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United Nations Environment Assembly Background Guide 2025

Written by Julien Nelson, Eli La Ronde,
Fatima Irfan, and Malaika Singh



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13570 Grove Dr., Suite 294 • Maple Grove, MN 55311
www.nmun.org • info@nmun.org • 612.353.5649

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2025 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce to you our committee, the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA). Your committee's work is facilitated by volunteer staffers. This year's committee staff are: Director Julien Nelson and Assistant Director Fatima Irfan (Conference A), and Director Eli La Ronde and Assistant Director Malaika Singh (Conference B). Julien Nelson has a B.A. in International Relations and Public Affairs and is completing a Master's in International Relations. He currently works as a consultant in media and government relations, specializing in the agricultural and health sectors. Fatima has done a double bachelor's in computer science and is currently pursuing a master's in software engineering with a focus on the implementation of AI tools. She is currently working as a software developer for a Microsoft partner. Eli La Ronde is currently obtaining his Master's Degree in Business Administration from Duke University. His focus is on operations management and financing for impact investments. Malaika Singh is currently working towards her Post-graduate Diploma in International Business at Humber Polytechnic and works for an NGO based in the Philippines, that focuses on migrant advocacy and immigrant protection. The preparation of these materials was supported by Under-Secretaries-General Anthony Bassey (Conference A) and Johanna Güntel (Conference B) with contributions by Under-Secretary-General for Conference Management Paola Chávez (Conference A).

The topics on the agenda for this committee are:

1. Transforming Food Systems to Prevent Biodiversity Loss
2. Environmental Recovery in Areas Affected by Armed Conflict

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the conference, each delegation should submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. ET on 1 March 2025 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers website](#).

Two resources, available to download from the NMUN website, serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

- The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions.
- The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which includes the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for this committee, please contact the Deputy Secretaries-General at dsq.ny@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Julien Nelson, Director
Fatima Irfan, Assistant Director
Conference A

Eli La Ronde, Director
Malaika Singh, Assistant Director
Conference B



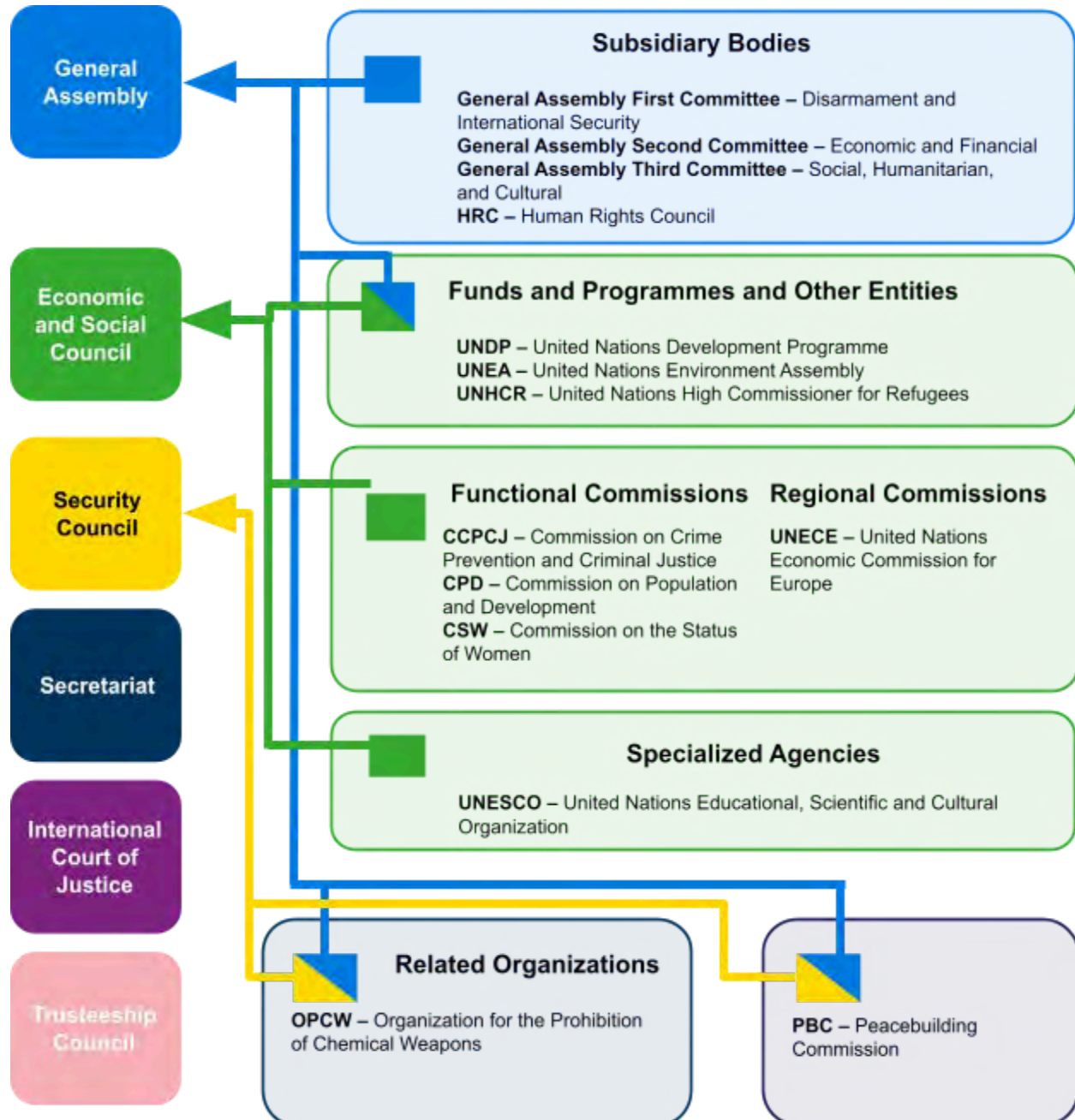
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United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the United Nations system simulated at NMUN•NY. It shows where each committee “sits” within the system to demonstrate the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee’s position, purpose, and powers within the United Nations system.





