

Terms of Reference
United Nations Inter-Agency Issue-Based Coalition
on Environment for Europe and Central Asia

Background

UNEP and UNESCO proposed during the Regional UN System Meeting held in Istanbul in May 2019 to establish an issue-based coalition (IBC) on the Environment, in recognition of the importance of the environmental pillar of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and to ensure that the UN system works in a coordinated manner on environmental issues in Europe and Central Asia. The IBC on Environment would provide support for UN Country Team environmental actions in the region. In the lead up to the December 2019 Regional UN System Meeting, held in Vienna, UNECE declared its readiness to serve as co-lead.

Objectives

The inter-agency IBC on Environment under the Regional UN System Meetings will provide a regional platform for UN agencies to (i) promote coordinated support to all member States in Europe and Central Asia in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda and (ii) support UN Country Teams (UNCTs) in the Europe and Central Asia region on environmental issues.

The IBC will address activities dedicated to strengthening environmental governance, improving environmental management and promoting sustainable management of natural resources.

The IBC's work will be based around three pillars:

- **Strengthening environmental governance and implementing the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda:** To build political momentum and advocate for enhanced and accelerated policy action to implement the environmental dimension of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. In addition to advocating for environmental issues at the regional level, particularly through the Environment for Europe Process and the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, and with regional institutions such as the European Commission and the Commonwealth of Independent States, the IBC will focus on working with UNCTs to strengthen national institutions working on environmental policy and governance, as well as to strengthen country capacities to accede to, implement and report on multilateral environmental agreements. In particular, the IBC on Environment will:
 - Using existing environmental processes, and in collaboration with regional institutions, advocate at the regional level for strengthened and accelerated policy action and transition pathways to address regional priorities, such as nature-based solutions, circular economy, decarbonization, sustainable consumption and production, sustainable infrastructure and both sectoral and cross-sectoral approaches.
 - Identify key institutional and governance challenges for the environment within the programme countries, such as inter-institutional cooperation, stakeholder engagement and human rights, and exchange good practice principles and approaches with the UNCTs.
 - Strengthen country capacities to accede to, implement and report on global and regional multilateral environmental agreements.

- **Supporting countries in the environmental dimension of UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and Common Country Assessment (CCA) processes:** To discuss and engage in the UNSDCFs in a coordinated and coherent manner, for strengthening the environmental dimension and science-policy interface (building on many other parallel supporting processes, such as UN custodian agencies for environment-related global indicator reporting to UN Statistical Division, the SG’s annual report, the Global Sustainable Development Report, UNEP’s Global Environment Outlook, the Shared Environmental Information System, other issue-based coalitions, Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS), environmental performance reviews and state-of-the-environment reports) for the delivery of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.
 - Create a roadmap and schedule of various events and critical dates in country-led UNSDCF processes to enable the pro-active involvement of the IBC to support UNCTs in programme countries.
 - Ensure a systematic approach is applied to engage and inform the development and content of the CCAs, using the UN Common Country Analysis Companion to Cooperation Framework Guidance¹.
 - Ensure environmental priorities are properly identified and presented in the CCAs for the 18 programme countries in the region, with an initial focus on the countries implementing UNSDCF processes in 2020.
 - Develop a menu of services related to the environmental dimension of SDGs, across the UN system, that can be provided to UNCTs.

- **Monitoring and reporting on the environmental dimension of SDGs:** To share scientific data and information within the UN family, with a focus on the implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in Europe and Central Asia (while fully acknowledging the integrated nature of environment, social, economic and governance aspects). This work will include reporting and follow-up (of data, statistics, indicators and Voluntary National Reports), which are critical inputs to the HLPF, with the purpose of supporting the regional UN system in building national capacity in countries for delivering on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.
 - Inform UNCTs preparing the CCAs about relevant environmental data, statistics and assessments, at both the national level and through global, regional and thematic assessments.
 - Advise on what environment-related knowledge products should be made available on the UN Regional Knowledge Management Hub.

The outcome will strengthen the environmental science-policy interface in Europe and Central Asia and enhance national capacities to deliver on the environmental dimension of the SDGs and of the 2030 Agenda, whilst recognizing that an integrated approach is essential to achieve the SDGs building on synergies and avoiding trade-offs. The IBC will draw on the various agencies’ specialisms and expertise to deliver “One UN” positions and deliver capacity building, as appropriate, and to strengthen the science-policy interface in national development processes in countries of Europe and Central Asia. This work will draw on the strong UNCT presence and the new role of the Resident Coordinators.

¹ This companion guide is currently under development by the UN system and provides guidance on how and what to analyze in the CCAs

The IBC will also provide the Regional Coordination Platform (RCP) for Europe and Central Asia with timely and relevant information on inter-agency cooperation and activities carried out in support of a strengthened environmental science-policy interface and for building capacity of countries in the region to implement and report on the environmental dimension of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. Finally, the IBC would maximize the opportunities presented by the UN Reform even where some agencies are not physically present in the target countries.

Membership

The IBC is open to all UN funds, agencies and programmes. Related entities working at the regional level on environment may also be invited.

The membership will be determined case-by-case every year based on specific needs or joint activities included in the annual workplan. Observers may be invited as necessary and when relevant.

Each member agency will designate a focal point and an alternate, ideally a specialist working on SDGs. Any cost of participation will be met by each participating member agency.

The focal points represent their agency and are responsible for providing an update on their organization's environmental science-policy work and activities supporting the delivery of the environmental dimension of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. The focal point is also responsible for keeping their colleagues in the respective agencies informed on the activities of the IBC.

Meeting modalities

- UNEP, UNESCO and UNECE to co-chair (note: gender and geographical balance need to be considered). Taking full advantage of the strength of UNEP, UNESCO and UNECE mandates, portfolios and expertise, and considering opportunities for other UN funds, agencies and programmes.
- Regular calls or video conferencing, at least every two months, as needed.
- The first call would take place in January 2020. This meeting would agree the Terms of Reference and develop an annual/ rolling workplan.
- Ad-hoc calls if needed to prepare for supporting UN missions, CCA preparations, reports and interventions at the national and regional level.
- Yearly review of work, results, progress towards achieving these terms of reference, engagement and attendance of agencies, country feedback and UN Regional Coordination Platform.

Geographical scope

The IBC will focus on countries in Europe and Central Asia.