



Chapter 1:

UNEP and Civil Society

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This chapter contains general information on UNEP and the contextual framework for engagement with civil society. UNEP is a UN organisation governed by member states with a secretariat charged with responsibility for carrying out member states' decisions.

Today's pressing global challenges require the United Nations to be more than just an intergovernmental forum; it must engage a broad range of others actors as well, as underscored by the 2004 Report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations–Civil Society Relations, entitled *We the Peoples: Civil Society, the United Nations and Global Governance*. (See <http://www.un-ngls.org/edited%20advance%20report%20of%20SG%20on%20Cardoso.pdf>.)

The views, expertise, and actions of civil society organisations are fundamental in any environment and sustainable development strategy. At the international, national, and local levels they play a critical role in changing on-the-ground realities and improving environmental quality and people's lives.

There are many different ways for civil society and major groups to become involved in UNEP's work at both the policy and the programmatic level, as detailed below and in subsequent chapters of this report.

UNEP's Mandate and Evolving Priorities

Established in 1972, UNEP's mission is: "To provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations."

In response to changing internal and external conditions, UNEP has recently developed a new Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) to guide the organisation's work between 2010 and 2013. In February 2008, UNEP's member-governments authorised the UNEP Executive Director to use this draft strategy in developing the organisation's future programme of work. (For further information, see http://www.unep.org/civil_society/GCSF9/pdfs/MTS-GCSS-X-8-ProposedStrategy.pdf.)

The overall vision of UNEP incorporated into the MTS is for UNEP "to be the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, that promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimensions of sustainable development within the United Nations system and that serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment."

The Medium-Term Strategy is based upon UNEP's mandate, which has continually evolved since the creation of UNEP in 1972. Most recently, UNEP's Governing Council adopted the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building (the Bali Strategic Plan) in February 2005. The goal of the Bali Strategic Plan is to strengthen technology support and capacity building, or human capital, in both developing countries and countries in economic transition. It provides a framework for co-operation between UNEP, multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), and other bodies engaged in environmental capacity building, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), civil society, and other relevant stakeholders. (For further information, see <http://www.unep.org/DEC/OnLineManual/Compliance/NationalImplementation/CapacityBuilding/Resource/tabid/679/Default.aspx>.)

The UNEP Medium-Term Strategy defines the following five primary roles as central to UNEP's mandate:

- Keeping the world environmental situation under review;
- Catalysing and promoting international co-operation and action;
- Providing policy advice and early warning information, based upon sound science and assessments;
- Facilitating the development, implementation, and evolution of norms and standards and developing coherent interlinkages among international environmental conventions;
- Strengthening technology support and capacity in line with country needs and priorities.

The MTS took account of broader international developments in considering UNEP's current role. For example, it notes that the international community is now working towards sustainable

development as a result of the outcomes of the “Earth Summit” held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. It also points out that there is renewed focus on the future evolution of international environmental governance within the United Nations system itself, including calls for greater coherence within the United Nations system and an increased focus on the role of civil society and the private sector, on being responsive to country-level priorities, and on results-based management.

The Medium-Term Strategy reorients UNEP’s Programme of Work around six thematic issue priorities: Climate Change, Disasters and Conflict, Ecosystem Management, Environmental Governance, Harmful Substances and Hazardous Wastes, and Resource Efficiency and Sustainable Consumption and Production.

The MTS also discusses a range of tools and institutional mechanisms for implementing its priorities and objectives. Regarding stakeholder participation, for example, the MTS notes that UNEP will further strengthen its co-operation with civil society and the private sector, and that it will engage the full range of major groups and non-governmental actors, including those active at the local, national, regional, or global levels, and those oriented towards advocacy, research, and business.

The MTS also calls for UNEP to move towards a strategic presence model, based on UNEP deploying its staff and resources more strategically in response to regional and country needs and to enable UNEP to work more effectively with the rest of the UN system and with other partners. Towards this end, the MTS calls for strengthening the role of UNEP’s regional offices. It also emphasises the importance of integrating gender equality and equity in all of UNEP’s policies, programmes, and projects and within its institutional structures and in the work that UNEP undertakes with its various partners and other United Nations agencies.

