I. Good to Know

- Angela Merkel wins German election
- Austria’s governing coalition slips in elections
- Norway agrees centre-right minority government
- EU State of the Union Address
- French Environment Conference
- EIB spells out energy lending criteria

II. UNEP on the Ground

- PlanetSolar catamaran successfully concludes campaign in Paris
- UNEP and Switzerland consult on environmental issues
- Two European Laureates receive UN Champions of the Earth award
- Heads of States call for stronger action against wildlife crime
- Ozone Protection Award for Customs and Enforcement Officers
- Georgia takes the lead in assessing its natural capital
- For a Greener Ukraine: national consultation held in Kiev
- Task Force defines steps to save the Saker Falcon
- Join us on-line and search for UNEP’s EU-focused news

III. On the Calendar

- Heads of States call for stronger action against wildlife crime, p.4

- Embedding the environment in Sustainable Development Goals
- Post-2015 debated in European Parliament

SPECIAL Post-2015 Agenda

- UNEP’s side events at the 19th Session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP)
- Countries gather for final step in plan to phase out mercury
- Preventing poisoning from lead in paint
- Youth Green Jobs Workshop, Brussels, 8 October
I. GOOD TO KNOW

Angela Merkel wins German election

Chancellor Angela Merkel’s Conservative Party has won Germany’s election, but finished just short of an absolute majority, official results show. Her conservative bloc took about 41% of the vote - but her liberal partners failed to make it into parliament. It is thought she is likely to seek a grand coalition with the Social Democrats (SPD) who won 26%.

The SPD would have preferred to enter a coalition with the Green Party, but does not appear to have the votes to do so, and has ruled out a three-way alliance including the Left Party. The Green Party landed 8% of the votes.

More information here.

Austria’s governing coalition slips in elections

Austria’s pro-Europe, centrist coalition partners face weeks of hard bargaining to extend their seven years in power after voters gave them only a tiny combined majority while boosting the far right and a new liberal party.

Chancellor Werner Faymann’s Social Democrats (SPD) offered talks with their conservative People’s Party (OVP) allies to ensure that the two parties that have dominated post-war politics stay in power. But conservative leader Michael Spindelegger was keeping his options open after both parties emerged bruised from their worst electoral showings since World War Two, together winning just 50.9% of the vote.

The victory, albeit slim, bucks a trend of EU voters throwing out governments over unpopular austerity steps imposed to calm investors since the financial crisis erupted in 2008.

More information here.

Norway agrees centre-right minority government

Following the general election that took place in Norway on 9 September, a new government is being formed and should be appointed on 14 October when the old government’s mandate expires. Norway is set for the most rightwing administration in its postwar history with the centre-right Conservatives and populist Progress party forming a minority government after two smaller centrist parties ended coalition talks.

However, the Liberals and Christian Democrats will support the government in parliament having secured promises such as not to drill in the oil-rich Nordic country’s picturesque regions of the Lofoten Islands and Vesteralen.

More information here.

EU State of the Union Address

On 11 September European Commission’s President Barroso delivered the EU’s State of the Union Address to the European Parliament. Climate change was mentioned as Barroso expressed the EU’s commitment to fleshing out a comprehensive, legally binding global climate agreement by 2015, but also emphasized that the EU “needs the others on board”.

French Environment Conference

France’s Second National Environment Conference, bringing together 13 ministers and 500 participants took place on 20-21 September.

When opening the conference, President François Hollande said that France should aim for a 30% cut in fossil fuel use by 2030. He announced a series of measures to speed up the transition to more efficient sources of energy, which, he said, would cost “20 billion Euros in investments” all sectors combined.

President Hollande also called on EU partners to agree on a more ambitious target to cut greenhouse gas emissions and said the 28-nation bloc should consider imposing an EU-wide carbon tax. He reiterated his call for the EU to cut CO₂ emissions by 40% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels versus the existing 20% goal.

The head of France’s Green party, who had previously threatened to withdraw support for the Socialist government unless President Francois Hollande made a clearer commitment to protect the environment, was quite happy with the measures announced by the Head of State at the Environment Conference.

