

## **Europe Regional Consultation on Sustainable Infrastructure**

### **BACKGROUND**

Infrastructure is central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While only explicitly referred to under SDG 9, infrastructure either directly or indirectly influences the attainment of all the SDGs, including 92% of the 169 individual targets.<sup>1</sup> Infrastructure systems are drivers of economic growth and enable access to basic services and economic opportunities that improve livelihoods and well-being. Yet the choices that we make about the types of infrastructure we choose to build and where we choose to build it also have direct and indirect negative impacts on the environment and societies.

The OECD has estimated that US\$6.9 trillion will need to be invested in infrastructure every year to meet achieve the SDGs by 2030.<sup>2</sup> This will be even more significant in the post-COVID-19 context, as infrastructure investments are likely to play an important role in the socio-economic recovery and government stimulus packages as one of the most effective ways to create jobs and stimulate economic growth. Since infrastructure assets are typically designed to last for decades, it is critical that these investments are channelled into sustainable infrastructure systems, otherwise they risk “locking in” unsustainable choices and undermining the SDGs.

In March 2019, the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) passed a resolution on sustainable infrastructure ([UNEP/EA.4/Res.5](#)) that recognizes infrastructure’s centrality to the 2030 Agenda. It encourages Member States to develop and strengthen national and regional systems-level strategic approaches to infrastructure planning, promotes nature-based solutions and encourages the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to support countries in building the technical and institutional capacity to develop sustainable infrastructure. Furthermore, it requests that UNEP prepares a report on best practices for sustainable infrastructure, drawing on the wide body of existing normative guidance, and to identify gaps in the existing knowledge.

### **EXPERT WORKING GROUP AND GOOD PRACTICE GUIDANCE FRAMEWORK**

In response to UNEA Resolution 4/5, and with funding from the Global Environment Facility and the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment, UNEP has convened an Expert Working Group (EWG) to take stock of existing normative guidance on sustainable infrastructure, identify gaps, and develop consolidated, streamlined, internationally applicable Good Practice Guidance Framework on integrated approaches. Such approaches will help governments and other decisionmakers to incorporate sustainability into all phases of infrastructure planning and development, and upstream, systems-level planning in particular. The EWG will also contribute to the collection of case studies highlighting best practices and innovative solutions for sustainable infrastructure.

Integrated approaches consider the interlinkages between different infrastructure systems and sectors, their locations, relevant governance frameworks, and the three pillars of sustainability (economic, social, and environmental) throughout the entire infrastructure lifecycle. They do so as far upstream in the decision-making process as possible, and they involve inclusive stakeholder consultation from the outset.

Integrated approaches help to create the enabling conditions for investment in sustainable infrastructure in three main ways. First, they allow for better optimization of the balance between benefits and trade-offs, helping infrastructure to better contribute to multiple sustainable development objectives. Second, they result in high quality and resilient infrastructure systems that can effectively and efficiently deliver services. And third, by identifying and addressing potential risks early in decision-making processes, they result in more bankable projects going to market, which increases access to finance and investors.

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<sup>1</sup> Thacker S, Adshead D, Morgan G, Crosskey S, Bajpai A Ceppi P, Hall JW & O’Regan N. (2018). *Infrastructure: Underpinning Sustainable Development*. UNOPS, Copenhagen, Denmark. [https://content.unops.org/publications/Infrastructure\\_underpinning\\_sustainable\\_development\\_EN.pdf?mtime=20181220182223](https://content.unops.org/publications/Infrastructure_underpinning_sustainable_development_EN.pdf?mtime=20181220182223)

<sup>2</sup> OECD (2018). *Investing in Climate, Investing in Growth: A Synthesis*. p. 13.  
<https://www.oecd.org/environment/cc/g20-climate/synthesis-investing-in-climate-investing-in-growth.pdf>

## **REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS: OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

As part of the global consultations with Member States on the implementation of UNEA Resolution 4/5, UNEP will convene two regional consultations with Member States in the Europe Region from **9am-12pm (GMT+2/Geneva time) on September 3 and 4, 2020** (details below).