The Role of UNEP’s Secretariat

UNEP’s Secretariat is composed of about 600 staff members. More than half of them are hired internationally and the rest are recruited locally. The Secretariat is charged with the implementation of the member states’ decisions. It manages an annual budget of approximately US\$180 million, most of which is contributed by governments.¹

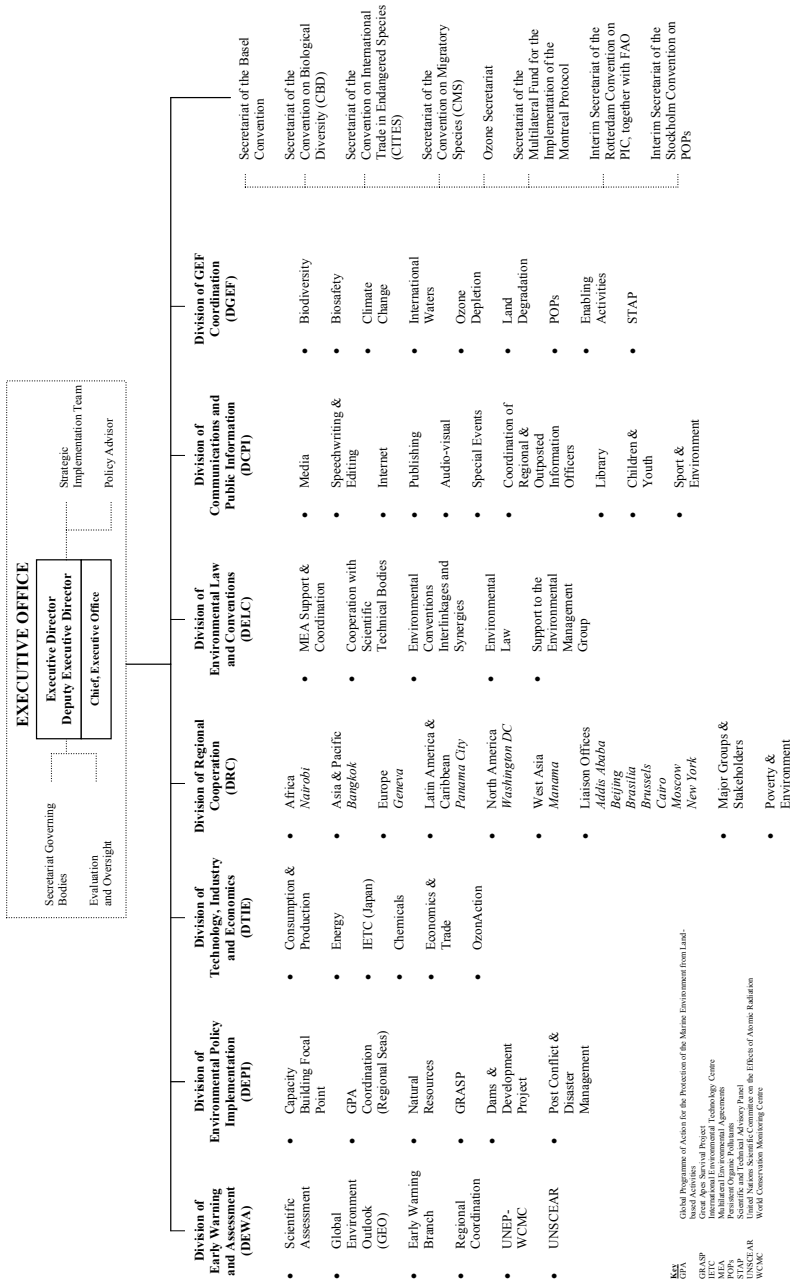
¹ Figures based on 2008–2009 numbers provided in Report of the Executive Director, Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, “Proposed biennial programme and support budgets for 2010–2011.”

UNEP’s budget comes from four sources:

- The Environment Fund (43%), voluntary funds contributed by governments to finance UNEP activities.
- Trust Funds (36%), voluntary funds contributed by governments to finance specific UNEP activities.
- Earmarked contributions (16%), voluntary funds from governments, UN agencies, other organisations, and individuals, and earmarked for specific activities.
- UN Regular Budget (4%), compulsory funds provided by UN General Assembly.

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UNEP's headquarters is located in Nairobi, Kenya. The organisation also has six regional offices as well as several national offices and collaborating centres. (See Organigram.)



The Executive Office houses the Office of the Executive Director and that of the Deputy Executive as well as the office of Evaluation and Oversight, a Strategic Implementation Team, and the Secretariat of the Governing Bodies (SGB).

The Secretariat of the Governing Bodies (SGB) provides a link between the UNEP Secretariat and the organisation's member governments. The SGB provides information to governments on UNEP activities, prepares and organises the Governing Council, and assists the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR). The latter is a subsidiary organ of the Governing Council, whose membership is open to Permanent Representatives accredited to UNEP from members of the UN and its specialised agencies.

