

## 1. Facts and figures

**Type of organisation:** UN programme, not a separate organisation

**Established in:** 1972

**Headquarters:** Nairobi

**Number of country offices:** 4 country offices, 6 regional offices

**Head of organisation:** UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director Achim Steiner (Germany)

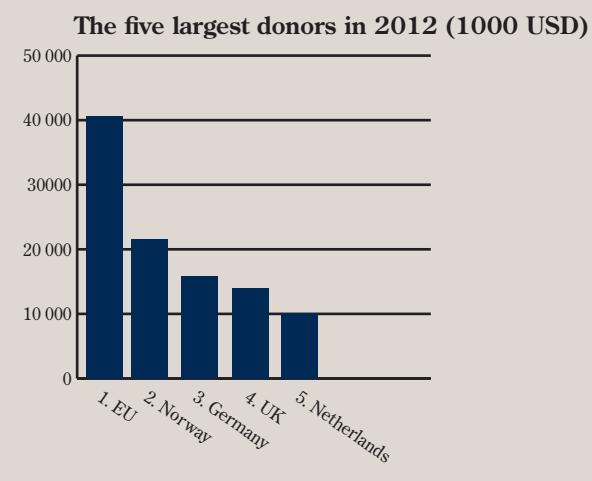
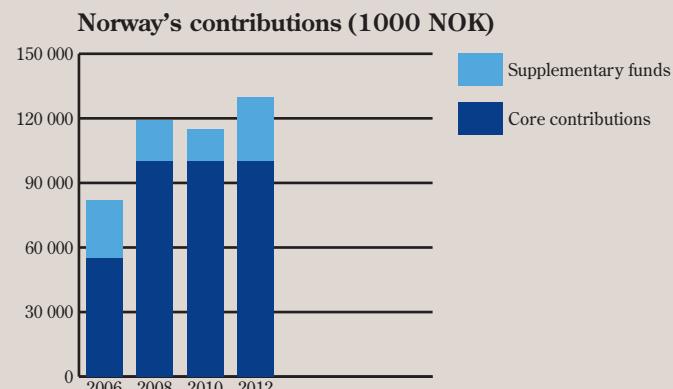
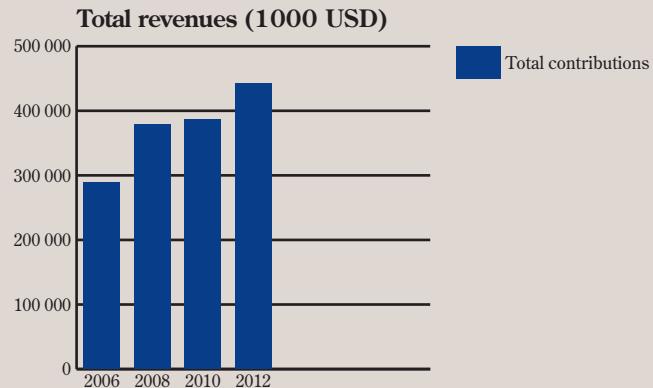
**Dates of Council meetings in 2013:** 18–22 February 2013, UNEP Governing Council

**Norway's representation in Council:** Universal membership for all UN Member States including Norway. Norway has a seat in the Bureau representing the Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG)

**Number of Norwegian staff:** 4

**Competent ministry:** Responsibility shared by the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Website:** [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)



## Mandate and areas of activity

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was established by UN General Assembly Resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972 as a follow-up of the UN's first environmental conference in Stockholm in 1972. UNEP's main tasks include promoting international environmental cooperation and recommending policies to this end, providing general guidance for environmental programmes in the UN system, and reviewing the global environmental situation to ensure that emerging environmental issues of international significance are addressed.

UNEP is primarily a normative organisation, and in the past few years has placed greater emphasis on the link between the environment and development. UNEP has defined seven focus areas in its Medium-Term Strategy for 2014–2017:

- Climate change
- Disasters and conflicts
- Ecosystem management
- Environmental governance
- Chemicals and waste
- Resource efficiency
- Environment under review

## Results achieved in 2012

The Rio+20 Earth Summit and its follow-up agreed to strengthen UNEP and carrying out institutional changes in the Programme. It was also decided that UNEP is to be a forum with universal membership, as has been advocated by Norway. In 2012, UNEP launched the report "Keeping Track of Our Changing Environment: From Rio to Rio+20". The report sums up global trends, including global population trends, climate change, energy, resource efficiency, forests, food security, agriculture and drinking water.

