

Chapter 4

UNEP in the Regions





4.1 Role of the Division of Regional Cooperation

Global environmental policy development and implementation can only be effective if full account is taken of regional priorities. Environmental problems are often local, regional or sub-regional in scale, and require regionally-based solutions that take into consideration geography, specific environmental conditions, cultural heritage, traditions and practices. A strong focus on local and regional levels is crucial to the ownership and successful development of sustainable livelihood strategies; at the same time, it fosters local capacity development and provides an enabling environment for local initiatives oriented towards combating poverty and reducing environmental degradation.

In this context, Governments decided to strengthen UNEP's regional presence. In February 2003, they adopted decision GC22/21, which requests UNEP to *“establish and strengthen partnership at the regional and sub regional levels with other United Nations bodies, development banks and other institutions, including major groups, with a view to enhance the effectiveness of the development and delivery of the programme of work of the United Nations Environment Programme in the regions.”*

UNEP's Division of Regional Cooperation (DRC) is composed of a coordinating office based at the headquarters in Nairobi, and of the following six Regional Offices.

- Regional Office for Africa (ROA)
- Regional Office for Europe (ROE)
- Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC)
- Regional Office for North America (RONA)
- Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP)
- Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA)

Regional offices play a leading role in the delivery of UNEP's vision and mandate. The main activities of the DRC are to:

- Undertake relevant information and data-gathering to bring regional perspectives to the development of UNEP policies and programmes;
- Present UNEP global policies in the regions and enlist support for them at all levels;
- Implement and complement relevant parts of UNEP's global programmes through initiating, co-ordinating, and catalysing regional and sub-regional cooperation and action in response to environmental problems and emergencies;
- Assist in the development of policies and programmes on global and regional environmental issues between and within Governments in the regions;
- Provide advisory services to help Governments translate global commitments into national action for the protection and enhancement of the environment;
- Raise public awareness of environmental problems and create a constituency for environmental action;
- Promote cooperation between UNEP and NGOs and the private sector; and
- Broaden the constituency of UNEP.





4.2 Civil society engagement within UNEP's regional offices

Primary contact points for local, national and regional CSOs, the regional offices are at the “front line” of civil society engagement. In this context, the regional offices play a proactive role in engaging civil society in governmental decision-making (chapter 2) and in all aspects of the implementation of UNEP's work programme (chapter 3): scientific assessment; development of policies and law; implementation of environment policies and law; communication; and engaging business and industry. Additionally, each regional office focuses on specific actions according to each regional context. Below is a summary of the main activities targeted at civil society within the different regional offices.

4.2.1 Regional Office for Europe (ROE)

Europe is home to some of the largest and most powerful CSOs. The Governments of this region also maintain a long tradition of involving civil society in their work programmes. Consequently, there are numerous opportunities for civil society to engage with ROE.

UNEP National committees

The main objective of the National Committees is to improve outreach through an NGO acting as a platform in each country. This NGO works with other NGOs and the public in general to foster a greater awareness of global, regional and national environmental concerns and undertakes fund-raising activities to finance environmental activities. The first National Committee was set up in 1986.

As of 1 January 2004, there were 33 UNEP National committees; one in ROAP (South Korea), two in RONA (represented by the United Nations Association of Canada and USA), four in ROLAC (Argentina, Brazil, Jamaica and Peru), and 26 in ROE (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malta, Moldova, The Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Russia, Sweden, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom, Ukraine and Uzbekistan). These national committees were being formed in a number of countries with encouragement from UNEP, but to a large extent, they were emerging as a spontaneous movement.

The UNEP National Committees benefit from the support of UNEP regional offices to raise public awareness. They are connected by a “unep-natcom” listserv:

UNEP-NATCOM@ cedar.at

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ROE supports civil society in key environmental policy areas. This includes: the promotion of the Aarhus Convention; the promotion of voluntary industry codes of conduct (Global Compact) or reporting (Global Reporting Initiative); the facilitation of the Geneva Environment Network; and the promotion of national actions on sustainable consumption. ROE supports the implementation of concrete action focusing on energy, consumption and production patterns, water quality and air pollution. ROE works with youth and the ageing population, two groups with increased purchasing power, to educate and encourage alternatives to the current “consumerism.”



