by the UNEP Project Manager. Some projects have additional requirements to report regularly to funding partners, which will be supplied by the project team. The Review will assess the extent to which both UNEP and donor reporting commitments have been fulfilled. Consideration will be given as to whether reporting has been carried out with respect to the effects of the initiative on disaggregated groups.

¹²² Complementarity with other interventions during project design, inception or mobilization is considered under Strategic Relevance above.

¹²³ SMART refers to results that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-oriented. Indicators help to make results measurable.

Global Environment Facility	For internally executed projects the Review Consultant should review the quality of regular reports and confirm they have been submitted on a timely basis.
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H. Sustainability (for Adaptation Fund, read Human and Ecological Sustainability and Security)

Sustainability¹²⁴ is understood as the probability of the benefits derived from the achievement of project outcomes being maintained and developed after the close of the intervention. The Review will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the endurance of achieved project outcomes (i.e. 'assumptions' and 'drivers'). Some factors of sustainability may be embedded in the project design and implementation approaches while others may be contextual circumstances or conditions that evolve over the life of the intervention. Where applicable an assessment of bio-physical factors that may affect the sustainability of direct outcomes may also be included.

i. Socio-political Sustainability

The Review will assess the extent to which social or political factors support the continuation and further development of the benefits derived from project outcomes. It will consider the level of ownership, interest and commitment among government and other stakeholders to take the project achievements forwards. In particular the Review will consider whether individual capacity development efforts are likely to be sustained.

ii. Financial Sustainability

Some project outcomes, once achieved, do not require further financial inputs, e.g. the adoption of a revised policy. However, in order to derive a benefit from this outcome further management action may still be needed e.g. to undertake actions to enforce the policy. Other project outcomes may be dependent on a continuous flow of action that needs to be resourced for them to be maintained, e.g. continuation of a new natural resource management approach. The Review will assess the extent to which project outcomes are dependent on future funding for the benefits they bring to be sustained. Secured future funding is only relevant to financial sustainability where the project outcomes have been extended into a future project phase. Even where future funding has been secured, the question still remains as to whether the project outcomes are financially sustainable.

iii. Institutional Sustainability

The Review will assess the extent to which the sustainability of project outcomes (especially those relating to policies and laws) is dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance. It will consider whether institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. are robust enough to continue delivering the benefits associated with the project outcomes after project closure. In particular, the Review will consider whether institutional capacity development efforts are likely to be sustained.

Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider, under <u>Human and ecological sustainability and security</u> – the extent to which the intervention is likely to generate continued positive or negative, intended and unintended impacts beyond its lifetime, taking into consideration, social, institutional, economic, and environmental systems. Is the intervention sensitive to conflict and fragility, i.e., to what extent does it consider the political context and the sharing of natural resources? Is it contributing towards targeted communities' livelihoods and to the health or well-being of the ecosystems on which they depend?
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¹²⁴ As used here, 'sustainability' means the long-term maintenance of outcomes and consequent impacts, whether environmental or not. This is distinct from the concept of sustainability in the terms 'environmental sustainability' or 'sustainable development', which imply 'not living beyond our means' or 'not diminishing global environmental benefits' (GEF STAP Paper, 2019, Achieving More Enduring Outcomes from GEF Investment)

I. Factors Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

(These factors are rated in the ratings table but are discussed within the Main Review Report as cross-cutting themes as appropriate under the other review criteria, above. If these issues have not been addressed under the Review Criteria above, then independent summaries of their status within the reviewed project should be given in this section)

i. Preparation and Readiness

This criterion focuses on the inception or mobilisation stage of the project (i.e. the time between project approval and first disbursement). The Review will assess whether appropriate measures were taken to either address weaknesses in the project design or respond to changes that took place between project approval, the securing of funds and project mobilisation. In particular, the Review will consider the nature and quality of engagement with stakeholder groups by the project team, the confirmation of partner capacity and development of partnership agreements as well as initial staffing and financing arrangements. *(Project preparation is included in the template for the assessment of Project Design Quality).*

ii. Quality of Project Management and Supervision

In some cases 'project management and supervision' may refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others it may refer to the project management performance of an implementing partner and the technical backstopping and supervision provided by UNEP. The performance of parties playing different roles should be discussed and a rating provided for both types of supervision (UNEP/Implementing Agency; Partner/Executing Agency) and the overall rating for this sub-category established as a simple average of the two.

The Review will assess the effectiveness of project management with regard to: providing leadership towards achieving the planned outcomes; managing team structures; maintaining productive partner relationships (including Steering Groups etc.); maintaining project relevance within changing external and strategic contexts; communication and collaboration with UNEP colleagues; risk management; use of problem-solving; project adaptation and overall project execution. Evidence of adaptive management should be highlighted.

Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider the extent to which the evaluand was <u>adapted in response to lessons and reflections during implementation</u> ; and the extent to which the intervention supported the use, development, or diffusion of innovative practices, tools, or technologies to improve or accelerate Climate Change Adaptation.
Global Environment Facility	For internally executed projects the Review Consultant should review whether the segregation of responsibilities met the GEF requirements ¹²⁵ (the GEF Agency must separate its project implementation and execution duties and establish each of the following: (a) A satisfactory institutional arrangement for the separation of implementation and executing functions in different departments of the GEF Agency; and (b) Clear lines of responsibility, reporting and accountability within the GEF Agency between the project implementation and execution functions.

iii. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation

Here the term 'stakeholder' should be considered in a broad sense, encompassing all project partners, duty bearers with a role in delivering project outputs, target users of project outputs and any other collaborating agents external to UNEP and the implementing partner(s). The assessment will consider

¹²⁵ GEF Minimum Fiduciary Standards: Separation of Implementation and Execution Functions in GEF Partner Agencies (2019).

the quality and effectiveness of all forms of communication and consultation with stakeholders throughout the project life and the support given to maximise collaboration and coherence between various stakeholders, including sharing plans, pooling resources and exchanging learning and expertise. The inclusion and participation of all differentiated groups, including gender groups, should be considered.

iv. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality (for Adaptation Fund, read 'Equity'; for GCF, read 'Gender Equity')

The Review will ascertain to what extent the project has applied the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Within this human rights context the Review will assess to what extent the intervention adheres to UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment¹²⁶.