UNEP's seven main divisions are:

- Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA)
- Division of Environmental Policy Implementation (DEPI)
- Division of Environmental Law and Conventions (DELCL)
- Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE)
- Division of Communication and Public Information (DCPI)
- Division of the Global Environmental Facility (DGEF)
- Division of Regional Cooperation (DRC)

The Division of Early Warning and Assessment's mission is to provide the world community with improved access to meaningful environmental data and information, and to help increase the capacity of governments to use environmental information for decision making and action planning for sustainable human development. Scientific assessments produced by DEWA provide the basis for governmental discussions.

At the request of governments, UNEP helps to develop international or national policies and laws in response to environmental concerns. Once these are developed, the Division of Environmental Policy Implementation assists governments with implementing these policies and laws at the international level, as well as in their own nation states. The Division of Environmental Law and Conventions promotes the progressive development and implementation of environmental law and supports the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements, including promoting attention to interlinkages and synergies among them. The three Divisions—DEWA, DEPI, and DELCL—cooperate closely to ensure coherence between the state of scientific knowledge, the development of environmental policy and law, and implementation efforts.

The Division of Technology, Industry and Economics works to encourage decision-makers in governments, local authorities, and industries to develop and implement policies, strategies, and practices that are cleaner and safer; make efficient use of natural resources; ensure environmentally sound management of chemicals; reduce pollution and risks for humans and the environment; enable implementation of conventions and international agreements; and incorporate environmental costs.

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DTIE is composed of a Production and Consumption Branch, an Energy Branch, and an OzonAction Branch based in Paris; a Chemicals Branch and an Economics and Trade Branch based in Geneva; and an International Environmental Technology Centre (IETC) based in Osaka.

The Division of Communication and Public Information serves as UNEP's voice. DCPI works to raise UNEP's profile and to influence attitudes, behaviour, and decisions related to the local and global environment. It disseminates the environmental message through the media, the Internet, and audiovisual and printed products, as well as through a wide variety of events, awards, and partnerships.

The Division of the Global Environmental Facility executes UNEP's role in the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), a financial mechanism established as a partnership by UNDP, the World Bank, and UNEP. As an Implementing Agency of the GEF, UNEP provides the Secretariat to the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) of the GEF, corporate support to the GEF (for example, in the development of policy or operational guidance), and oversees the development and implementation of a broad range of eligible projects.

The Division of Regional Cooperation coordinates the delivery of the programmes of work at the regional and national levels. DRC includes some staff based at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi as well as that of the organisation's six regional offices:

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

Defining Civil Society and Major Groups

Agenda 21, adopted by the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992, grants special recognition to nine "major groups" and encourages their involvement in international efforts to promote environmental protection and sustainable development. For further information, see <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21/english/agenda21toc.htm>.

The nine Major Groups are:

- Business and Industry
- Children and Youth
- Farmers
- Indigenous Peoples and their Communities
- Local Authorities

- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)
- Scientific and Technological Community
- Women
- Workers and Trade Unions

Several of these constituencies are well organised through representational membership organisations spanning the national and global levels. Some Major Groups focus on well-defined issues, while others address a much broader array of concerns. The challenge for both civil society organisations and for UNEP is to develop a process that respects and gives voice to the diverse views of Major Group representatives while at the same time structuring Major Group input in such a way that it can effectively inform the inter-governmental process.

UNEP seeks to engage the full range of non-governmental actors: local, national, and international; for-profit² and non-profit; and advocacy, research, and business oriented. Consistent with the UN definition of Major Groups and the purpose of this guidebook, the term “civil society” used throughout is inclusive and should be understood in the broadest sense possible. In particular, it is understood in this context to encompass all nine of the UN-recognised Major Groups.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) can be differentiated according to their functions, including the following primary categories:

- **Service Delivery** – Organisations that develop, monitor, and implement projects and programmes or services; these CSOs are often based at the grassroots level or work closely with community-based organisations (CBOs).
- **Representation** – Organisations that aggregate citizen voices; these include CSO umbrella and network organisations and indigenous peoples’ groups.
- **Advocacy and Policy Input** – Organisations that provide expertise and lobby on particular issues; these include think-tanks, research-oriented institutions, and “watchdog” institutions.
- **Capacity Building** – Organisations that provide support to other CSOs, including funding, training, and raising awareness; these institutions include foundations and major NGOs.
- **Social Functions** – Organisations that foster collective social activities, including religious groups.

Many CSOs, such as indigenous peoples’ networks and their communities or local authorities, fall into more than one category as they carry out different functions.

The primary way in which UNEP engages with the diverse members of civil society is through networks and organisations that have the capacity to interact with UNEP. For example, rather than working directly with a particular rural community, UNEP engages with umbrella organisations that represent this constituency.