ROE is particularly active in the outreach field. It produces outreach materials, including youth publications, and supports a Youth network through the Tunza Europe E-mail listserv: Europe-Tunza@yahoo.com. ROE also developed and maintains an extensive network of UNEP national committees, which support implementation of UNEP's work programme and outreach activities at the



national level. ROE supports the Geneva Environment Network, a network of international environmental organizations with NGO involvement, which publishes directories of green organizations, newsletters and develops websites.

ROE's main CSO partners include Friends of the Earth Europe, the Environmental NGO Coalition, IUCN, The World Council of Churches, The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), and the WWF.

Please see ROE contacts details below:

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Tel.: +41 22 917 82 79 - Fax: +41 22 917 80 24

E-mail: roe@unep.ch - Web: www.unep.ch/roe

4.2.2 Regional Office for Africa (ROA)

Located at UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, ROA provides a wide range of advisory services through an umbrella project known as Regional Advisory Services (RAS).

ROA's work focuses on ensuring that environmental considerations are the engine driving Africa along the road to recovery, stability and sustainable development. ROA has been instrumental in developing the environmental focus of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and for assisting the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) Forum, as the main vehicle for reviewing African environmental issues and identifying priorities.



Credit/Still Pictures

ROA supports civil society policy involvement within NEPAD. CSOs can contact ROA and the IUCN Regional Office for Southern Africa, which has programmes on NEPAD and civil society, www.iucnrosa.org.zw. At the sectoral level, ROA is focusing its attention on water and reversal of land degradation, two major African challenges. ROA implements the "Nairobi River Basin Initiative", a project that seeks a restored riverine system with clean water for Nairobi and a healthier environment for the people.

ROA also works with the African Network for Environmental Journalists and with schools and universities through work with the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). FEE was established in 1981 to raise awareness of environmental issues and effect change through education. Working with FEE, ROA is partnering African educational institutions with others in Europe.





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4.2.3 Regional Office for North America (RONA)

The Regional Office for North America (RONA) is located in Washington, DC. It works with the Canadian and United States of America Governments and a range of CSOs in North America, including NGOs, the corporate sector, scientific communities, environmental research organizations and the media.

At the policy level, RONA hosts meetings of civil society to discuss issues relevant to UNEP's programme such as sustainable consumption and production, strategies for raising the profile of environmental issues, trade and environment, sustainable building and construction, green procurement and others.

RONA fosters partnerships between North American organizations and UNEP. RONA is currently working in partnership with universities on the Global Reporting Initiative and exploring several other partnerships.

To raise public awareness, RONA conducts an annual information campaign targeted at the US Congress. In addition, RONA works with the Global Legislators Organization for a Balanced Environment (GLOBE), www.globeinternational.org, to better inform parliamentarians of key environmental issues.

Please see RONA contact details below:
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4.2.4 Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP)

UNEP's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) is located in Bangkok, Thailand.

ROAP involves civil society in a sub-regional policy dialogue. Initiated in 2003, this dialogue seeks to strengthen regional policy formulation through an annual meeting of the chairs of five sub-regional governmental processes and five eminent civil society leaders. Additionally, UNEP plans to establish sub-regional civil society forums in five ROAP sub-regions that aim to identify priority emerging issues and implement programmes based on State of the Environment Assessments and WSSD/Millennium Development Goals imperatives. Representatives are drawn from each country within the sub-region and from the nine civil society groups defined in Agenda 21.





ROAP supports sub-regional networking, capacity building and knowledge management. It focuses its work on young people, parliamentarians, media and the private sector. With Youth, in addition to active implementation of the Tunza strategy, ROAP established the South Asia Youth Environmental Network (SAYEN), which has created membership criteria, network hosting arrangements, print and electronic communications, meeting schedules, programme activities – including publication in 2003 of the South Asian Youth SOE Children of the Monsoon – and capacity building mechanisms. In 2003, UNEP hosted the Eco-Innovate 03 Forum involving 120 Australian and South East Asian young people in Sydney in a partnership with Bayer and the University of New South Wales.