The report should present the extent to which the intervention, following an adequate gender analysis at design stage, has implemented the identified actions and/or applied adaptive management to ensure that Gender Equality and Human Rights are adequately taken into account. In particular the Review will consider to what extent project design, implementation and monitoring have taken into consideration: (i) possible inequalities (especially those related to gender) in access to, and the control over, natural resources; (ii) specific vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups (especially women, youth and children and those living with disabilities) to environmental degradation or disasters; and (iii) the role of disadvantaged groups (especially women, youth and children and those living with disabilities) in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation.

Adaptation Fund	The Review should consider the extent to which the project's design and implementation includes input of the designated authority (DA) and vulnerable groups such as women, youth, persons with disability, Indigenous Peoples, minorities, and other potentially marginalized groups or locations. It also encompasses the degree to which the intervention reduced or perpetuated inequalities, and how equitably benefits were accrued to vulnerable groups.
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v. Environmental and Social Safeguards

UNEP projects address environmental and social safeguards primarily through the process of environmental and social screening at the project approval stage, risk assessment and management (avoidance, or mitigation of potential environmental and social risks and impacts associated with project and programme activities. The Review will confirm whether UNEP requirements¹²⁷ were met to: *review* risk ratings on a regular basis; *monitor* project implementation for possible safeguard issues; *respond* (where relevant) to safeguard issues through risk avoidance, minimization, mitigation or offsetting and *report* on the implementation of safeguard management measures taken. UNEP requirements for proposed projects to be screened for any safeguarding issues; for sound environmental and social risk assessments to be conducted and initial risk ratings to be assigned, are reviewed above under Quality of Project Design).

¹²⁶ The Evaluation Office notes that Gender Equality was first introduced in the UNEP Project Review Committee Checklist in 2010 and, therefore, provides a criterion rating on gender for projects approved from 2010 onwards. Equally, it is noted that policy documents, operational guidelines and other capacity building efforts have only been developed since then and have evolved over time. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7655/-Gender_equality_and_the_environment_Policy_and_strategy-2015Gender_equality_and_the_environment_policy_and_strategy.pdf.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

¹²⁷ For the review of project concepts and proposals, the Safeguard Risk Identification Form (SRIF) was introduced in 2019 and replaced the Environmental, Social and Economic Review note (ESERN), which had been in place since 2016. In GEF projects safeguards have been considered in project designs since 2011.

The Review will also consider the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.

vi. Country Ownership and Driven-ness

The Review will assess the quality and degree of engagement of government / public sector agencies in the project. While there is some overlap between Country Ownership and Institutional Sustainability, this criterion focuses primarily on the forward momentum of the intended projects results, i.e. either: a) moving forwards from outputs to project outcomes or b) moving forward from project outcomes towards intermediate states. The Review will consider the involvement not only of those directly involved in project execution and those participating in technical or leadership groups, but also those official representatives whose cooperation is needed for change to be embedded in their respective institutions and offices (e.g. representatives from multiple sectors or relevant ministries beyond Ministry of Environment). This factor is concerned with the level of ownership generated by the project over outputs and outcomes and that is necessary for long term impact to be realised. Ownership should extend to all gender and marginalised groups.

vii. Communication and Public Awareness

The Review will assess the effectiveness of: a) communication of learning and experience sharing between project partners and interested groups arising from the project during its life and b) public awareness activities that were undertaken during the implementation of the project to influence attitudes or shape behaviour among wider communities and civil society at large. The Review should consider whether existing communication channels and networks were used effectively, including meeting the differentiated needs of gendered or marginalised groups, and whether any feedback channels were established. Where knowledge sharing platforms have been established under a project the Review will comment on the sustainability of the communication channel under either socio-political, institutional or financial sustainability, as appropriate.

Section 3. REVIEW APPROACH, METHODS AND DELIVERABLES

(This section has both standard text and parts that are specific to the project, to be filled in)

The Terminal Review will be an in-depth review using a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders are kept informed and consulted throughout the review process. Both quantitative and qualitative review methods will be used as appropriate to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. It is highly recommended that the consultant(s) maintains close communication with the project team and promotes information exchange throughout the review implementation phase in order to increase their (and other stakeholder) ownership of the review findings. Where applicable, the consultant(s) should provide a geo-referenced map that demarcates the area covered by the project and, where possible, provide geo-reference photographs of key intervention sites (e.g. sites of habitat rehabilitation and protection, pollution treatment infrastructure, etc.)

The findings of the Review will be based on the following: [This section should be edited for each Review]

(a) A desk review of:

Relevant background documentation available in PIMS 01988 Documents Repository, and the IPMR final 6 months (Jan-June 2023) including:

Project design documents (including minutes of the project design review meeting at approval); Annual Work Plans and Budgets or equivalent, revisions to the project (Project Document Supplement), the logical framework and its budget;

Project reports such as six-monthly progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, donors, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence, and any other monitoring materials etc, including Annex A: The DaRT project implementation to date: Summary of the progress of activities as of November 2022, DaRT Progress Report

CBD/COP/15/INF/19 submitted to the Secretariat of the CBD, DaRT Consultant Narrative Reports

Project deliverables (e.g. publications, assessments etc) [\[list\]](#): MEAs Decisions and Resolutions on DaRT, background documents of Bern II, MEAs Cross-Mapping documents, Bogis-Bossey Expert Meeting Planning Note, DaRT Power Point and Flyer side-event for CBD COP15

Mid-Term Review or Mid-Term Evaluation of the project: Project Mid-Term Review, May 2022

Evaluations/Reviews of similar projects.