² The term “for-profit” encompasses profit-making companies, enterprises, corporations, as well as federations of corporate interests, but not trade unions. The term “private sector” includes profit-making companies and their federations.

A Brief History of Civil Society Engagement in UNEP

In response to public pressure, governments organised the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference) in 1972, which led to UNEP's creation. A large NGO Forum took place alongside the Conference.

UNEP developed an NGO section in 1973, charged with the task of collaboration with civil society, especially in outreach activities to raise public awareness. Civil society was, therefore, involved in the definition of the pillars that continue to structure UNEP: scientific assessment, policy and law, and public information.

In 1974, UNEP backed the establishment of the Environment Liaison Centre International (ELCI), an NGO designed to serve as a focal point for liaison between NGOs across the world and UNEP. UNEP's links with civil society also included drawing expertise from it. For example, UNEP's first Executive Director, Maurice Strong, is a well-known figure from civil society.

Since 1974, UNEP and civil society have developed positive relationships, which culminated in 1992 with the Earth Summit in Rio. Attended by many thousands of NGOs, the Summit was an outstanding success. Two outcomes of this conference—the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 (a ten-year programme for sustainable development)—consecrated the Major Groups as necessary partners to achieve sustainable development.

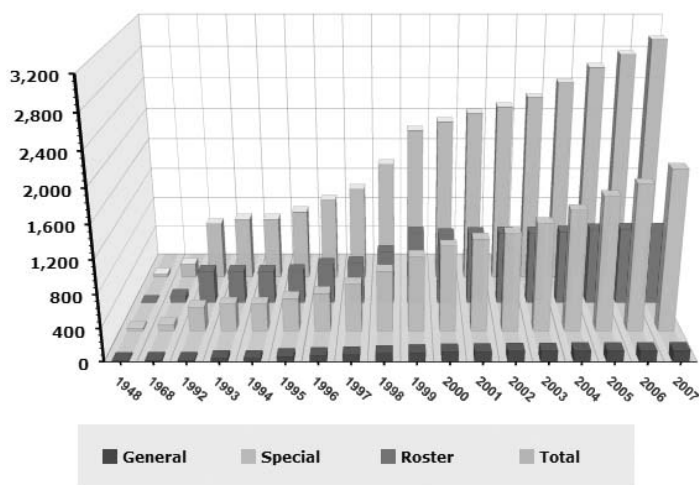
Catalysed by the impressive CSO presence at the Earth Summit, CSO mobilisation gained speed in other conferences in the following decade, including the Vienna Human Rights Summit (1993), the Cairo Population Summit (1994), the Beijing Women's Summit (1995), the Istanbul Summit on Human Settlement (1996), and the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002).

Established at the Earth Summit in 1992 as an intergovernmental policy forum on sustainable development, the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) became a primary major venue for CSOs to incorporate their views into policy debates surrounding sustainable development. Economic and development organisations such as UNDP, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have also sought to engage civil society in their work. Moreover, the maturation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) has provided opportunities for civil society to interact with governments on specific issues, such as climate change, biological diversity, and desertification.

The diversification and strengthening of civil society, which emerged as a key actor in the global environment in the 1990s, bodes well for strengthening the environmental pillar of sustainable development. UN agencies have greatly benefited from the strengthening of civil society and its multiple contributions to the environmental field, including in the areas of advocacy, monitoring, public awareness raising, and scientific assessment. By 2007, more than 3,000 CSOs were accredited

to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), more than triple the number at the time of the Earth Summit. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1. CSOs Accredited to ECOSOC, by Type, 1948–2007



Source: <http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/>

UNEP responded to the growing involvement of civil society in UN activities by organising an annual Global Civil Society Forum (GCSF) in conjunction with UNEP Governing Council/ Global Ministerial Environment Forum. The First GCSF was convened in May 2000 in Malmö, Sweden, and it has been held annually every year since then. The GCSF has become the main entry point for the participation of Major Groups in UNEP's work at the governance level.

UNEP also developed a Strategy Paper Enhancing Civil Society Engagement in the Work of the United Nations Environment Programme that was presented to the 22nd UNEP Governing Council in February 2003. The strategy is based on three interdependent pillars:

1. **Strengthening institutional management.** The goal is to facilitate transparent and meaningful communication between civil society and UNEP, using Internet-based technologies, and to build internal and external capacity mechanisms for civil society to interact with UNEP.
2. **Promoting Engagement at the Policy Level.** The goal is to take into account civil society expertise and views when governments are discussing UNEP's work programme and when governments are discussing major environmental issues.
3. **Encouraging Engagement at the Programmatic Level.** The goal is to involve civil society when UNEP implements its work programme.