In 2012, UNEP launched its fifth report on the state of the global environment, *Global Environmental Outlook (GEO 5)*. The report shows that of the 90 most important environmental goals adopted by the international community, significant progress has only been made in four. The *Summary for Policy-makers* was presented prior to the Rio+20 conference. This is the first time the GEO report is accompanied by a document

containing a common interpretation of environmental information, which increases the possibilities of reaching agreement on joint action.

In September 2012, UNEP presented its *Global Chemicals Outlook* report. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, a number of countries agreed on the goal of reducing production and use of chemicals so as to ensure better health and protect the environment. However, the report shows that despite initiatives by both states and the private sector, poor progress has been made in reducing environmentally hazardous substances. In December 2012, UNEP launched the African Adaptation Knowledge Network, which is tasked with collecting knowledge, research and lessons learned from initiatives and partnerships aimed at promoting climate-adaptation efforts on the continent.

In November 2011, UNEP released a report on the cost-effectiveness of reducing emissions of short-lived climate forcers (SLCFs) in order to limit global warming. The report was a follow-up of an earlier partnership with the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) on the need to reduce SLCFs, and on the rapid benefits such reduction would have in terms of curbing greenhouse-gas emissions. Rapid reduction of SLCFs, with a focus on black carbon, methane and some hydrofluorocarbons, would help to mitigate the rise in temperature caused by climate change by 0.5 °C by 2050, in addition to reducing air-pollution-related deaths and crop losses. The report formed the basis for establishment of the *Climate and Clean Air Coalition* (CCAC), of which Norway and some 50 other countries are members. The CCAC has already launched several initiatives, including cooperation with the Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles. UNEP is the Secretariat for the CCAC.

Work on establishing the Intergovernmental Panel for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) began in 2005. The IPBES was established in Panama in 2012 and held its first plenary meeting in January 2013. The IPBES parallels the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and can play an important role in providing a specialised information base of scientific and traditional knowledge. The first IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) and Bureau meeting was held in June 2013 in Bergen.

The joint initiative between UNEP and UNDP, the Poverty Environment Initiative (PEI), is often described as a model of effective, successful concerted UN efforts. PEI's primary goal is to promote economic incentives for protecting the environment. The initiative supports the efforts of public authorities in developing countries to manage natural resources in a way that improves the livelihoods of poor people and promotes sustainable growth. PEI provides support for national measures that facilitate the integration of environmental issues into national development plans and budgets. Demand for PEI services far exceeds the programme's capacity. Norway is the largest contributor of funding for PEI and participates in PEI's Technical Advisory Group, represented by Norad.

## 2. Assessments: Results, effectiveness and monitoring

### **The organisation's results-related work**

UNEP contributes to setting the global environmental and development agenda, and the Programme's results-related work has improved in the last few years. The 2011 report of the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) confirms that UNEP has made considerable progress towards becoming a results-oriented organisation, but points out that the link between targets and user outcomes has not yet been defined clearly enough.

UNEP's presentation of results, particularly in its Annual Report, can be done in a far more analytical, fact-based way that shows changes over time. A special challenge in the environmental area is that results often depend on factors and framework conditions that are beyond UNEP's control. Moreover, efforts are often required over a long period of time to be able to demonstrate significant results. This appears to have steered UNEP towards a focus on preparing reports; quantitative measurement of report preparation is a simple matter, whereas environmental results are more difficult to measure and achieve.

There is emphasis on establishing procedures to ensure high scientific quality and transparency in the processes related to UNEP reports. UNEP is not an organisation in its own right; it is a programme under the UN General Assembly. A complicated governance structure and a policy area comprising many politically controversial issues with economic implications and interfaces with many areas of society give rise to special challenges. UNEP plays a special role as coordinator of the UN's environmental efforts, including in the Environment Management Group.