(b) **Interviews** (individual or in group) with:

UNEP Project Manager¹²⁸ [add people as appropriate]: Diane Klaimi

Project management team: Tita Korvenoja (Chief of Environmental Conventions and Policy Branch), Dorothy Obuya (Project Management Assistant), Emilie Vauchel (Associate Project Manager)

UNEP Fund Management Officer (FMO): Reem Al-Qawas, Catherine Karuiru, Bernard Koech, Aini Aini

Sub-Programme Coordinator: Yassin Ahmed

Project partners, including: Neville Ash (UNEP-WCMC), Eric Wiedmer (Nature Consult)

Relevant resource persons: Switzerland financing partners, MEAs secretariats involved in the project, EU, Cameroon, China

Representatives from civil society and specialist groups (such as women's, farmers and trade associations etc).

(c) **Surveys** [provide details, where appropriate]-

(d) **Field visits** [provide details, where appropriate]

(e) **Other data collection tools** [provide details, where appropriate]

11. Review Deliverables and Review Procedures

The Review Consultant will prepare:

- **Inception Report:** (see Annex 1 for a list of all templates, tables and guidance notes) containing an assessment of project design quality, a draft reconstructed Theory of Change of the project, project stakeholder analysis, review framework and a tentative review schedule.
- **Preliminary Findings Note:** typically in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, the sharing of preliminary findings is intended to support the participation of the project team, act as a means to ensure all information sources have been accessed and provide an opportunity to verify emerging findings.
- **Draft and Final Review Report:** containing an Executive Summary that can act as a stand-alone document; detailed analysis of the review findings organised by review criteria and supported with evidence; lessons learned and recommendations and an annotated ratings table.

A **Review Brief** (a 2-page overview of the evaluand and review findings) for wider dissemination through the UNEP website may be required. This will be discussed with the UNEP Project Manager no later than during the finalization of the Inception Report.

Review of the Draft Review Report. The Review Consultant will submit a draft report to the UNEP Project Manager and revise the draft in response to their comments and suggestions. The UNEP Project Manager will then forward the revised draft report to other project stakeholders, for their review and

¹²⁸ For GEF funded projects, UNEP Project Manager refers to the Task Manager.

comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions as well as providing feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons. Any comments or responses to draft reports will be sent to the UNEP Project Manager for consolidation. The UNEP Project Manager will provide all comments to the Review Consultant for consideration in preparing the final report, along with guidance on areas of contradiction or issues requiring an institutional response.

The UNEP Evaluation Office provides templates and tools to support the review process and provides a formal assessment of the quality of the final Terminal Review report, which is provided within this report's annexed material. In addition, the Evaluation Office formally validates the report by ensuring that the performance judgments made are consistent with evidence presented in the Review report and in-line with the performance standards set out for independent evaluations. As such the project performance ratings presented in the Review report may be adjusted by the Evaluation Office.

At the end of the review process, the UNEP Project Manager will prepare a **Recommendations Implementation Plan** in the format of a table, to be completed and updated at regular intervals, and circulate the **Lessons Learned**.

12. The Review Consultant

The Review Consultant will work under the overall responsibility of the UNEP Project Manager [Diane Klaimi], in consultation with the Fund Management Officer [Reem Al-Qawas], the Head of Unit/Focal Area/Branch [Tita Korvenoja] and the Sub-programme Coordinators of the UNEP [Environmental Governance Subprogramme Coordinator, [Yassin Ahmed]].

The Review Consultant will liaise with the UNEP Project Manager on any procedural and methodological matters related to the Review. It is, however, the consultants' individual responsibility (where applicable) to arrange for their visas and immunizations as well as to plan meetings with stakeholders, organize online surveys, obtain documentary evidence and any other logistical matters related to the assignment. The UNEP Project Manager and project team will, where possible, provide logistical support (introductions, meetings etc.) allowing the consultants to conduct the Review as efficiently and independently as possible.

The Review Consultant will be hired over a period of 5 months [15 June to 15 October 2024] and should have the following: a university degree in environmental sciences, environmental governance, environmental law, ecology and biodiversity policy, international development or other relevant political or social sciences area is required and an advanced degree in the same areas is desirable; a min of 10 years experience in environmental governance, environmental law, biodiversity-related conventions and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), and linkages between environment, biodiversity and sustainable development a minimum of 5 years of technical / evaluation experience is required, preferably including evaluating large, regional or global programmes and using a Theory of Change approach; and a good/broad understanding of [environmental governance, biodiversity-related conventions and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), and linkages between environment, biodiversity and sustainable development] is desired. English and French are the working languages of the United Nations Secretariat. For this consultancy, fluency in oral and written English is a requirement. Working knowledge of the UN system and specifically the work of UNEP is an added advantage. The work will be home-based with possible field visits.

The Review Consultant will be responsible, in close consultation with the UNEP Project Manager, for overall quality of the review and timely delivery of its outputs, described above in Section 11 Review Deliverables, above. The Review Consultant will ensure that all review criteria and questions are adequately covered.

13. Schedule of the Review

The table below presents the tentative schedule.

Table 3. Tentative schedule for the Review

Milestone	Tentative Dates
Inception Report (preparation and review)	15 July 2024 (preparation and review)

E-based interviews, surveys etc.	20 July- 30 August 2024
PowerPoint/presentation on preliminary findings and recommendations	15 September 2024
Draft Review Report to UNEP Project Manager	30 September 2024
Draft Review Report shared with wider group of stakeholders	10 November 2024
Final Main Review Report	20 November
Final Main Review Report submitted to the UNEP Evaluation Office for validation and quality assessment	25 November
Final Main Review Report shared with all respondents	30 November 2024

14. Contractual Arrangements

The Review Consultant(s) will be selected and recruited by the UNEP Project Manager under an individual Special Service Agreement (SSA) on a “fees only” basis (see below). By signing the service contract with UNEP/UNON, the consultant certifies that they have not been associated with the design and implementation of the project in any way which may jeopardize their independence and impartiality towards project achievements and project partner performance. In addition, they will not have any future interests (within six months after completion of the contract) with the project’s executing or implementing units. All consultants are required to sign the Code of Conduct Agreement Form.