In 2004, UNEP further enhanced participation of civil society in its work by creating the Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch to implement the multi-pronged strategy described above. The Branch's responsibilities include coordinating UNEP's communication with Major Groups and stakeholders, promoting the active participation of Major Groups and stakeholders in UNEP's work, organising and coordinating the Global Civil Society Forum, maintaining a website, and promoting regional co-operation and networking.

Another step forward was taken in 2008 with the introduction of new Guidelines on Improving the Global Civil Society Cycle that aim to create a balanced and actively facilitated framework for managing Major Groups' input to the UNEP governance process. The guidelines created a Major Groups Facilitating Committee (MGFC) charged with oversight of this task. The MGFC is composed of representatives of each of the nine Major Groups as well as two representatives from each of the six regions where UNEP has offices (Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and West Asia). The guidelines are available online at http://www.unep.org/civil_society/PDF_docs/Guidelines-Round1-CSO-revised-31Mar08.pdf.

Avenues for Civil Society Participation in UNEP

When governments are making Governing Council decisions or discussing major environmental policies, it is in their own interest to take into account civil society views to ensure sound environmental governance. Intergovernmental decisions will have stronger and broader recognition and support by the public if governments take civil society views into account as early as possible in the policymaking decision process. Civil society also plays a direct role in the formation of policy as researchers, think-tanks, and watchdogs, or through advocacy. Open political decision-making processes enhance transparency, foster coordination among organisations taking part in environmental governance, and foster accountability of the actors in their decisions. In addition, participation of civil society in governance strengthens the environmental pillar in relation to the social and economic pillars of the sustainable development paradigm.

Recognizing the crucial role of civil society, member governments have endorsed UNEP's annual practice of organising a Global Civil Society Forum (GCSF) in conjunction with the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF). The GCSF aims to inform civil society stakeholders of current and future UNEP policy and to provide a forum where representatives from Major Groups can exchange views and develop common ground. The GCSF also prepares Major Groups' representatives to participate actively in the deliberations of the Governing Council and the Global Ministerial Environment Forum itself, including in recently introduced small ministerial roundtables and in the plenary sessions.

For more information about civil society in UNEP's governance and policy process, see Chapter 2. CSOs can also help to implement UNEP's work programme, complementing UNEP's own

capabilities. Civil society strengths include the ability to raise funds and play a proactive role in the design, implementation, and monitoring of a range of projects and programmes related to the environment. Civil society organisations working on specific environmental areas can adapt the global UNEP work programme to national or local realities, and liaise between UNEP and local communities. Civil society can also function as an ever-alert environmental watchdog, holding governments accountable for their actions. In addition, civil society can provide scientific, policy, and law expertise necessary for implementation.

Civil society is well placed to raise public awareness and engage the general public in an informative and educative manner. Many civil society organisations have close ties to the media and can disseminate relevant information effectively. Civil society can also educate the public, through schools, universities, and scientific institutions, or through targeted campaigns, to raise the awareness of new generations about their roles and duties so that they become responsible citizens.

For more information about opportunities for civil society to participate in UNEP's work programme, see Chapters 3–6.

The Bali Strategic Plan of 2005 mandated UNEP to increase delivery and coordination of capacity building and technology support at the national level. To achieve this, UNEP is increasing engagement with civil society at the local level through:

- **Promoting success stories** that are global or regional, and which specifically address sound environmental practices. For example, UNEP has developed an online database of best practices where civil society can select and promote case studies.
- **Supporting pilot projects** to test policy and demonstrate how new policies can be implemented or improved. These pilot projects have helped UNEP to develop long-term comprehensive capacity-building programmes with regional and country focus. For example, UNEP has supported pilot projects related to rainwater harvesting and management, renewable energy technologies, and integrated management of river basins.
- **Developing core training programmes and educational materials.** For example, UNEP prepared a training course for policymakers in the use of economic instruments in environmental management for sustainable development and undertook the project "Living Wealth of Africa" to develop educational materials for biodiversity conservation. These programmes are developed with and implemented through national, sub-regional, and regional CSOs.
- **Testing and developing guidelines** for implementing environmental policy at the national, sub-regional, and regional levels. The guidelines help to translate policy into action. For example, the guidelines on empowering women in water resources management could assist countries in implementing environmental policy governing water resources, as well as advancing objectives of gender equality.

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- **Providing support to networking.** For example, UNEP has established a network of African journalists interested in environmental reporting that builds their capacity to continue reporting. UNEP has helped identify and link trainers of trainers from different institutions. UNEP helps them stay in touch and communicate through a newsletter.