EIB spells out energy lending criteria

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has adopted new guidelines to reinforce support for investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency, energy grids and research and innovation-related projects. These guidelines are the result of a comprehensive review undertaken over a year to ensure that its energy lending criteria reflect the EU energy and climate policy “as well as current investment trends”. Amongst other things, the EIB approved the introduction of new standards to screen out investments whose carbon emissions exceed a threshold level of 550 gr CO₂/kWh.
II. UNEP ON THE GROUND

PlanetSolar catamaran successfully concludes campaign in Paris

PlanetSolar’s 2013 campaign, which began on 8 April in La Ciotat (France), came to an end on 10 September in Paris. In successfully completing an unprecedented campaign of scientific measurements along the Gulf Stream in collaboration with the University of Geneva (UNIGE) and UNEP, the world’s largest solar vessel demonstrated throughout this journey that she could be used for practical purposes. The ship sailed over 20,000 kilometers in 156 days, raising the general public’s awareness about climate issues and promoting solar energy at each stopover. The Parisian stopover brings the 2013 mission to a close.

The collected data is currently being analyzed at UNIGE, and the researchers are already drawing a positive initial assessment.

“PlanetSolar DeepWater made it possible to test several scientific instruments – some of which were prototypes developed at UNIGE – in real conditions. Extensive physical, chemical, and biological data is now in the hands of the institution and will be the subject of a thorough analysis. Although the study of this information is not yet under way, interesting trends are becoming apparent, particularly in relation to sea spray aerosol production,” stated Martin Beniston, climatologist and Director of the Institute of Environmental Sciences at UNIGE.

UNEP was an active partner of this first-ever large-scale scientific solar expedition by processing satellite data that guided Planet Solar towards best locations for sampling. The scientists on the boat were looking for specific zones with great variations in temperatures and chlorophyll concentration, as these zones carry large amounts of energy and provide best possible information. Now that UNEP has fulfilled its “GPS-by-satellite” guidance role, it will host all the scientific data collected during the mission and ensure they are easily accessible for download and processing by the scientists involved.

More information: isabelle.valentiny@unep.org

UNEP and Switzerland consult on environmental issues

The annual bilateral consultations with Switzerland were held in Geneva on 2 September with an intense and interesting agenda. The debate focused on three aspects of UNEP’s role in the UN system-wide strategies (Rio+20): UNEA as a truly global and politically relevant, system-wide forum for environment with ministerial engagement and outcome; the Environment Management Group as a tool for integrating environment into all of UN and its system-wide strategies; and UNEP’s active engagement in the SDGs and Post-2015 discussions as the voice for environment with concrete proposals for the goals, targets and indicators. Interesting exchanges were also heard regarding the Global Environment Outlook process, consolidation of headquarters functions, UNEP’s financing, Geneva Environment Network, synergies for chemicals and biodiversity related Multilateral Environment Agreements, as well as sustainable production and consumption including Green Economy and 10YFP. The need for strengthened partnerships with all actors, in particular with the private sector and the capital markets, was stressed. The annual consultations in 2014 will be held in Nairobi.

More information: sylvie.motard@unep.org or kati.autere@unep.org

Two European Laureates receive UN Champions of the Earth award

Carlo Petrini, founder of the Slow Food movement, and European Commissioner for the Environment Janez Potočnik received the United Nations 2013 “Champions of the Earth” award. The prize – the UN system’s highest environmental accolade – is awarded to leaders from government, civil society and the private sector whose actions have had a significant and positive impact on the environment.

Mr Petrini was recognised for his pioneering work over the past three decades to improve the efficiency and sustainability of the world’s agriculture and food supply “one bite at a time”. Slow Food has over 100,000 members and supporters in more than 150 countries, defending local food traditions, supporting biodiversity, tackling food waste, and promoting small-scale quality food products.

Mr Potočnik received the Policy Leadership award for his commitment to an inclusive Green Economy and boosting resource efficiency including in respect to food wastage across the European Union. The Slovenian national’s leadership has emphasized how rising pressures on water, land, and other resources can trigger a positive shift towards more sustainable, low-carbon economies and lifestyles.

They joined an eclectic group of “Champions of the Earth” laureates, including Brazil’s Environment Minister, the developers of Google Earth, and a leading air pollution researcher, who received their awards on 18 September at a special ceremony held in New York with Achim Steiner and UNEP’s Goodwill Ambassador Gisele Bundchen.

“Champions of the Earth” is organized by UNEP.