Fees will be paid on an instalment basis, paid on acceptance and approval by the UNEP Project Manager of expected key deliverables. The schedule of payment is as follows:

Schedule of Payment:

Deliverable	Percentage Payment
Approved Inception Report (<i>as per Guidance Note</i>)	30%
Approved Draft Main Review Report (<i>as per Guidance Note</i>)	30%
Approved Final Main Review Report (<i>as per Report Template</i>)	40%

Fees only contracts: Where applicable, air tickets will be purchased by UNEP and 75% of the Daily Subsistence Allowance for each authorised travel mission will be paid up front. Local in-country travel will only be reimbursed where agreed in advance with the UNEP Project Manager and on the production of acceptable receipts. Terminal expenses and residual DSA entitlements (25%) will be paid after mission completion.

The consultant may be provided with access to UNEP’s information management systems (e.g. PIMS, IPMR, Anubis, SharePoint, etc.) and, if such access is granted, the consultants agree not to disclose information from that system to third parties beyond information required for, and included in, the Review Report.

In case the consultant is not able to provide the deliverables in accordance with these guidelines, and in line with the expected quality standards by the UNEP Project Manager, payment may be withheld at the discretion of the Head of Branch/Unit until the consultants have improved the deliverables to meet UNEP’s quality standards.

If the consultant fails to submit a satisfactory final product to the UNEP Project Manager in a timely manner, i.e. before the end date of their contract, UNEP reserves the right to employ additional human resources to finalize the report, and to reduce the consultant’s fees by an amount equal to the additional costs borne by the project team to bring the report up to standard or completion.

ANNEX XII. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Project Title and Reference No.: *Environmental Treaties programme -Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity " PIMS no. 01988 / IPMR no. 35480 2017 – 2023*

Contact Person (TM/PM):

Diane Klaimi, Programme Management Officer, Law Division

RECOMMENDATIONS	PLANS			
	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
Mobilizing funding to sustain the success of the Bern Process, implement its outcomes, strengthen global cooperation, and support national-level implementation	Yes	UNEP will continue working with the Donor Switzerland and new potential donors, like China on the continuation of the Bern Process, and they showed commitment to the synergies agenda which is now anchored in UNEA and 6 MEAs. The Treaties programme manager and project team will continue working on the following actions in collaboration with the steering group and Co-Chairs of Bern III Conference: 1) The roadmap for the continuation of Bern Process shared in July 2024 with the steering committee, including an action plan for each recommendation to sustain its outcomes and promote its messaging at the three Rio COPs and beyond. 2) A plan to communicate Bern III messages with wider stakeholders through a webinar series in 2025 3) A plan to translate Bern III actions into national plan on synergies and integrate synergies actions in revised NBSAPs.	May-December 2025 (for all 8 adjacent points). Some proposals are in draft form awaiting further finalization.	Diane Klaimi, Emilie Vauchel, Yannik Friedli MEAs Collaboration Unit, Law Division, with oversight by Tita Korvenoja, Chief of Environmental Conventions and Policy Branch, UNEP

RECOMMENDATIONS	PLANS			
	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
		4) A review of the Bern website content and DaRT to promote guidance on synergies including on a revised Cross Mapping Paper of interlinkages among the MEA strategies and the KMGBF. 5) A concept note on Bern IV Conference was shared with China 6) A concept note on a Bogis-Bossey Expert Meeting in 2025 focused on the global review of implementation or stock take of the KMGBF and the future of the Bern Process. 7) A new funding proposal will be submitted to the donor as an annex to the progress report on the funding contributions for the Bern process and DaRT 8) A project proposal under the Kunming Biodiversity Fund (KBF) is under consideration on mainstreaming biodiversity through synergies and policy coherence tools in 3 countries.		
Reinstate and institutionalize Quarterly Deep Dive reviews for enhanced financial oversight and strategic alignment	Yes and No	The project team proposed to reinstate the Deep Dive sessions under Treaties II, but the Project Delivery and Service Unit at the Law Division advised against it, referring to a new Umoja Power BI tool that will be available to project managers including a training on the tool. The project manager will assess the effectiveness of the new tool whilst keeping the Deep Dive option and benefits under consideration.	Q3 2025	Diane Klaimi, Emilie Vauchel, Yannik Friedli, MEAs Collaboration Unit, in collaboration with Aini Aini Head of PDSU Unit at Law Division Law Division
Strengthen existing monitoring mechanisms in follow-up	Yes	The revised Treaties II Prodoc which is underway in 2025, will establish more	Q1 2025	Diane Klaimi, Emilie Vauchel, Yannik Friedli

RECOMMENDATIONS	PLANS			
	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
projects (i.e., Treaties II) by establishing an impact-focused monitoring and evaluation system at project level to measure long-term results and enhance sustainability		strengthened impact indicators at outcome level that measure intermediate phases and long-term results more quantitatively, and ensure sustainability. A monitoring tool will be considered in the revised Prodoc for project evaluation.		MEAs Collaboration Unit, Law Division, with oversight by Tita Korvenoja, Chief of Environmental Conventions and Policy Branch, UNEP
Repositioning the DaRT Platform as an integrated platform for data sharing and collaboration on MEAs	Yes	The need to prioritize DaRT's long-term sustainability and DaRT governance and funding, under the longer-term Treaties Programme and within the InforMEA platform and guided by the Digital Transformation Subprogramme and UNEP's ICTS team, in CSD is a priority for the project team. DaRT was discussed internally at UNEP and with the steering committee, and it was generally agreed that the best way to maintain DaRT's sustainability is to discuss its future under a working group to be established under Treaties II Programme, composed of the MEAs, donors and partners and at the next InforMEA Steering Committee. A new mid-term strategy for DaRT is currently under development in its third iteration and focused on a gap analysis and development of DaRT to better serve its purpose in supporting countries with the preparation of national reports to MEAs and working more closely with Parties of the CBD and its Secretariat on ORT links for the preparation of the CBD 7th National Report, due by February	October 2025	Diane Klaimi, Emilie Vauchel, Yannik Friedli, MEAs Collaboration Unit, Law Division, with oversight by Tita Korvenoja, Chief of Environmental Conventions and Policy Branch, UNEP