The consultation will have the following objectives:

1. Countries of the region share their experiences related to sustainable infrastructure, including successes, best practices, innovative solutions, key challenges and opportunities, and lessons learned.
2. Policy- and decision-makers learn about integrated approaches and how infrastructure investments can be used to achieve national sustainable development objectives.
3. Policy- and decision-makers help to shape the good practice guidance framework by providing input and feedback as to how it can be of use in enabling sustainable infrastructure investments and how it can best be implemented.
4. Member States suggest potential actions for following up on UJNEA Resolution 4/5 at the fifth UNEA in 2021.
5. Identify opportunities for developing sustainable infrastructure project proposals.

Following the regional consultations, the Good Practice Guidance Framework will be finalized and launched ahead of the 5<sup>th</sup> UNEA, along with a report showcasing case studies and best practices on sustainable infrastructure from around the world.

## **FORMAT AND PARTICIPANTS**

The consultations will follow a two-part virtual process:

- 1) **Online Review and Questionnaire:** the draft guidelines are available online at the following link:

<https://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/news/unep-regional-consultations-sustainable-infrastructure-information-portal>

Please note that the webpage language can be selected with the button on the top right of the webpage menu bar, and the draft guidelines are available in all six official UN languages at the bottom of the page. We ask that participating ministries kindly review the guidelines and complete the questionnaire by 1 September, 2020.

- 2) **Virtual Workshops** –UNEP and UNECE will co-host two 3-hour virtual workshop for Member States where participants will have the chance to provide feedback and participate in discussions on the sustainable infrastructure guidelines and implementation of UNEA resolution 4/5. **The agenda will be the same for each consultation meeting; participants can select which of the two meeting they will attend based on date and language preferences.**

The dates, times, and languages are as follows:

**To register, please click on the dates below by 15 August 2020**

- a. **[3 September 2020](#), 9am-12pm (GMT+2/Geneva time), in English**
- b. **[4 September 2020](#), 9am-12pm (GMT+2/Geneva time), in Russian and English, with simultaneous interpretation provided.**

Draft Agenda for both meetings

09h00-09h15	<p>Welcome remarks and introduction (chair Rie Tsutsumi, UNEP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Bruno Pozzi, Regional Director and Representative for Europe, UNEP</i></li> <li>• <i>Zaal Lomtadze, Head of Environment for Europe and Sustainable Development Section, Environment Division, UNECE</i></li> <li>• <i>Laura Platchkov, Swiss Federal Office for the Environment</i></li> </ul>
09h15-10h15	<p>Overview of Integrated Approaches and the Good Practice Guidance Framework (<i>Rowan Palmer, UNEP</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Infrastructure and sustainable development</i></li> <li>• <i>Integrated approaches and the Good Practice Guidance Framework</i></li> </ul> <p><u>Discussion Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Questions and comments on the presentation?</i></li> <li>• <i>How might the Good Practice Guidance Framework be applied in your country?</i></li> <li>• <i>How could the Good Practice Guidance Framework be strengthened or improved?</i></li> </ul>
10h15-10h25	Break
10h25-11h25	<p>Sustainable Infrastructure – Regional Perspective (<i>Zaal Lomtadze, UNECE</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The role of MEAs and other policy instruments in implementing integrated approaches</i></li> </ul> <p><u>Discussion questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What are countries' successes and challenges in using these tools and mechanisms?</i></li> <li>• <i>What are the main barriers to their effective use for sustainable infrastructure development?</i></li> <li>• <i>What can help remove these barriers?</i></li> </ul>
11h25-11h55	<p>Substantive Discussions on the Guidance and UNEA Process (<i>Laura Platchkov, Swiss Federal Office for the Environment</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How have Member States been implementing the UNEA Resolution?</i></li> <li>• <i>What can Member States do to follow up on the UNEA Resolution?</i></li> </ul>
11h55-12h00	Closing Remarks and Next Steps (Chair)