### **Planning and budgeting systems**

UNEP's institutional structure for planning and budgeting was changed at the most recent meeting of the Governing Council in 2013. The role of the Committee of Permanent Representatives in Nairobi has been strengthened, and a

subcommittee of the Committee is to review the programme of work and budget and their implementation by the Secretariat. Work is in progress on putting in place the details of a new structure in the light of these changes. Improvements in the working methods of the Committee of Permanent Representatives in Nairobi following the latest Governing Council meeting in February 2013 has created greater opportunity for involvement and governance for member states.

### **Oversight and anti-corruption**

As part of the UN Secretariat, UNEP is subject to external audits by the UN Board of Auditors and internal reviews by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). These audit reports are available upon direct request to the UN. UNEP must comply with the anti-corruption and whistle-blowing rules that have been adopted for the UN Secretariat.

### **Institution-building and national ownership**

UNEP has six regional offices, but has little operational or direct presence at country level. UNEP collaborates extensively with other actors, including UNDP, on implementation at country level. The Poverty Environment Initiative (PEI) is a good example of successful partnership with UNDP and others at country level.

It already follows from UNEP's mandate adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1972 that environmental programmes and projects must be compatible with national development plans and policies.

### **Willingness to learn and change**

UNEP is following up on a number of institutional changes in the wake of the Rio+20 conference on sustainable development, and it remains to be seen to what degree the Programme will succeed in implementing them. Many changes were adopted at the Governing Council meeting in 2013 as a result of the Rio process. These are being followed up by the Committee of Permanent Representatives in Nairobi.

### 3. Norway's policy towards UNEP

For Norway, UNEP is an important strategic partner in efforts to promote sustainable development. UNEP plays a key role in setting the agenda in the global environmental policy arena and processes relating to environment and development. This is a field in which Norway has strong interests and where we make use of the multilateral system to promote our views. There are many examples to show that the environment today is losing the battle against other interests. UNEP's relevance and role lie in part in monitoring the environment and being a constructive partner in seeking solutions that foster sustainable development policies.

Global environmental problems transcend national borders and must be solved at the international level, based on knowledge-based policy development. As the UN's leading environmental programme, UNEP has a broad mandate. Norway is working to ensure that UNEP becomes an organisation in the long term, but the Rio Earth Summit 2012 could not reach agreement on upgrading UNEP to a specialised agency for the environment. However, UNEP has been strengthened in several areas as a result of the Rio summit and the follow-up of the Rio meeting in 2012. The institutional reform of UNEP is the first tangible result of the Rio conference on sustainable development in 2012.

The tasks of the Committee of Permanent Representatives include preparing meetings, budgets and programmes of work, and supervising that decisions are implemented. The UNEP's regional presence is to be strengthened and head-quarter functions are to be consolidated in Nairobi. Efforts

to strengthen the interface between science and policy are to be intensified. It was also decided that UNEP's Executive Director is to draw up a written policy on access to information. Norway is following these efforts closely and is an active advocate of UNEP becoming a more open organisation governed by member states. In 2013 Norway was elected to the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, representing the Western Europe and Others Group.

Norway wishes UNEP to continue to play a central role in setting the agenda in the global environmental policy arena and in facilitating international environmental negotiations. Among other things, UNEP has played a significant part as facilitator for negotiations on conventions on climate change, biodiversity, chemicals, etc. UNEP also serves as the Secretariat for a number of environmental conventions.

Environment is a cross-cutting topic and Norway emphasises the importance of UNEP partnering with others. The cooperation between UNEP and UNDP is particularly important in this respect. Such cooperation has been carried out effectively in the Poverty Environment Initiative (PEI), and efforts have been made to collaborate with UNDP on the PAGE project. In 2012, UNEP worked closely with UNDAF on the preparation of cross-cutting plans in the fields of environment and climate change. Norway strongly underscores the importance of UNEP working in partnership with other parts of the UN system, including FAO, UNDP and UNESCO, for instance in connection with the secretariat function of the Intergovernmental Panel for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Visiting address: 7. juni plassen 1 / Victoria terasse 5, Oslo,  
P.O.Box 8114 Dep, NO-0032 Oslo, Norway.

For more information, contact the Section for Budget and Administration by e-mail at: [sbf-fn@mfa.no](mailto:sbf-fn@mfa.no). This document can be found on our website: <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/selected-topics/un>.