

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)



UNEP is the global environmental steward that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the UN system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment. UNEP works to advance environmental and human rights. UNEP reports to the General Assembly and UN Environment Assembly and is a member of UN-Water.

WHAT IS UNEP?

UNEP is responsible for defining the world environmental agenda, which aims at promoting the implementation of sustainable development practices across States preserving the environment. UNEP serves as the leading authority as well as the global main advocate for the protection of the environment and human rights.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF UNEP?

UNEP focuses its work programme on six strategic areas:

- Climate Change
- Ecosystem Management
- Harmful substances
- Post Conflict and Disaster Management
- Environmental Governance
- Resource efficiency/Sustainable Consumption and production

In addition, UNEP hosts the secretariats for many critical multilateral environmental agreements and research bodies, including:

Convention Secretariats within UNEP

- Convention on Biological Diversity
- Basel Convention
- Rotterdam Convention
- Stockholm Convention
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
- Minamata Convention on Mercury

Research body Secretariats

- Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

UNEP's work on water is undertaken primarily by the Freshwater Ecosystems Unit based in Nairobi, along with the UNEP-DHI Centre for Water and Environment, a collaborating centre in Copenhagen. UNEP's work related to WASH includes:

UNEP AND WASH

- Monitoring water quality
- Supporting the SDGs on water
- Mainstreaming freshwater ecosystem health
- Advancing Integrated Water Resources Management
- Addressing water-related conflict and disasters

UNEP has been undertaking work on human rights and the environment for almost two decades and has been at the forefront of efforts to ensure the integration of human rights and environment linkages in UN system-wide strategies. UNEP's environmental rights work focuses on three pillars:

UNEP AND HUMAN RIGHTS

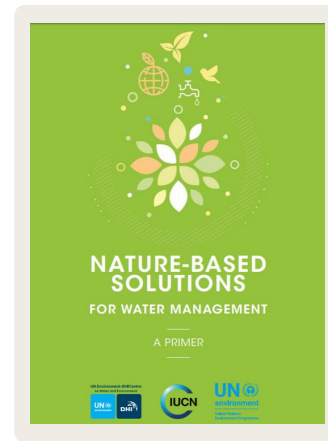
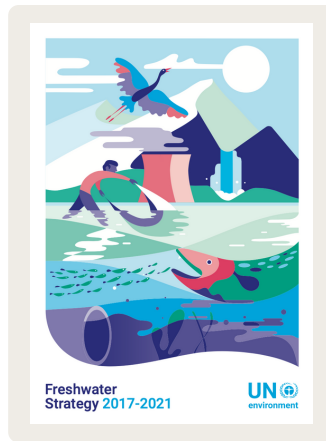
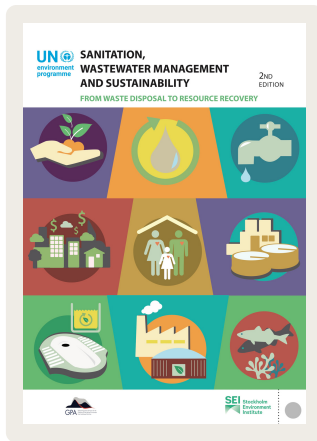
- Enhancing protection of environmental human rights defenders and expanding civic space;
- Integrating human rights, including the right to a healthy environment, into UN processes;
- Enhancing states and other actors' abilities to promote and protect the human right to a healthy environment.

UNEP is custodian of three SDG 6 indicators on water quality, IWRM and freshwater ecosystems:

- tackling global water quality challenges, corresponding to SDG indicator **6.3.2**;
- protecting and restoring freshwater ecosystems, SDG **6.6.1**;
- advancing integrated water resources management (IWRM) approaches, SDG **6.5.1**.

The Global Freshwater Quality Database GEMStat - a database that provides scientifically-sound information on the global water quality is a part of the UN-Water Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6 (IMI-SDG6), which seeks to support countries in monitoring water- and sanitation-related issues within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

PUBLICATIONS



THE WAY FORWARD

When rivers are polluted, it is more difficult for the population in vulnerable situations - often living near rivers and relying on rivers as source of water - to have affordable access to water of good quality. In other words, environmental issue and the human rights to water and sanitation are indivisible. I look forward to collaborating with UNEP on elaborating the links between the human rights to water and sanitation and environmental degradation.

Pedro Arrojo-Agudo,
UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation

*The Special Rapporteur held a meeting with UNEP representatives on 20 January 2021