RECOMMENDATIONS	PLANS			
	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
		2026. A revised terms of reference of a DaRT working group were developed in October 2024. The working group will be tasked with advising UNEP on DaRT management to ensure its continued relevance and functionality. While UNEP's consultant contract for DaRT came to an end in October 2024, two UNEP staff members have been trained to ensure the sustainability of DaRT in the interim.		
Develop and implement a structured capacity building program based on active learning with continuous technical support to ensure effective adoption of the tools promoted by the project, particularly DaRT	Yes- subject to funding availability	The project manager will be discussing the establishment of a capacity building programme to implement synergies actions recommended under the Bern Process, including on scientific cooperation, knowledge management, financing and reporting for example. The Climate Change Capacity Building Hub among Rio Convention Secretariats will be used as an example to promote such actions and use webinars. Paris-Committee-on-Capacity-building. The project Manager liaised with the secretariat of the Hub to promote the outcomes of the Bern Conference at UNCCC COP 29 in Baku. PCCB@unfccc.int	A proposal to be ready by Q1 2026	Diane Klaimi, Emilie Vauchel, Yannik Friedli, MEAs Collaboration Unit, Law Division, with oversight by Tita Korvenoja, Chief of Environmental Conventions and Policy Branch, UNEP
Support / motivate the creation of National MEA working groups as a pathway to institutionalize committees to enhance national engagement and strengthen support,	Yes- subject to national acceptance-commitment to create working groups at national levels.	Establishment of working groups or committees at national level is a national decision. UNEP may motivate creation of working groups but cannot force countries to establish committees. Working groups require mandates and funding to meet and implement activities. Funding will not be provided unless	2025-2026	Diane Klaimi, Emilie Vauchel, Yannik Friedli, MEAs Collaboration Unit, Law Division, with oversight by Tita Korvenoja, Chief of Environmental

RECOMMENDATIONS	PLANS			
	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
cooperation, collaboration, and alignment		there is an economic value. The use of existing bodies is more likely to work like national biodiversity committees. We were only successful with Cameroon because the minister endorsed the decision. However, they struggled to keep the working active for national reasons. Mexico met and discussed the creation of a more permanent national coordination mechanism to implement the Bern Actions. Therefore, we can only continue to motivate the creation of MEA Working groups and measure progress and help countries to sense the benefits of synergies.		Conventions and Policy Branch, UNEP
Enhancing collaboration, strategic focus, alignment, and phased implementation between InforMEA and DaRT for greater MEA mainstreaming and implementation support and efficiency in environmental governance	yes	A mid term strategy for DaRT sustainability and ToRs of a consultant to evaluate DaRT including a potential option to integrate DaRT within InforMEA, which will be submitted to a project working group at the InforMEA Steering Committee to be held in September 2025. A DaRT new strategy will be developed to enhance its development and adaptability to AI, for the purpose of synergistic reporting and monitoring of global strategies and review of the KMGBF.	December 2025	Diane Klaimi, Emilie Vauchel, Yannik Friedli, MEAs Collaboration Unit, Law Division, with oversight by Tita Korvenoja, Chief of Environmental Conventions and Policy Branch, UNEP
Enhance early, comprehensive and inclusive stakeholder engagement to strengthen project implementation, proactive collaboration with MEA Secretariats, and sustainability in future projects	Yes	Under the Law Division Functional Review, a project revision is underway and a potential new prodoc to merge the Treaties Programme with the Montevideo Programme, to enhance the delivery of effective capacity building to member states and to address technical support on law and governance in a package more effectively. This task will address the	December 2025	Diane Klaimi, Emilie Vauchel, Yannik Friedli, MEAs Collaboration Unit, Law Division, with oversight by Tita Korvenoja, Chief of Environmental

RECOMMENDATIONS	PLANS			
	ACCEPTED (YES/NO/PARTIALLY)	WHAT WILL BE DONE?	EXPECTED COMPLETION DATE	REPOSIBLE OFFICER/ UNIT/ DIVISION/ AGENCY
		issue of early engagement of stakeholders for more effective delivery of capacity building needs on law and governance.		Conventions and Policy Branch, UNEP
Enhance engagement of vulnerable groups and strengthen social inclusion monitoring for greater equity and impact in global synergies-focused projects	Yes- we have already started working with Faith Based organizations and IPLCs	Under the Law Division Functional Review, a project revision is underway and a potential new prodoc to merge the Treaties Programme with the Montevideo Programme, to enhance the delivery of effective capacity building to member states and to address technical support on law and governance in a package more effectively. This task will address the issue of engagement of vulnerable groups to strengthen social inclusion monitoring for greater equity and impact in global synergies-focused projects. Guidance will be sought from PPD on the same and guidance from MEAs themselves on how these groups are further strengthened in planning and implementation.	December 2025	Project manager and project Team to work with Project Review Committee (PRC)-at PPD Division.
Adopt a hybrid work model to strengthen collaboration, cooperation, and alignment in subsequent projects (i.e., Treaties II), maximizing inclusion, efficiency, and impact	Yes	The project will continue to implement and strengthen the use of online and digital knowledge tools like DaRT and InforMEA to enhance e-learning, and promote synergies knowledge and guidance, and prepare for MEAs governing bodies meetings better. The project benefited from Bern II Consultations that took place online in 2021 and was successful in delivering a full consultation with 16 MEAs online. This lesson will continue to resonate that meetings and negotiations can happen online to a certain extent.	2025-2026	Diane Klaimi, Emilie Vauchel, Yannik Friedli, MEAs Collaboration Unit, Law Division, with oversight by Tita Korvenoja, Chief of Environmental Conventions and Policy Branch, UNEP

ANNEX XIII. QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE REVIEW REPORT

Review Title: Terminal Review of the UNEP Project “Environmental Treaties Programme – Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity” PIMS no. 01988 / IPMR no. 35480 2017 – 2023

Consultant: Elaine Varela

All UNEP Reviews are subject to a quality assessment by the UNEP Evaluation Office. This is an assessment of the quality of the review product (i.e. Main Review Report).

