



Distr.: General
26 August 2020
English only



**United Nations Environment
Assembly of the United Nations
Environment Programme**

**151st meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives
to the United Nations Environment Programme**
Nairobi, 14 September 2020
Online meeting
13:00 – 15:00; 15:30 – 17:30 (GMT+3)

Agenda Item 8: Progress update on the implementation of the UNEA-4 Pollution Action Plan.

This document serves as a background document for agenda item 8: Progress update on the implementation of the UNEA-4 Pollution Action Plan. It presents an update on the progress on the implementation of the Pollution Action Plan adopted at UNEA-4 in resolution 4/21, including some highlights in implementing the specific deliverables identified in the Plan.

Member States are invited to provide further guidance to the implementation of the UNEA-4 Pollution Action Plan.

Progress on implementation of UNEA resolution 4/21 Implementation plan “Towards a pollution-free planet”

Background

Pursuant to the [Ministerial Declaration](#) adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) at its third session, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) prepared an [Implementation Plan “Towards A Pollution-Free Planet”](#). The Assembly, at its fourth session, adopted [Resolution 4/21](#) which welcomed the Implementation Plan and recognized it as the vehicle for prompt implementation of the objectives of the Ministerial Declaration, relevant resolutions of UNEA and voluntary commitments.

The Resolution requests the Executive Director to coordinate and monitor the delivery of the Implementation Plan in the context of its current and relevant future programmes of work and budget, with input from Member States and other stakeholders, and to fully and effectively leverage the capacity of UNEP’s regional and subregional offices and its partnerships with other relevant United Nations bodies and partners. The Resolution also encourages all Member States and relevant stakeholders to contribute to its implementation and invites Member States and others in a position to do so to provide extrabudgetary financial resources.

This brief provides an update on progress made in relation to operationalizing the Implementation Plan in implementation of Resolution 4/21, including some highlights in implementing the specific deliverables identified in the Plan. However, more substantive updates on the efforts ongoing under the various subprogrammes are reported as part of the programme performance reporting.

Focus of the Implementation Plan

The Plan aims to build synergies across the work of UNEP and to provide the glue across the dimensions of pollution, i.e. air, water, land/soil, marine and coastal pollution and the crosscutting issue of chemicals and waste through improved coordination, information sharing, communication and reporting. It identifies five capacity gaps and related action areas and specific accelerators to promote a transition towards a pollution-free planet, for improved knowledge, implementation, infrastructure, awareness, and leadership. To address these capacity gaps, the Plan identifies a list of specific deliverables, and a tentative budget. The plan also aims to strengthen the linkages with pollution-related forums and global efforts such as the SDGs, multilateral environmental agreements, and strategic approaches.

Landscape for implementation

The cross-cutting functions of coordination, information sharing, and monitoring and reporting on progress on pollution are undertaken by the Pollution and Health Unit in the Economy Division and anchored in the Chemicals, Waste and Air Quality subprogramme. The implementation of the Plan however engages all Divisions, regional and sub-regional offices, and all other UNEP subprogrammes include efforts that contribute to addressing pollution. UNEP partnerships with individual agencies (including WHO), relevant MEAs and multi-stakeholder partnerships, networks and alliances are a key conduit for delivering on pollution.

Progress

Information sharing: sharing tools and knowledge of good practices and innovative solutions

- Website launched to provide visibility, share information and provide an entry point to other knowledge portals on pollution. The page is linked to thematic pages on various aspects of pollution (<https://www.unenvironment.org/beatpollution/>).
- Pollution dedicated feature in [World Environment Situation Room](#) platform being finalized to be regularly updated with data, maps and resources related to pollution and to link up with relevant platforms.
- A global tailings dams portal hosted by GRID Arendal in collaboration with Investor Mining and Tailings Safety Initiative co-chaired by the Church of England Pensions Board and the Swedish National Pension Funds’ Council of Ethics, and supported by UNEP (<https://tailing.grida.no/about>).

Reporting: tracking progress of action towards a cleaner planet

- A first pollution summary report is in preparation, led by UNEP's science division, to provide an overview of the global progress towards a pollution-free planet within the context of SDG indicators. The Report will be finalized in the course of 2021 and will take into account several reports being developed upon request by previous sessions of UNEA or several aspects of pollution, including reports due by UNEA5.

