

Measures to Develop Strategies for the Medium-Term Strategy

Forum: Environment Commission

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Introduction

The Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025 refers to how the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) will strengthen the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda during the period 2022-2025. The strategy focuses on three planetary crises: climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, pollution and waste. The UNEP explains, “It maps out the actions needed to reshape our consumption and production patterns towards sustainability... It does so while respecting synergies with the Multilateral Environmental Agreements and in line with their relevant objectives, goals, and principles, without prejudice to the outcome of future negotiations.”

Background

On September 25, 2015, the United Nations General Assembly approved Resolution 70/1, Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The document presented the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the intention of “leaving no-one behind.” The resolution declares that nations dedicate themselves to eliminating poverty in all forms by 2030. However, the United



Increasing surgical masks found on beach due to COVID-19

Nations announced that international crises, such as COVID-19, climate change, and various conflicts, have put the progress of the agenda at risk. A UN report in July 2022 described how years of progress in eradicating poverty and hunger, improving education, providing services, and many more aspects were reversed. Secretary General Antonio Guterres remarked, “With only 10 years left before the 2030 deadline, there is an urgent need to step up action. And every nation, every community and every person can and must make a contribution.”

As a response to the adversities the world is facing to accomplish the 2030 Agenda, on February 23, 2021, the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly endorsed the Medium-Term Strategy, including its program and its budget. The strategy aimed to support an integrated execution of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda.

Problems Raised

Digital Divide

The digitalization of society provides a massive opportunity to develop greater environmental sustainability. Using technology, countries can ensure that their objectives and methods remain relevant to the rapidly changing world. However, it is important to acknowledge the digital divide between developed and developing countries. While approximately 87% of the population in developed countries use the internet, only 19.1% of the population in developing countries do. Limited access to data about environmental changes discourages the participation of communities and sound decision-making. Technology must be improved to allow for inclusivity and equity in environmental considerations.

Varying Project Design

The SDGs are different from previous Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that they are a universal framework that is not limited to developing countries but rather applies to all countries. Thus, the Medium-Term Strategy faces the challenge of implementing comprehensive and inclusive strategies in innumerable landscapes. The Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment (MOPAN) analyzed UNEP's challenges in November 2021, explaining their findings that "Each project is reviewed for its alignment with the new Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework (ESSF) but limited human resource capacity means this is not applied with equal rigour across all projects." In other words, the improvements on project designs for sustainability and safety are not equally or accurately made due to limited resources. While the UNEP engages in various partnerships and collaborations to compensate for its lack of physical presence in countries, the issue of project design is still crucial for more effective strategies.

International Actions

The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) is the global authority that oversees the environmental dimension of sustainable development in the UN system. The UNEP's Executive Director and Senior Management Team lead the fulfillment of the Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025. The institution set objectives for the MTS as well as three types of subprogrammes, thematic, foundational, and enabling subprogrammes, for their effective implementation. In addition, the organization outlined four important levers of change, Multilateral Environmental Agreements, raising environmental ambition, inclusive multilateralism, and innovative communication to enhance the strategies indicated in the MTS.

Furthermore, the UNEP recognizes the need to engage Major Groups and



Summary diagram of the Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025

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Stakeholders to increase support for their mission. Thus, official Major Groups and Stakeholders have assisted the UNEP in various ways, including providing scientific and technical expertise, raising public awareness, engaging the general public, and participating in international environmental policy.

Possible Solutions



Climbing to an observation platform at Danum Valley Field Center, Sabah, Malaysia.

Resource Management

The MOPAN reports that the UNEP faces “limited flexibility of its resource base.” The international group receives the majority of resources for operations on the ground from donors, but non-reserved funds are provided by the Environment Fund (EF), which consists of donations from member states. However, analysis revealed that these voluntary contributions were often uneven or declining. The organization notes that the many sub-programmes that carry out the UNEP’s plans receive the lowest funding. An increased budget for resources will enable better implementation of strategies. A similar approach is to aid the UNEP in securing a stronger organization design to better allocate roles, responsibilities, and resources for the Medium-Term Strategy.

Scientific Development

The UNEP emphasizes that “science remains at the centre of all decision-making processes” to reduce to adverse consequences of chemicals and pollution on the environment. The program works to provide scientifically credible and unbiased data as well as analysis to assist in making solutions for the environment. Global efforts to collaborate with the UNEP to provide scientific data will help the UNEP in finding cost-effective, valuable solutions for all three aspects of the Medium-Term Strategy.

Glossary

Environment Fund: the financial fund of the UNEP contributed by 79 member states; used for the implementation of the Medium-Term Strategy and its programmes

Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework: a framework that enables the UNEP to manage environmental and social issues in a planned and structured manner

Medium-Term Strategy: the UNEP’s strategy for tackling climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, and pollution and waste from 2022-2025

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): eight goals designed to reduce extreme poverty, hunger,

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illiteracy, and disease by 2015

Multilateral Environmental Agreements: a generic term for treaties, conventions, protocols, and other binding instruments related to the environment

Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN): a network of eighteen donor countries with a common interest in assessing the organizational effectiveness of the major multilateral organizations they fund

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): seventeen goals that call for action by all countries in a global partnership

2030 Agenda: a resolution adopted by the General Assembly to mobilize global efforts to end poverty, foster peace, safeguard the rights and dignity of all people, and protect the planet

Timeline

1972 – United Nations Environment Programme is established

1973 – Environment Fund is established by the General Assembly

1992 – Agenda 21 is approved at the Earth Summit

2000 – Millennium Declaration is adopted at the Millennium Summit

2002 – MOPAN is established

2012 – “The Future We Want” is adopted at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)

2013 – a 30-member Open Working Group is set up to formulate the SDGs

2015 – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is approved

2021 – Medium-Term Strategy is approved

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