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Review Report Rating
Report Quality Criteria		
Quality of the Executive Summary <u>Purpose:</u> acts as a stand alone and accurate <u>summary</u> of the main review product, especially for senior management. To include: • concise overview of the review object • clear summary of the review objectives and scope • overall review rating of the project and key features of performance (strengths and weaknesses) against exceptional criteria • reference to where the review ratings table can be found within the report • summary response to key strategic review questions • summary of the main findings of the exercise/synthesis of main conclusions • summary of lessons learned and recommendations.	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are adequately addressed. The executive summary provides an overview of the project, key findings, lessons learned, and recommendations. It includes project ratings and references the location of the rating table within the report. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Well-structured, concise, and provides a standalone summary. The conclusions provide a summary response to the strategic review questions.	5
Quality of the 'Introduction' Section <u>Purpose:</u> introduces/situates the evaluand in its institutional context, establishes its main parameters (time, value, results, geography) and the purpose of the review itself. To include: • institutional context of the project (sub-programme, Division, Branch etc) • date of PRC approval, project duration and start/end dates • number of project phases (where appropriate) • results frameworks to which it contributes (e.g. POW Direct Outcome) • coverage of the review (regions/countries where implemented) • implementing and funding partners • total secured budget • whether the project has been reviewed/evaluated in the past (e.g. mid-term, external agency etc.) • concise statement of the purpose of the review and the key intended audience for the findings.	Final report (coverage/omissions): Most elements are addressed. An indication of the sub-programme, Division, Branch, and the POW results framework it contributes is missing. However, this information is located in the project table and under the 'Strategic Relevance' section. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Clearly introduces the institutional and contextual background.	5

Quality of the 'Review Methods' Section <u>Purpose:</u> provides reader with clear and comprehensive description of review methods, demonstrates the <u>credibility</u> of the findings and performance ratings. To include: • description of review data collection methods and information sources • justification for methods used (e.g. qualitative/quantitative; electronic/face-to-face) • number and type of respondents (see <i>table template</i>) • selection criteria used to identify respondents, case studies or sites/countries visited • strategies used to increase stakeholder engagement and consultation • methods to include the voices/experiences of different and potentially excluded groups (e.g. vulnerable, gender, marginalised etc) • details of how data were verified (e.g. triangulation, review by stakeholders etc.) • methods used to analyse data (scoring, coding, thematic analysis etc) • review limitations (e.g. low/ imbalanced response rates across different groups; gaps in documentation; language barriers etc) • ethics and human rights issues should be highlighted including: how anonymity and confidentiality were protected. Is there an ethics statement? E.g. <i>'Throughout the review process and in the compilation of the Final Review Report efforts have been made to represent the views of both mainstream and more marginalised groups. All efforts to provide respondents with anonymity have been made.'</i>	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are adequately addressed. Clearly describes data collection methods, respondent selection criteria, and analysis techniques. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Well-documented methods, triangulation of data, and efforts to ensure inclusivity.	5.5
Quality of the 'Project' Section <u>Purpose:</u> describes and <u>verifies</u> key dimensions of the evaluand relevant to assessing its performance. To include: • <i>Context:</i> overview of the main issue that the project is trying to address, its root causes and consequences on the environment and human well-being (i.e. synopsis of the problem and situational analyses) • <i>Results framework:</i> summary of the project's results hierarchy as stated in the ProDoc (or as officially revised) • <i>Stakeholders:</i> description of groups of targeted stakeholders organised according to relevant common characteristics • <i>Project implementation structure and partners:</i> description of the implementation structure with diagram and a list of key project partners • <i>Changes in design during implementation:</i> any key events that affected the project's scope or parameters should be described in brief in chronological order • <i>Project financing:</i> completed tables of: (a) budget at design and expenditure by components (b) planned and actual sources of funding/co-financing	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are adequately addressed in this section as well as in other sections of the report and Annexes. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Detailed financial breakdown and discussion of project timeline adjustments. The diagramme on the project timeline is helpful to understand the project changes.	5

Quality of the Theory of Change <u>Purpose:</u> to set out the TOC at Review in diagrammatic and narrative forms to support consistent project performance; to articulate the causal pathways with drivers and assumptions and justify any reconstruction necessary to assess the project's performance. To include: • description of how the <i>TOC at Review</i>¹²⁹ was designed (who was involved etc) • confirmation/reconstruction of results in accordance with UNEP definitions • articulation of causal pathways • identification of drivers and assumptions • identification of key actors in the change process • summary of the reconstruction/results re-formulation in tabular form. <i>The two results hierarchies (original/formal revision and reconstructed) should be presented as a two-column table to show clearly that, although wording and placement may have changed, the results 'goal posts' have not been 'moved'. This table may have initially been presented in the Inception Report and should appear somewhere in the Main Review report.</i>	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are adequately addressed. While this section does not mention who was involved in the design of the TOC at Review, para 55 of the Evaluation Methods section provides this information: <i>"During the Data Collection and Analysis Phase, the ToC at Inception - based on the project design document - was refined, reviewed, and validated with the project team".</i> Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Provides a clear logic model connecting project activities to outcomes.	5
Quality of Key Findings within the Report <u>Presentation of evidence:</u> nature of evidence should be clear (interview, document, survey, observation, online resources etc) and evidence should be explicitly triangulated unless noted as having a single source. <u>Consistency within the report:</u> all parts of the report should form consistent support for findings and performance ratings, which should be in line with UNEP's Criteria Ratings Matrix. <u>Findings Statements (where applicable):</u> The frame of reference for a finding should be an individual review criterion or a strategic question from the TOR. A finding should go beyond description and uses analysis to provide insights that aid learning specific to the evaluand. In some cases a findings statement may articulate a key element that has determined the performance rating of a criterion. Findings will frequently provide insight into 'how' and/or 'why' questions.	Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The findings are well-supported by evidence. The evidence presented by the reviewer is clear and consistent throughout the report. Finding statements specific to each review criterion and sub criterion were provided. Clear differentiation between findings, lessons, and recommendations.	5
Quality of 'Strategic Relevance' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present evidence and analysis of project strategic relevance with respect to UNEP, partner and geographic policies and strategies at the time of project approval. To include: Assessment of the evaluand's relevance vis-à-vis: • Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities • Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are adequately addressed. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): This section comprehensively assesses alignment with UNEP, donor, and regional priorities and complementarity with existing interventions.	5