Knowledge: science for evidence-based policy and action¹

- Reports on the cost of pollution to human capital and implications for poverty reduction in Ghana, Ethiopia, and Rwanda and in India are being finalized (expected last quarter 2020).
- Report on consumer and business perceptions of plastic packaging and pollution as part of [SEA circular](#) initiative.
- Statistical analysis focused on SDG indicators is being carried out as part of developing the Pollution Summary Report mentioned under the reporting function above. Pollution-related targets and indicators are part of capacity building efforts on SDG-related data.
- Studies and knowledge portals are being developed on a variety of pollution aspects, including on pesticides and fertilizers, antimicrobial resistance, soil pollution, nutrients, air pollution legislation, air quality action, etc. as requested by UNEA Resolutions.
- Various UNEP initiatives focus on improving availability of data on environmental quality (e.g. World Water Quality Alliance, improving air quality monitoring capacities).

Implementation: capacities, incentives and integrated policies²

- Existing methodologies and tools on pollution, environment and health are being mapped and shared in a pollution solutions toolbox. A link will be available on the website (<https://www.unenvironment.org/beatpollution/take-action/addressing-implementation-gap>) that will lead to a toolbox in the World Environment Situation Room.
- Additional methodologies and guidance documents are being developed for instance the recently issued [National Guidance for Plastic Pollution Hotspotting and Shaping Action](#), co-developed by UNEP, IUCN, and the Life Cycle Initiative, aiming to provide a methodological framework for identifying 'hotspots' of plastic pollution and providing recommendations for action
- Reports were developed to address the use of fiscal policies both globally and in relation to a specific country/sector:
 - [Reducing pollution and health impacts through fiscal policies – A selection of good practices](#)
 - [Study on the effects of taxes and subsidies on pesticides and fertilizers](#)
 - [Study on Fiscal Policies to Address Air Pollution from Road Transport in Cities and Improve Health: Insights from Country Experiences and Lessons for Indonesia](#)
- Capacities for the management of Integrated Health and Environment Observatories and for the legal and institutional aspects of Chemicals management are being strengthened in selected African countries through the [African ChemObs](#) project.
- Joint Environment and Health Initiative in India was launched (led to recent establishment of a cross Ministerial, UNEP and WHO Steering Committee to oversee Environment and Health Issues in India).
- Capacities on environment and health and pollution issues are being strengthened through a number of projects, including on air quality through UNEP-wide air quality programme and targeted sectoral interventions, with a key role played by regional and sub-regional offices and partnerships at the global and regional level, including the Climate and Clean Air Coalition.

Infrastructure: technologies, innovation and circularity³

- Ongoing project development to support the Greening of health infrastructure in Africa, being developed in response to the COVID-19 Crisis.

¹ Accelerators: Using geo-spatial information to improve decision-making; Understanding the environment and health nexus through assessment of the cost of pollution to human capital and productivity; Strengthening capacity for analysis of pollution-related information to improve pollution governance.

² Accelerators: A pollution solutions policy toolbox; Stimulating good practices through fiscal policy; and Integrated cross-sectoral capacity-building on pollution, environment and health.

³ Accelerators: Making the case for innovative technologies and ecological infrastructure for pollution management and control and sharing of lessons learned.

- Global Industry [Standard](#) on Tailings Management was launched on 5 August 2020 as an outcome of the process co-convened by UNEP, International Council of Mines and Metals and Principles of Responsible Investment.
- Strengthening of environmental quality monitoring capacity through various programmes.

Awareness: Outreach, communication, education and consumer information⁴

- Ongoing efforts to strengthen the programmatic aspects of the [BreatheLife](#) campaign with CCAC, WHO, and World Bank.
- Celebration of first [International Day for Clean Air and Blue Skies](#) (September 7th), pursuant to the UN General Assembly resolution 74/212, adopted in October 2019.
- Ongoing efforts to revitalize the [BeatPollution](#) campaign in the lead up to UNEA 5, including through updates to existing voluntary commitments made by Governments, the private sector and civil society in the lead up to UNEA3, new commitments and better integration of various campaigns.
- [Factsheets](#) and webinars on waste management in response to COVID-19.
- Uptake of One Planet Network's [product sustainability guidelines](#) in selected countries.

