

## UNEP and Monitoring the Environmental Dimension of the SDGs

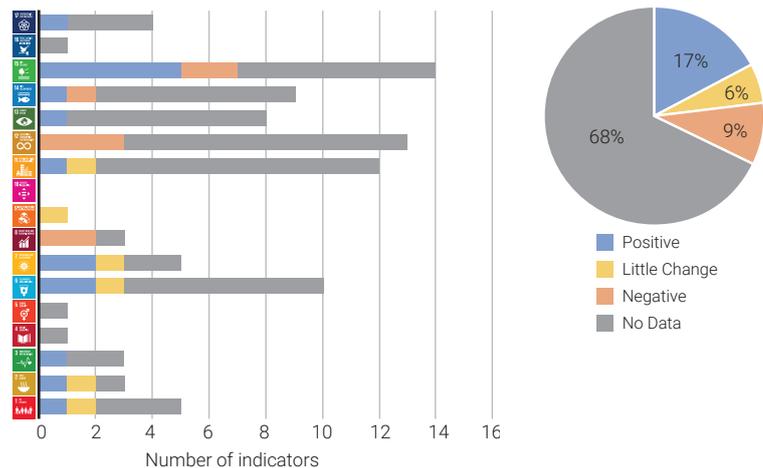
The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflect a shift in how the world views global development. Unlike the Millennium Development Goals, the SDGs recognize that the economy and the environment are interlinked. The SDG framework has a total of 17 goals, 169 targets and 244 indicators— 93 of which are environment related.

### Measuring progress

In March 2019, UNEP launched the report 'Measuring Progress Towards monitoring the environmental dimension of the SDGs' which analyses the environmental dimension of sustainable development based on 93 environment-related SDG indicators. These indicators track progress on 72 targets across the Goals.

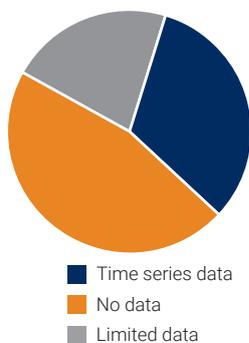
The report found that:

- The world is not on track to achieve the environmental dimension of the SDGs.
- There is too little data to assess progress toward achieving of 50 of the 72 environment-related SDG targets.
- Actions to reduce pollution, improve resource efficiency and better protect the environment must be scaled up in order to achieve the SDGs and ensure the long-term sustainability of the planet.
- Regional, sub-regional, and country-level coordination should be leveraged to improve SDG follow-up, review and implementation.



As the UN entity dedicated to environmental policy and science, UNEP has a crucial role to play in global, national and regional actions for monitoring SDGs and for promoting the use of data to inform actions toward implementing the SDGs.

### UNEP's mandate



2019 - data availability for 96 SDG indicators

UNEP is the Custodian for 25 SDG indicators – across SDG Goal 6, 8, 12, 14, 15 and 17. These indicators cover topics related to resource management and protection of water, marine and terrestrial ecosystems, circular economy, including the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources; and environmentally sound management of chemicals and waste. For these, UNEP has the duty to work with UN member states to develop SDG methodologies; work with national statistical authorities to collect SDG data; and promote the use of data for analysis, including in the Global SDG progress report. This mandate is elaborated in the 2019 UN Statistical Commission report (E/CN.3/2019/2), "custodian agencies, international and supranational statistical agencies have accountability for the quality and accuracy of global reporting on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals".

Building on its expertise, UNEP has developed methodologies for all 25 SDG indicators. These methodologies have been endorsed through the formal SDG Member State process as the official monitoring methodologies for member states<sup>2</sup>. UNEP has also ensured that all methods developed are aligned with existing statistical standards and frameworks, including the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES) and the System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA)<sup>3</sup>. UNEP has also worked to ensure that gender is properly considered in all environment-related SDG indicators<sup>4</sup>. As a few examples of success in terms of SDG monitoring, UNEP has collaborations with Google, NASA and the EU Joint Research Centre's remote sensing on water-related ecosystems (SDG 6.6.1)<sup>5</sup> and UNEP has a partnership with the global citizen science community which is working toward bringing citizen science into the SDGs<sup>6</sup>.

Now that methodologies are in place, UNEP will scale-up its actions to improve national SDG monitoring and use of data for regional and global analysis and policy making.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/report/measuring-progress-towards-achieving-environmental-dimension-sdgs>

<sup>2</sup> For more information see: <https://uneplive.unep.org/statistics>

<sup>3</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envstats/fdes.cshml> and <https://seea.un.org/>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/report/gender-and-environment-statistics-unlocking-information-action-and-measuring-sdgs>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/un-environment-programme-wins-award-freshwater-related-ecosystems-work>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41893-019-0390-3>

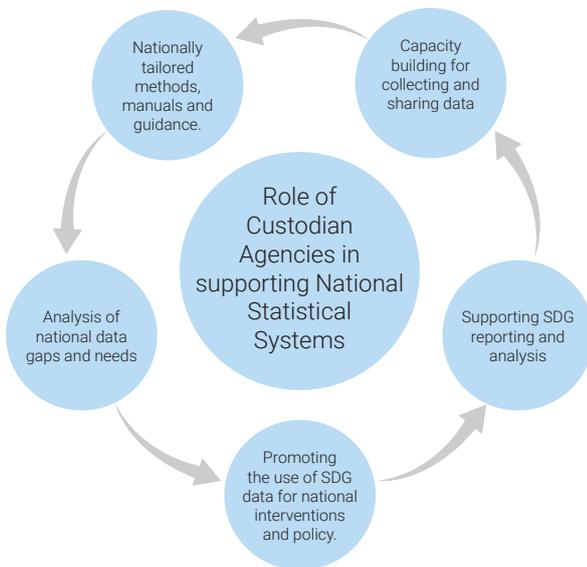


The title of the Award is “2019 Earth Observations for Sustainable Development Award”

This work was a joint effort of UNEP’s Science and Ecosystems Division.



### UNEP’s Niche At the national level



As the custodian for 25 environment-related SDG indicators, and the leading authority on the global environmental agenda, UNEP is best-placed to support member states in using environmental SDG data in decision making.

Initiatives such as the Common Country Analysis (CCA) and the SDG Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) are great examples of how UNEP can work in partnership with UN Country Teams and national stakeholders to promote the integration of the environment in their SDG analysis and implementation.

Additionally, through the Regional Commissions and the UN Statistical Division (UNSD) UNEP can provide technical advice to countries on how to measure the environmental SDG indicators. UNEP currently has an existing partnership with the Regional Commissions and UNSD which has provided capacity building to more than 25 countries on this topic<sup>7</sup>.

### At the global level and regional level

UNEP directly provides the data and analysis for the High-Level Political Forum report on the SDGs and for the global SDG database<sup>8</sup> (for the 25 indicators under UNEP custodianship). UNEP’s SDG data is the official source of SDG data for these indicators and is used in the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) and in many other analytical products.

UNEP also plays a key role in promoting environmental analysis in the SDGs. This includes through publications such as Measuring Progress which allows us to better understand how to achieve the environmental dimension of development. The second version of the Measuring Progress publication will focus on the relationship between the SDGs and nature.

UNEP actively works with other UN organizations to promote coordination and harmonized approaches for with the aim of “delivering as one”. For example, this includes through our joint work to build capacity on the environmental SDGs within the broader context of the SDGs and of environment statistics and our collaboration with the UN Statistical System on data sharing (through the Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange).