

# UN Environment Programme

## [UPSC Notes]

### What is UN Environment Programme?

Typically, the UNEP is a transnational environmental organization that is involved in instituting a universal environmental schema and encouraging the efficient accomplishment of the environmental factors of the United Nations Sustainable Development Programme.

- The increasing pollution counts during the decades of the 1960s & 1970s have urged this international governance to ponder over developing some laws and guidelines for environmental concerns with the support of the ILO and WHO.
- These environmental concerns were also adopted in 1972 at the UN Conference. This Conference is popularly also named Stockholm Conference 1972. The Conference later led to the implementation of the Stockholm Declaration.
- Additionally, the Stockholm Conference of 1972 led to the establishment of a management society for these human environment concerns, currently known as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which manages the United Nations' environmental activities.

### History of UN Environment Programme

The United Nations Environment Programme was initiated in 1972 to manage and coordinate environmental processes inside the UN system.

- The UNEP promotes global alliance and cooperation on environmental concerns, directs the United Nations bodies, and encourages the worldwide scientific society to formulate policies for several of the United Nations' environmental programmes by way of its scientific consultative commissions.
- The **UNEP headquarters** are situated in Nairobi, Kenya. They have also registered to help the business-related sectors to encourage the mindful and sustainable use of natural resources. Typically, UNEP is a programme that responds to environmental issues.
- The United Nations Environment Programme has made many initiatives to respond to environmental problems and put efforts into overcoming or mitigating these environmental issues. One of such most renowned initiatives of the UNEP is "Earth Watch". It is a global supervising system designed to streamline the flow of information related to the environment around states.

- People who become part of the “Earth Watch” organization are experienced and supremely skilled in recognizing critical environmental troubles and taking appropriate action to mitigate them.
- For instance, the United Nations Environment Programme was significantly influential in conquering the talks of reducing the use of ozone-depleting elements. The UNEP stipulates technical encouragement and backing to several international agreements.
- These agreements incorporate the Basel Convention Act to deal with the Regulation of Transboundary Interchanges of Harmful Wastes & their Clearance, the Montreal Protocol to deal with the elements that harm the Ozone layer, and the United Nations Convention to deal with Biological Multiplicity.
- The UNEP is the secretariat for these settlements and many other global treaties, where it implements decisions, monitors implementation, and caters to them with statistical data and crucial information.
- The UNEP also supports the realization of the Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent for Some Harmful Compounds and Pesticides in Transnational Trade (1998). The UNEP does it in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization.
- Additionally, it supervises efforts of various agencies in the United Nations concerning desertification and provincial oceans (with special consideration to the Mediterranean Sea).

## Main Objectives And Work Areas Of UNEP

The main objective of UNEP is to deal with environmental concerns and offer leadership and partnerships to countries to safeguard the environment for present and future generations. The organization has reordered its work program in the following areas of environmental concern.

### Climate Change:

UNEP has improved the capability of many nations in integrating climate change solutions with its guidance in alteration, mitigation, technology, and funding. UNEP is also contemplating its efforts to diminish the evolution of a low-carbon society, intensify public mindfulness, and boost climate science's insights.

### Post-war and Disaster Management:

UNEP executes environmental assessments in the countries affected due to natural disasters or environmental crises and offers them recommendations and suggestions on putting legitimate and official frameworks in the nation to improvise environmental management. The Post-Conflict & Disaster Management Section deals with environmental evaluations after wars.

## **Ecosystem Management:**

The UNEP also simplifies ecosystem management and refurbishment with techniques consistent with enduring and sustainable development. Additionally, these methods urge the utilization of ecosystem facilities. For example, the UNEP initiated the Global Programme of Action to guard the marine ecosystem against terrestrial-based activities.

## **Environmental Governance:**

UNEP supports and motivates various national governments to develop, implement and reinforce the procedure, strategies, and plans vital for attaining sustainable development and normalizing environmental inspections in development design.

## **Harmful Substances:**

UNEP puts excellent efforts into minimizing the unpleasant or destructive effects of hazardous chemicals and harmful wastes on the environment and humans. For instance, the organization has commenced negotiations for a global Mercury treaty. It is constantly functioning to eliminate toxins from the environment that are harmful to human health as well as the ecosystem.

UNEP is doing this with the help of the mercury treaty initiatives and by collaborating with the SAICM.

## **Efficiency and Defensible Utilization and Production of Resources:**

The UNEP also emphasizes regional and global ideas to ensure that environmental resources are engendered, handled, and utilized sustainably and in eco-friendly ways.