Leadership: mobilization of stakeholders, leaders and partners to address different forms of pollution⁵

- Efforts under the Finance Initiative and the Global Industry Standard on Tailings Management reflected under infrastructure.
- Further development and expansion of the [New Plastics Economy Global Commitment](#), with Ellen MacArthur Foundation, to align action by governments and businesses to transition towards a circular economy for plastics.
- Regional ministerial fora focusing on health and environment and other platforms addressing pollution-related issues. Highlights include:
 - **In Europe**, [South East European Platform to Beat Pollution](#): a regionally owned and led framework aimed at supporting countries in the Western Balkans in coordinated action and in upscaling initiatives addressing pollution; UNEP study "[Air Quality and Human Health: the Case of the Western Balkans](#)" contributes to the aspirations of the Platform. UNEP also supports to the European Environment and Health Process and its Ministerial Conference jointly with WHO and UNECE.
 - **In Africa**, UNEP and WHO jointly support health and environment collaboration at the ministerial level; the third inter-ministerial Conference on Health and Environment adopted in 2018 a 10-year strategic action plan for an increased coverage of health and environment interventions for primary prevention in public health and preservation of ecosystems integrity.
 - **In Asia and Pacific region**, UNEP and WHO collaborate with member states in the context of the Asia Pacific Regional Forum on Health and the Environment. Indonesia has commenced its chairmanship role for 2020-2024 with the theme "The role of strategic health and environment on national development to achieve SDGs".
 - UNEP and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific collaborate on an Issue-based Coalition on Climate Change Mitigation and Air Pollution.
 - UNEP implements project [CounterMEASURE](#) on plastic pollution in Asian rivers, focused on generating scientific knowledge on the plastic leakage to support and inform decision-making, contributing to UNEA Resolution 4/6 Marine Plastic Litter and Microplastics.
 - **In West Asia**, UNEP is supporting unified guidelines for air quality management with Gulf Cooperation Council countries.
 - **In Latin America & the Caribbean**, a [Coalition for the progressive closure of dumpsites](#) was established to develop a roadmap for the progressive closure of landfills and the effective transition towards the integrated waste management in the region, comprising of member states and international and regional organizations. An Intergovernmental Network on Chemicals and Waste for Latin America and the Caribbean was also established to bring together and systematize regional efforts and mechanisms, comprised of governments and non-governmental stakeholders.

⁴ Accelerators: Promote consumer information; Support the #BeatPollution campaign; Education programmes on the dynamics of pollution and behavioural change in young people.

⁵ Accelerators: Industry leadership: Encouraging and redirecting finance and investments to reduce/eliminate pollution from existing economic activities; Regional leadership: Engaging with regional meetings of ministers for the environment and forums and initiatives dealing with environment and health issues; Promoting the New Plastics Economy Global Commitment with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation.

- An update shared with the Committee of Permanent Representatives on the implementation of paragraphs 7c and 7j of UNEA Resolution 3/8 “Preventing and reducing air pollution to improve air quality globally”, provides more information on collaboration with Regional Economic Commissions.

Links with COVID-19

- As part of its response to COVID-19 UNEP has identified four responses areas: 1. The medical & humanitarian emergency phase; 2. A transformational change for nature and people; 3. Investing to build back better; and 4. Modernizing global environmental governance. Response area 1 is aligned with the Implementation Plan and the links established under it are key aspects of building back better as part of response 3.
- Under response area 1, [factsheets](#), [reports](#), and [webinars](#) were developed focusing on multiple links including with air and water. UNEP is ready to support member states with technical expertise to help address the increase in waste necessitated by the medical response to the crisis.

Looking forward: Gaps, Challenges and Opportunities

- The foundations are in place to better coordinate, track and report on progress on pollution under a common narrative; multiple streams of work are ongoing, with good progress in enhancing knowledge and in addressing specific capacity gaps. However, accelerating action requires dramatically stronger prioritization of pollution reduction efforts.
- Current drafts of the 2022-2025 Medium Term Strategy identify pollution as one of three strategic pillars and as the focus of a thematic programme, a conduit for a more focused programmatic approach on pollution; ongoing efforts to operationalize the Implementation Plan will be key to building solid baselines and methodology to track progress and a solid basis for delivery.
- Efforts continue to promote the embedding of pollution-related priorities within national development priorities, including through targeting UN country Teams, strengthening existing partnerships and forging new ones, and mobilizing financial resources. The support of Member States to this end is key, including to strengthen capacities to address the environment and health nexus, a need more strongly highlighted by the current pandemic.

Contacts

Ligia Noronha (ligia.noronha@un.org), Director, Economy Division

Cristina Zucca (cristina.zucca@un.org), Head, Pollution and Health Unit

Tessa Goverse (tessa.goverse@un.org), Sub Programme Coordinator, Chemicals, Waste and Air Quality