Credit/Ben Roche

With NGOs, ROAP has established links with the biennial Asia-Pacific NGOs Environmental Conferences and the Asia outreach programme of the Council of NGOs in consultative relationships with the UN (CONGO). At the core of ROAP's civil society strategy lies a regional environmental knowledge centre accessible to NGOs. UNEP also involves the media in addressing sustainable development issues, working with groups including the Asia-Pacific Forum of Environmental Journalists, the Asia Media Information and Communication Centre, the Asia-Pacific office of the Television Trust for the Environment as well as national and regional environmental journalists associations. With parliamentarians, UNEP works to deliver targeted capacity building programmes where feasible through existing regional parliamentarian forums and networks such as the GLOBE programme.

ROAP's specific support to the private sector includes programmes such as the "Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction from Industry in Asia and the Pacific" (GERIAP), which involves the transfer of environmentally sound technologies, cleaner and safer production, sustainable consumption, tourism, industrial pollution management, chemicals, the compliance assistance programme under the Montreal Protocol.

Please see ROAP contact details below:

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4.2.5 Regional Office for Latin America and Caribbean (ROLAC)

ROLAC is located in Mexico. Academic centres and NGOs play a major role in ROLAC's work, which focuses its actions on the Latin American "Forum of





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Ministers of the Environment.” The forum identifies regional environmental priorities through periodical meetings and develops a Regional Action Plan that lists the required activities for making regional co-operation more effective and congruent. One of the main challenges of the forum is to address the growing levels of poverty and inequality, while at the same time integrating environmental and social concerns into development policy in all sectors.

ROLAC involves civil society in policy debates during the Ministerial Forum where CSOs can organise and participate in parallel meetings. ROLAC is particularly active in the implementation of Principle 10 and the presentation of cultural diversity for environmental protection. ROLAC implements a partnership with civil society, “Global Environmental Citizenship”, a GEF Project executed in coordination with six NGOs to improve citizenship engagement within the areas of climate change, biodiversity, international waters and the ozone layer.

In raising public awareness, ROLAC works with youth networks to develop national and regional youth GEO reports. ROLAC works with the media for the “Tierramerica Project”, a joint UNEP, UNDP and International Press Service project with 27 regional newspapers, over 500 radio stations, and a webpage – reaching more than 5 million people each week. ROLAC also contributed to the creation of two networks of environmental journalists for Central America and South America. ROLAC has also developed the “environmental training network for Latin America and the Caribbean” to reach universities and academic communities, focusing its work on thematic issues, including the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor.

ROLAC is actively engaged with a wide range of civil society actors including the following: Academia Mexicana de Derecho Ecológico (AMDA); The Ford Foundation; Caribbean Law Association (CLA); Caribbean Law Institute Centre-Barbados (CLIC); Energy through Enterprise, Brazil (ECO); Environmental Law Centre, Fondo de las Américas, Chile; Lawyers for a Green Planet Institute, Brazil (LGPI); the Institute for Tropical Studies, Rare Center for Tropical Conservation (RARE); IUCN; universities and educational institutions.

ROLAC is the operative secretariat of the Commission de Medio Ambiente del Parlatino, working with them to prepare parliamentarians on emerging environmental issues.

Please see ROLAC contact details below:

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4.2.6 Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA)

The Regional Office for West Asia is located in Bahrain. The office serves 12 countries in West Asia: six Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates) and six Mashreq Countries (Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Yemen).

ROWA assists the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE), especially its Steering Committee on Environmental Education, Information and Public Awareness. ROWA elaborates environmental strategies in collaboration with the Joint Committee of Environment & Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR) and the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA).

The focus of ROWA reflects the focus of the region in the environmental field: the need for scientific assessment; freshwater and marine ecosystems; land; industrial pollution; and biodiversity.

In the policy debate, ROWA supports a number of consultations at the regional level, including ensuring the participation of civil society and parliamentarians. At the project implementation level, ROWA has focused on coral reefs (with the International Coral Reef Action Network), the phase-out of leaded fuel/gasoline, water, environmental law (with the Arab Regional Centre for Environmental Law), and clean production and environmental management systems.

In public awareness, ROWA is developing a media knowledge centre and is supporting the Arab media towards achieving sustainable development. UNEP works also with youth, taking advantage of its network established when producing GEO for youth. ROWA seeks to strengthen its scientific base, and its partners such as the Arabian Gulf University, while taking into account the spiritual component of environmental education in coordination with ministries of religious affairs and other civil society groups.

Please see ROWA contact details below:

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