## **Functions Of the UN Environment Programme**

The main function of the UN Environment Programme is to deal with every environmental concern. However, it has many sub-function for environmental safety and human protection.

- The UNEP is engaged in expanding international environmental conventions and addressing related issues. It accommodates the secretariats of numerous environmental conventions.
- Some of these conventions include Basel Convention, Minamata Convention, Vienna Convention, Stockholm Convention, Carpathian Convention, Tehran Convention, Bamako Convention, Rotterdam Convention, Convention on Migratory Species, United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, Montreal Protocol, CITES, and CCAC.
- The organization encourages ecological science and associated information.

- It sponsors and employs developmental projects concerning the environment and ecosystem.
- UNEP also connects with governments, NGOs, and other organizations or agencies related to environmental strategies and their execution.
- It prepares treaties and guidelines on transnational trade in hazardous chemicals, intercontinental waterways, and international air pollution.
- The UNEP also bestows individuals and organizations who work well for environmental concerns.

## Foremost Programmes Of The UNEP

The United Nations Environment Programme is constantly working on many programmes on environmental issues and techniques and solutions to address them and mitigate their effects. Some of its major initiatives and programmes include:

- • APELL
- • TUNZA
- • Earth Watch
- • Seal the Deal
- • Faith for Earth
- • Pain for the Planet
- • Billion Tree Campaign

## Facts about UN Environment Programme

The UNEA is the administering organization of the UNEP. It is also considered the world's topmost decision-making group concerning the environment.

- The UNEA organizes meetings in the interval of two years to establish goals and agendas for global environmental policies and develop intercontinental environmental laws.
- The UNEA was established in 2012, President and a Bureau regulate and manage it.
- The regulating bureau of the Assembly involves ten environment ministers of different nations or states.
- Every bureau member holds a two-year duration based on topographical alternation. It means the members of the bureau keep changing every two-year duration.
- Presently, it includes 193 member countries (all UN member countries).

## India and The United Nations Environment Programme

India has retained a faithful and strong relationship with the United Nations Environment Programme since its commencement. India has accomplished many projects with it, and several projects are functioning well between India and UNEP.

- India has had the UNEP's presence in the country since 2016, which was set off in an office in New Delhi.
- The GOI's Ministry for Environment, Forests, and Climate Change was the nodal group for our country's contacts with the UNEP.
- The country's High Commissioner for Kenya permanently stands for India in UNEP.
- India annually contributes around 100,000 USD to the UNEP.
- The UNEP has acknowledged India's schemes and programs in the environment sector for the International Solar Alliance and other initiatives. The current PM, Narendra Modi, was bestowed by UNEP with the honor of the 'Champions of Earth'.
- India enlisted in the Climate & Clean Air Coalition in 2019, whose secretariat is held by the UNEP.
- India has strategies and is prepared to act with CCAC nations for the best attempts and involvements to employ the "National Clean Air Programme" efficiently.

## The UNEP And Stockholm Conference 1972

Some environmental concerns were adopted at the United Nations Conference on Human Environment in 1972. This Conference is popularly also named Stockholm Conference 1972. The Conference was later preceded by the implementation of the Stockholm Declaration.

- Additionally, the Stockholm Conference of 1972 led to the establishment of a management society for these human environment concerns, currently known as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which manages the United Nations' environmental activities.
- Sweden had initially suggested the scheme of the Stockholm Conference; this is the reason it is also called the "Swedish Initiative".
- In 1972, the UN Conference in Stockholm was the first international meeting on the global environment. The theme of this meeting was 'Only One Earth' under the participation of 122 nations, with the duration of the Conference being 5 June to 16 June 1972.
- The Stockholm Conference 1972 primarily aimed to create a general authority plan for the universal environment and ecological sources.

## Main Treaties Of The Stockholm Declaration

The Stockholm Declaration has the following main agreements:

- There must be some mindful planning for sustainable use and protection of natural and environmental resources like air, water, flora & fauna, and terrestrials to keep them beneficial and dependable for the present and future generations.
- Releasing toxic constituents and heat discharges should not surpass the environment's capacity.
- There must be support and help for poor, undeveloped, and developing countries in their battle against pollution and environmental safety.
- The ecological strategies of the states must reinforce and encourage the present and future improvement potential of developing nations.
- Countries and international associations should take practical actions to attain a settlement on fulfilling the feasible national and international financial consequences of applying environmental measures.
- As per the United Nations commission and ideologies of international law, the nations have the autonomous or self-governing right to misuse their natural resources according to their environmental policies. But, these actions of any country must not harm other areas outside the limits of their national jurisdiction.