More information: isabelle.valentiny@unep.org
Heads of States call for stronger action against wildlife crime

A high level meeting, convened under the title “Poaching and illicit wildlife trafficking – a multidimensional crime and a growing challenge to the international community”, was hosted by the governments of Germany and Gabon on 26 September in New York during the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly. The event was attended by ministers and other high level representatives from Belgium, Chad, Colombia, Norway, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The discussion was moderated by John E. Scanlon, CITES Secretary-General.

Jan Eliasson, deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, told participants: “Key species are being driven to extinction. The proceeds of illegal trade support transnational organized crime and terror organizations. Murder and violence go hand in hand with this despicable business. The illegal trade in wildlife and endangered species is linked to drug smugglers, gun runners and human trafficking. It is a threat to all three pillars of our Organization: human rights, peace and security, and development.”

“To make the fight effective, Member States must strengthen penalties against wildlife crime,” said Mr Eliasson. “At the same time, we need to quash demand. That means educating populations about the real cost of poaching and trafficking.”

Mr Eliasson said UNTV, the UNEP and UN Goodwill Ambassadors are reaching out to audiences who may not otherwise hear this message.

President Ali Bongo of Gabon called for the appointment of a UN special envoy on wildlife crime as well as a UN General Assembly resolution.

His proposal was supported by UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, William Hague, and the German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, as well as other representatives such as Norwegian Environment Minister Bard Vegar Solhjell.

There was wide support for making best use of exiting instruments and initiatives in combating wildlife crime, with many placing strong emphasis on CITES and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime conventions against organised transnational crime and corruption, as well as the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC).

More information: juan.vasquez@cites.org

Ozone Protection Award for Customs and Enforcement Officers

The Europe and Central Asia (ECA) Ozone Protection Award for Customs and Enforcement Officers, set up by UNEP in 2010 under the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, aims to provide incentive and recognition to Customs and Enforcement Officers, who succeed in preventing illegal/unwanted trade in ozone-depleting substances (ODS) and ODS equipment. It also contributes to raising awareness about the Montreal Protocol and promotes cooperation between Customs Services and National Ozone Units.

The third edition of the ECA Ozone Protection Award has been launched and eligible participants include Customs and Enforcement Officers as well as Environmental Inspectors, Police, Licensing and Ozone Officers (or their respective organizations) who successfully prevented illegal/unwanted trade in ODS with European, Caucasus and Central Asian countries.

More information here.

Refrigerant cylinders containing substances banned in the EU seized in September 2013 in Poland
Georgia takes the lead in assessing its natural capital

“...is often said that you can’t manage what you don’t measure. The same principle can apply for a country’s natural capital”, said Pavan Sukhdev, Chair, TEEB Advisory Board and UNEP Goodwill Ambassador, at the launch of “The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) Scoping Study for Georgia” that took place in Tbilisi on 1 October.

Georgia is one of the pilot countries that has volunteered to assess its natural capital with the ultimate objective of valuing it, including non-monetary values, and the services provided by the country’s ecosystems. “Bringing the wealth of the natural world to the attention of decision-makers will pave the way to better informed choices and policies for all Georgians”, added Mr Sukhdev.

The “TEEB Scoping Study for Georgia” - a joint effort of the Georgian Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection, UNEP and WWF-Caucasus - is an important step forward in valuing ecosystems and biodiversity. Identifying five core sectors of Georgian economy – Energy, Tourism, Agriculture, Mining, and Forestry – the study highlights their substantial dependence on natural capital and related services, hence showing the importance of healthy ecosystems beyond environmental concerns.

Addressing the audience in Tbilisi, Jan Dusik, Acting Director and Regional Representative for UNEP in Europe said: “UNEP is proud to host The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) initiative which has brought the multiple values, including the non-monetary values, of the globe’s ecosystems and their services from the invisible into the visible spectrum of economic and developmental discourse. Not because the economics of nature are nature's only relevance to humanity; but in a world where the ups and downs of GDP currently define much of policy-making, informing decision-makers by increasing the evidence base for countries to account for their natural assets in policy formulation may lead to more sustainable development and greener economies”.

The “TEEB Georgia: Scoping Study” is a preliminary study that sets the stage for undertaking a full TEEB study for Georgia that would provide decision-makers with data and recommendations on questions that the scoping study identifies. The recommendations would cover a large spectrum, including public policies for subsidy reform, land use management, protected area management, investment in natural infrastructure restoration, and national accounting to include natural capital.