¹²⁹ During the Inception Phase of the review process a *TOC at Review Inception* is created based on the information contained in the approved project documents (these may include either logical framework or a TOC or narrative descriptions), formal revisions and annual reports etc. During the review process this TOC is revised based on changes made during project intervention and becomes the *TOC at Review*.

• Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities • Complementarity with Existing Interventions: complementarity of the project at design (or during inception/mobilisation¹³⁰), with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups.	Well-articulated relevance to UNEP strategies and SDGs.	
Quality of the 'Quality of Project Design' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the project design, on the basis that the detailed assessment was presented in the Inception Report.	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are adequately addressed. A table presenting the overall project design quality score was included. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Summarize design strengths and weaknesses. Identifies key areas where design could have been stronger.	5
Quality of the 'Nature of the External Context' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to describe and recognise, when appropriate, key <u>external</u> features of the project's implementing context that limited the project's performance (e.g. conflict, natural disaster, political upheaval¹³¹), and how they affected performance. While additional details of the implementing context may be informative, this section should clearly record whether or not a major and unexpected disrupting event took place during the project's life in the implementing sites.	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are adequately addressed. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Discusses COVID-19 disruptions and external challenges. Clearly describes impacts of external factors. It indicates the mitigation strategies employed.	5
Quality of 'Effectiveness' Section (i) Availability of Outputs: <u>Purpose:</u> to present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the outputs made available to the intended beneficiaries. To include: • a convincing, evidence-supported and clear presentation of the outputs made available by the project compared to its approved plans and budget • assessment of the nature and scale of outputs versus the project indicators and targets • assessment of the timeliness, quality and utility of outputs to intended beneficiaries • identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are mostly addressed. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Overall, the section clearly and comprehensively assesses the extent to which outputs were delivered as planned. Provides a well-supported and evidence-based comparison of actual outputs against project indicators and targets.	4.5

¹³⁰ A project's inception or mobilization period is understood as the time between project approval and first disbursement. Complementarity during project implementation is considered under Efficiency, see below.

¹³¹ Note that 'political upheaval' does not include regular national election cycles, but unanticipated unrest or prolonged disruption. The potential delays or changes in political support that are often associated with the regular national election cycle should be part of the project's design and addressed through adaptive management of the project team.

those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	This section does not identify positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation. However, para 172 under 'Likelihood of Impact' indicates that "Overall, there were no significant unintended negative effects resulting from the project".	
ii) Achievement of Project Outcomes: <u>Purpose:</u> to present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the uptake, adoption and/or implementation of outputs by the intended beneficiaries. This may include behaviour changes at an individual or collective level. To include: • a convincing and evidence-supported analysis of the uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries • assessment of the nature, depth and scale of outcomes versus the project indicators and targets • discussion of the contribution, credible association and/or attribution of outcome level changes to the work of the project itself • any constraints to attributing effects to the projects' work • identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are mostly addressed. This section assessed how effectively project outputs translated into tangible outcomes. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Strong linkage between project activities and observed behavioral or institutional changes among stakeholders. Comprehensive assessment of the nature, depth and scale of outcomes versus the project indicators and targets This section does not identify positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation. However, para 172 under 'Likelihood of Impact' indicates that "Overall, there were no significant unintended negative effects resulting from the project"	4.5
(iii) Likelihood of Impact: <u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis, guided by the causal pathways represented by the TOC, of all evidence relating to likelihood of impact, including an assessment of the extent to which drivers and assumptions necessary for change to happen, were seen to be holding. To include: • an explanation of how causal pathways emerged and change processes can be shown • an explanation of the roles played by key actors and change agents • explicit discussion of how drivers and assumptions played out • identification of any unintended negative effects of the project, especially on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are addressed. Assesses the sustainability and potential long-term impact of the project interventions. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Integrates analysis of key assumptions and drivers that influence the realization of impact. It indicates that there were no significant unintended negative effects resulting from the project.	5

Quality of 'Financial Management' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under financial management and include a completed 'financial management' table (may be annexed). Consider how well the report addresses the following: • <i>adherence</i> to UNEP's financial policies and procedures • <i>completeness</i> of financial information, including the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used • <i>communication</i> between financial and project management staff	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are adequately addressed. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Clear financial accountability. Adherence to policies, completeness of financial data, and fund management are well-documented.	5.5
Quality of 'Efficiency' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under efficiency (i.e. the primary categories of cost-effectiveness and timeliness). To include: • time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe • discussion of making use, during project implementation, of/building on pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. • implications of any delays and no cost extensions • the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are adequately addressed. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Assesses cost-effectiveness, time management, and use of partnerships. Highlights adaptive strategies used.	5
Quality of 'Monitoring and Reporting' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the evaluand's monitoring and reporting. Consider how well the report addresses the following: • quality of the monitoring design and budgeting (<i>including SMART results with measurable indicators, resources for MTE/R etc.</i>) • quality of monitoring of project implementation (<i>including use of monitoring data for adaptive management</i>) • quality of project reporting (<i>e.g. PIMS and donor reports</i>) \	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are adequately addressed. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Comprehensive analysis of the quality of the monitoring design and budgeting, monitoring of project implementation, and quality of project reporting.	5
Quality of 'Sustainability' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under sustainability (i.e. the endurance of benefits achieved at outcome level). Consider how well the report addresses the following: • socio-political sustainability • financial sustainability • institutional sustainability	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are adequately addressed. Examines financial, socio-political, and institutional sustainability. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Identifies key risks and mitigation strategies.	5

