



Distr.: General
6 October 2017
Original: English



**United Nations
Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment
Programme**

United Nations Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme

Third session

Nairobi, 4–6 December 2017

Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

**Performance of the programme of work and budget, including
implementation of the resolutions of the Environment Assembly**

**Progress made in the implementation of resolution 2/3 on
investing in human capacity for sustainable development
through environmental education and training**

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to resolution 2/3 of the United Nations Environment Assembly on investing in human capacity for sustainable development through environmental education and training. It provides an update on progress on the implementation of the resolution.

* UNEP/EA.3/1.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2/3 on investing in human capacity for sustainable development through environmental education and training, the United Nations Environment Assembly requested the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to continue to provide technical assistance and capacity-building through access to environmental education, training and capacity-building opportunities, to promote cooperation and interaction between the Environment Programme and the higher education community in mainstreaming environment and sustainability across education and training, and to enhance cooperation with all relevant United Nations bodies. Since the adoption of the resolution, the Environment Programme has made significant progress with respect to environmental law training, biodiversity, knowledge management and environmental education.

II. Progress in the implementation of resolution 2/3

A. Environmental law training and education

2. In June 2016, as part of training on the rule of law with regard to the environment, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) co-developed and administered an online course on human rights and environmental protection for sustainable development. The course equipped students, policymakers, experts and advocates with the tools needed to develop and implement innovative public policies and laws for the protection of the environment and human rights, specifically targeting the relevant Sustainable Development Goals. Ninety-five per cent of participants agreed that the course content was relevant to their jobs, with 91 per cent confirming that their expectations had been met. Scholarships applications were received from 80 individuals, and the course achieved full gender parity, with participants from 20 countries, primarily from the developing world.

3. In 2017, the Environment Programme continued its global process of capacity-building for judiciaries with respect to constitutional environmental rights and evaluating the impact of those rights. In May, the Programme convened a regional judicial workshop on the practice and implementation of constitutional environmental rights for Latin America and the Caribbean. Over 60 judges from the region deliberated on procedural matters and how courts gave effect to constitutional provisions relating to environmental protection.

4. The Environment Programme has also been working with judicial training institutes to integrate environmental law training in judicial education in Africa. Train-the-trainer workshops have been organized to equip participants with skills for delivering environmental law training through a variety of methods and approaches and to improve their competencies in developing related curriculums for judicial officers. Those and other interventions enabled various stakeholders, including judges and magistrates, to be in a better position to adjudicate environmental cases.

5. Under the Green Customs Initiative, the Environment Programme is training customs officials in the East African Community and selected countries in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in combating illegal trade. That initiative will be undertaken in partnership with the East African Community and ECOWAS.

6. The Environment Programme is also working on a training curriculum for police and prosecutors, to enhance collaboration between the two groups, and is developing an educational module on environmental crime.

B. Biological diversity

7. The Environment Programme, in collaboration with the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, brought together parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety from 35 countries at two regional workshops, one held in Cairo in May 2017, and the other held in Nadi, Fiji, in June 2017. The workshop in Fiji aimed at enhancing the capacities of countries in the Pacific to more effectively participate in the Biosafety Clearing House. Both workshops were also aimed at promoting public awareness, education and participation in order to facilitate the sustainable implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety by 2020 and beyond. The capacity-building activities are part of a \$4.7 million, four-year global project organized by the Environment Programme and the Global Environment Facility, involving 76 developing countries and countries with economies in transition in sustainable capacity-building for effective participation in the Biosafety Clearing House.

C. Knowledge management

8. The United Nations information portal on multilateral environmental agreements is a collaboration of 20 secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements. The Environment Programme and its partners, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNITAR, the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, the International Institute for Sustainable Development and the International Union for Conservation of Nature have further developed the information portal's learning section (<https://e-learning.informea.org/>), which provides free and self-paced online courses to a growing user base from Government, academia and civil society on issues relating to international environmental law. Most of the courses are available in at least two official languages, with translations into additional languages envisaged through partnering with academic institutions around the globe.

9. In 2016, the Environment Programme conducted outreach activities relating to the information portal, in collaboration with faculties and schools of law and of environment at various universities in Kenya. Over 200 students and about a dozen staff members participated in the activities, which drew very positive reactions. The outreach contributed to environmental education and training by supporting student access to environmental law information and raising awareness of the platform, with the expectation that use of the information platform in institutions of higher learning will increase.

D. Environmental education and training

10. The Environmental Education and Training Unit of the Environment Programme works closely with higher education institutions across the globe by promoting innovative, action-oriented, and value-based environmental education for sustainable development through a flagship programme, the Global Universities Partnership on Environment and Sustainability. The programme promotes South-South and South-North partnerships among higher education institutions and enables academic exchanges, knowledge-sharing and cooperation. Key achievements of the programme for 2016-2017 include the following:

(a) In 2016, the Environment Programme chaired a United Nations inter-agency group on the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative and collaborated in the development of the Sustainability Literacy Test platform, which is used to assess the knowledge of students at higher education institutions around the world. Over 60,000 tests have been administered through the platform. The results will help to identify gaps in knowledge relating to sustainable development;

(b) The Environment Programme produced and rolled out massive open online courses in collaboration with universities on the topics of disasters and ecosystems, pathways to climate change adaptation for small island developing States, marine litter and e-waste. An institutional partnership has been established to deliver a massive open online course on environmental security and peacebuilding in the first quarter of 2018 through the Sustainable Development Solutions Network. The partners include the Environmental Peacebuilding Academy, the Environmental Law Institute, the University of California at Irvine and Duke University, as well as the Columbia University School of Professional Studies, through its certificate of professional achievement in environment, peace and security;

(c) The Kenya Green University Network was launched in 2016, creating a platform for facilitating knowledge-sharing and promoting best practices in higher education with respect to mainstreaming environmental and sustainability considerations in their curricula, campus operations and management and through engagement with students and communities. The National Environmental Management Authority of Kenya is a core partner of the Network;

(d) The Environment Programme, together with an East African mobile service provider, Safaricom, and Strathmore University, has developed a mobile telephone-based short course on plastic bag waste. The course will be launched in November 2017;

(e) In partnership with the Environment Programme, and with support from the Mohammed VI Foundation for the Environment, Morocco launched a national green university network on the margins of the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

(f) In partnership with Tongji University, the Environment Programme co-sponsored an international student conference on environment and sustainability in Shanghai, China, in June 2017, on the theme "Connecting people to nature". The conference also addressed efforts to sustain the messages of the World Environment Day campaign launched by the Programme.

III. Recommendations and suggested action

11. Resources to implement resolution 2/3 to more actively and effectively engage the more than 840 member universities of the Global Universities Partnership on Environment and Sustainability have been extremely limited. The global universities partnership forum, held every year up until 2016 to build capacity, share experiences, and galvanize the potential of the network was cancelled in 2017 owing to a lack of resources. This setback compromised the Programme's potential to contribute to the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development and contribute more effectively to building a cadre of young leaders with knowledge on sustainability to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

12. The Environment Programme recognizes that tertiary education represents an important but limited number of the global youth. Today's young people are the generation that will be affected by the actions we take today. Greater youth participation to effect change could be addressed across all aspects of the Environment Programme's programme of work, particularly by raising awareness of sustainability issues and the importance of making informed choices.

13. The United Nations Environment Assembly may wish:

(a) To express its continued support for the critical role of mainstreaming environment into tertiary education curricula through innovative technologies and the active engagement of the global universities partnership on environment and sustainability;

(b) To acknowledge the role of youth as a catalyst for change globally and support the inclusion of youth participation more visibly throughout the work of the Environment Programme.