Access the full report here. More information: ivonne.higuero@unep.org or isabelle.valentiny@unep.org
Task Force defines steps to save the Saker Falcon

The Saker Falcon Task Force convened a stakeholders’ workshop on 9-11 September in Abu Dhabi, UAE, to further develop a comprehensive plan for the recovery of the endangered Saker Falcon (Falco cherrug). The workshop was hosted by the Coordinating Unit of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (Raptors MOU), which was concluded under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). Over 70 government representatives, nature conservation authorities and NGOs from more than 30 countries throughout the African-Eurasian range of the species worked on elaborating a Saker Falcon Global Action Plan to address threats and conservation challenges. Electrocution by power lines and unsustainable taking of the birds from the wild for falconry purposes were recognised as key threats. The Saker Falcon population has declined by almost 50 per cent in the last 20 years. An artificial nesting programme is being implemented in Mongolia: 5,000 artificial platforms have been set up, which has resulted in over 500 new breeding pairs being established producing almost 2,000 young falcons. More conservation action on the breeding grounds, monitoring using satellite tags to better understand Saker Falcon ecology during the winter and a framework for legal harvest of the species are necessary steps to address major threats to the species. An online information portal is proposed to raise awareness amongst trappers, falconers and falcon hospitals about the plight of the Saker Falcon. In addition, delegates called for one million existing or new electricity poles to be made safe for the Saker Falcon across its migration range, which will also benefit many other species of birds. The Saker Falcon is classified as globally “Endangered” on the IUCN Red List. It is also listed on CMS Appendix I and CITES Appendix II.

More information: veronica.lenarz@cms.int
Embedding the environment in Sustainable Development Goals

As part of UNEP outreach activities, the Geneva Environment Network Secretariat organized a high-level discussion on “Embedding the Environment in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” with UNEP Executive Director, Achim Steiner, and Franz Perez, Head of International Affairs Division at the Federal Office for the Environment of Switzerland. Around 140 participants attended the event moderated by WWF International Director for Policy and Science, Janos Pasztor, who is also the former Executive Secretary of the UN Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Global Sustainability.

One of the main outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference was the agreement to establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process to develop a set of SDGs, which will build upon the Millennium Development Goals and converge with the post-2015 development agenda. While countries recommended that the SDGs take a forward-looking approach, they also suggested that the new goals should be based on experiences from current international goals and targets.

An analysis of current environmental goals and targets shows that the successful ones are built on general support from society and a scientific consensus that the problem exists and is urgent. The ones making the most progress tend to be embedded in effective governance regimes, and be easier to implement because solutions are readily available. A key to success also seems to be that goals are underpinned by specific and measurable targets.

In 2006, the president of Switzerland suggested at the Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF) that UNEP should develop Global Environmental Goals (GEGs), as it plays an important role as voice of the environment and of the MEAs in the SDG process. The GMEF also called for GEO-5 (Global Environment Outlook) to be more policy relevant and to assess progress in relation to internationally agreed goals.

UNEP developed a compilation of existing internationally agreed environmental goals and objectives. Building on lessons from existing goals, a framework has been suggested for embedding environmental sustainability into SDGs.

The work so far has helped to clarify conceptual questions; it should now focus on concrete elements. Internationally agreed environmental goals could provide input for environmental targets as well as integrated targets.

During the debate organized at the International Environment House in Geneva, some questions on how to become concrete were raised. Should we have a chemicals and waste 2020 target as new SDG or should this target be under the Sustainable Consumption and Production target? Should we develop concrete indicators (amount of transboundary movement of hazardous waste to places where sound management can be measured; amount of mercury used in Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining, etc.)? How to use Aichi targets to formulate a Biodiversity SDG?

At the end of the discussion, Switzerland reaffirmed that UNEP should take the lead, involving other actors (MEAs, NGOs and academia) to identify critical environmental issues crucial for achieving sustainable development (including drivers of environmental degradation) and existing environmental goals and targets that are specifically relevant for SDGs.

More information: diana.rizzolio@unep.org

Post-2015 debated in European Parliament

On 17 September, UNEP helped facilitate a meeting on the future Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the current Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the European Parliament. The discussion focused on how these two processes can best be converged and saw a discussion between Andris Piebalgs, EU Commissioner for Development, Janez Potočnik, EU Commissioner for Environment, and Amina J. Mohammed, UN Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Post-2015 Development Planning.

In a fruitful exchange of views, the participants emphasized the need for a strong connection between poverty eradication and sustainability, while stressing that continued work on the MDGs remains a priority. Commissioners Piebalgs and Potočnik were remarkably united in their calls for strong EU participation in the post-2015 discussions and calls were made for “a common EU vision” on the post-2015 development agenda by early 2014. Commissioner Potočnik furthermore placed importance on the Rio+20 outcomes, recognising Green Economy as an important pathway and tool for sustainable development. The questions of universality of the goals, the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities, financing and sustainable consumption and production were identified by the UN Secretary-General’s Special Adviser as the biggest challenges for the intergovernmental phase ahead. Nevertheless, international discussion on these issues can also be considered a “formidable opportunity” for achieving sustainable development.
III. ON THE CALENDAR

24 October, Geneva, Switzerland:
Briefing on the First Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP

UNEP will organize a side event during the 19th session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP), which will focus on the state of preparations for the 1st session of the United Nations Environment Assembly to UNEP (UNEA1), in particular the proposed structure and programme of the session, and will seek feedback, guidance and suggestions from Member States.

25 October, Geneva, Switzerland:
UNEP’s contribution to the Post-2015 development agenda and update on the implementation of 10YFP

This side event will provide insights into UNEP’s contribution to the Post-2015 development agenda based on its recently published discussion paper on embedding the environment in sustainable development goals. It will also provide updates on the implementation of the 10 Years Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP) for which UNEP is serving as Secretariat and administering its Trust Fund. The event will be open to Member States and other stakeholders, and UNEP will seek their views and comments.

More information: wondwosen.asnake@unep.org

Countries gather for final step in plan to phase out mercury

After a four-year negotiation process, 140 countries agreed in January 2013 at the fifth and final session of the intergovernmental negotiation committee on the text for a global legally binding instrument on mercury that aims at reducing mercury use and emissions.

The Minamata Convention on Mercury, named after Minamata, a city in Japan where serious health damage occurred as a result of mercury pollution in the mid 20th century, will be presented for adoption and opened for signature at a special high-level Diplomatic Conference in Kumamoto and Minamata, Japan.

The Convention will provide controls and reductions across a range of products, processes and industries where mercury is used, released or emitted.

For more information on how to register to attend the conference, please click here.

Details and information on the Conference can be found here.
Preventing poisoning from lead in paint

As part of UNEP’s continuing work on lead and cadmium, WHO and UNEP will be holding an International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action, to take place 20-26 October.

The theme of the week is preventing poisoning from lead in paint to boost action on the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint (GAELP). Now that the Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles (PCFV) has almost completed its work to eliminate lead from vehicle fuels, the elimination of lead paint is the next target.

Lead compounds are added to paint to impart a number of functional properties, among which specific colours, durability and crack-resistance. They are not unique in imparting these properties and several manufacturers have already removed lead compounds from all or most of their paint formulations with little economic impact. UNEP believes that the Global Alliance can achieve the elimination of lead paint by encouraging governments to make regulatory controls prohibiting the manufacture and marketing of paints.

We would like your help in making the “International Lead Poisoning Prevention Awareness Week of Action” a success by encouraging governments and key stakeholders in your region to participate in the Awareness Week and join the Global Alliance.

International lead poisoning prevention week of action
20–26 October 2013

Lead is a poison. It has serious consequences for health.
- There is no safe amount of lead exposure.
- Lead is particularly harmful to children and pregnant women, affecting the developing brain and nervous system of children.
- Lead gets into the body mainly by eating and breathing in small particles.

You and your children may be exposed to lead
- In many countries, lead is found in household paints.
- Lead paint is also used on toys, playgrounds and other children’s products.
- Lead from paint ends up in household dust.

Protect your family
- Wash your children’s hands to remove invisible lead dust.
- Clean the house regularly to remove dust/dirt that may contain lead particles.
- Ask for lead-free paint. Alternatives exist.

Youth Green Jobs Workshop, Brussels, 8 October

Need a job? Is the job market failing you?

This is your chance to put questions to decision-makers and industry on green jobs for youth and young professionals.

The workshop will present best practices from the UN perspective, EU cities and regions, the European Commission and Intel. Solutions and ideas including youth (green) entrepreneurship, and especially in youth-dominated industries with long-lasting, sustainable potential will be the focus.

More information here.