	In table 4. Under “stakeholder participation and co-operation” there is a typo as it is overall rated as MU (Moderately Unlikely) instead of ML (Moderately Likely) as indicated in the narrative section under Chapter V.	
Quality of Factors Affecting Performance Section <u>Purpose:</u> These factors are not always discussed in stand-alone sections and may be integrated in the other performance criteria as appropriate. However, if not addressed substantively in this section, a cross reference must be given to where the topic is addressed and that entry must be sufficient to justify the performance rating for these factors. Consider how well the review report, either in this section or in cross-referenced sections, covers the following cross-cutting themes: • preparation and readiness • quality of project management and supervision¹³² • stakeholder participation and co-operation • responsiveness to human rights and gender equality • environmental and social safeguards • country ownership and driven-ness • communication and public awareness	Final report (coverage/omissions): Elements are adequately addressed. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): It provides a comprehensive and evidence-based analysis of each cross-cutting theme, along with a separate rating for each sub-criterion. In table 4. Under “stakeholder participation and co-operation” there is a typo as it is rated as U (Unsatisfactory) instead of MU (Moderately Unsatisfactory) as indicated in the narrative section under Chapter V.	5
Quality of the Conclusions Section (i) Conclusions Narrative: <u>Purpose:</u> to present summative statements reflecting on prominent aspects of the performance of the evaluand as a whole, they should be derived from the synthesized analysis of evidence gathered during the review process. To include: • compelling narrative providing an integrated summary of the strengths and weakness in overall performance (achievements and limitations) of the project • clear and succinct response to the key strategic questions • human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention should be discussed explicitly (e.g. how these dimensions were considered, addressed or impacted on)	Final report (coverage/omissions): Most elements are addressed. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Summarizes overall performance and clear response to key strategic questions. Integrates findings cohesively. This section does not include a compelling narrative providing an integrated summary of the strengths and weakness in overall performance (achievements and limitations) of the project. However, key findings are summarized in the Executive Summary. This section does not explicitly discuss the human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention. However, this	4.5

¹³² In some cases ‘project management and supervision’ will refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others, specifically for GEF funded projects, it will refer to the project management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping provided by UNEP. This includes providing the answers to the questions on Core Indicator Targets, stakeholder engagement, gender responsiveness, safeguards and knowledge management, required for the GEF portal.

	information is provided under Table 4 "Summary of project findings and ratings" included under the conclusions. Gender issues could have been addressed under conclusion 4 as lesson learned 7 on gender and social inclusion was based on conclusion 4.	
ii) Utility of the Lessons: <u>Purpose:</u> to present both positive and negative lessons that have potential for wider application and use (replication and generalization) Consider how well the lessons achieve the following: - are rooted in real project experiences (i.e. derived from explicit review findings or from problems encountered and mistakes made that should be avoided in the future) - briefly describe the context from which they are derived and those contexts in which they may be useful - do not duplicate recommendations	Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Lessons are clearly drawn from project experiences and applicable to future interventions. Provides well-contextualized insights for replication in similar projects. Lesson learned are related to the conclusions.	5
(iii) Utility and Actionability of the Recommendations: <u>Purpose:</u> to present proposals for specific action to be taken by identified people/position-holders to resolve concrete problems affecting the project or the sustainability of its results. Consider how well the recommendations achieve the following: - are feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities) and specific in terms of who would do what and when - include at least one recommendation relating to strengthening the human rights and gender dimensions of UNEP interventions - represent a measurable performance target in order that the UNEP Unit/Branch can monitor and assess compliance with the recommendations. NOTES: (i) In cases where the recommendation is addressed to a third party, compliance can only be monitored and assessed where a contractual/legal agreement remains in place. Without such an agreement, the recommendation should be formulated to say that UNEP project staff should pass on the recommendation to the relevant third party in an effective or substantive manner. The effective transmission by UNEP of the recommendation will then be monitored for compliance. (ii) Where a new project phase is already under discussion or in preparation with the same third party, a recommendation can be made to address the issue in the next phase.	Final report (strengths/weaknesses): Recommendations are specific, actionable, and feasible within available resources to be implemented during the implementation of the Treaties II project. Cross-references to sections of the report supporting the recommendations are provided. Clear alignment with project findings and implementation strategies. One recommendation relating to strengthening human rights and gender is included. Overall, the recommendations are presented in accordance with the guidance of the Evaluation Office. However, "Agency" was mentioned as type of recommendation, which is not clear what it means.	5
Quality of Report Structure and Presentation (i) Structure and completeness of the report: To what extent does the report follow the UNEP Evaluation Office structure and formatting guidelines? Are all requested Annexes included and complete?	Final report (coverage/omissions): Follows UNEP formatting and structure. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The report is complete and follows the Evaluation Office	5

	guidelines. All the required Annexes are included in the report. The visuals included are clear. The report meets most of the UNEP Quality Assessment criteria, with minor areas for improvement.	
(ii) Writing and formatting: Consider whether the report is well written (clear English language and grammar) with language that is adequate in quality and tone for an official document? Do visual aids, such as maps and graphs convey key information?	Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The Review report is well-written and easy to understand. The report contains a couple of typos in Table 4 concerning the ratings, and different font types were used. The visuals included are clear.	5
OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING		5

A number rating 1-6 is used for each criterion: Highly Satisfactory = 6, Satisfactory = 5, Moderately Satisfactory = 4, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 3, Unsatisfactory = 2, Highly Unsatisfactory = 1. The overall quality of the review report is calculated by taking the mean score of all rated quality criteria.