Committee Overview

Introduction

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) is the primary governing body of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and is the international community's highest-level decision-making body on environmental matters.¹ In partnership with other United Nations institutions, it outlines the international environmental agenda and sets priorities for the international community.² Although its resolutions are not binding, UNEA brings together relevant international actors to address global environmental issues and shape environmental governance.³

Mandate, Function and Powers

Twenty years after the adoption of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992), the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development called for the strengthening and upgrading of UNEP so it could better execute its mandate.⁴ UNEA was created in 2012 as the successor to UNEP's Governing Council.⁵ Whereas the Governing Council was composed of 58 Member States and sat within UNEP, UNEA is structured as a distinct entity and enjoys universal membership with 193 Member States.⁶ As a high-level governance body, UNEA reviews and coordinates the work of the international community on environmental matters while serving as a forum for and initiator of debates to be continued by other, more specialized bodies.⁷

While the following list is not exhaustive, the mandate of UNEA can be summarized as:

- **UNEA will generally:** set broad priorities for global environmental policy; identify emerging themes in environmental governance; progressively develop international environment law and begin negotiations on environmental treaties; define the work and priorities of UNEP; create ad-hoc committees and subsidiary bodies to further discussions on specific areas of environmental concern when necessary; make recommendations to Member States and other international organizations.⁸
- **UNEA will not generally:** engage in operational projects; complete negotiations on environmental treaties, but rather identify emerging issues and promote an architecture for future environmental governance.⁹

¹ United Nations Environment Assembly. *About the United Nations Environment Assembly*. N.d.

² *ibid.*

³ United Nations Environment Programme. *Q&A: UN Environment Assembly*. 2024.

⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *The future we want (A/RES/66/288)*. 2012. p. 18.

⁵ United Nations Environment Assembly. *About the United Nations Environment Assembly*. N.d.

⁶ *ibid.*; United Nations Environment Programme, Governing Council. *Proceedings of the Governing Council at its Nineteenth Session (UNEP/GC.19/34)*. 1997.

⁷ International Institute for Sustainable Development. *The United Nations Environment Assembly's Role as a Governance Architect*. 2022.

⁸ United Nations Environment Programme. *What you need to know about the United Nations Environment Assembly*. 2024.

⁹ *ibid.*; International Institute for Sustainable Development. *The United Nations Environment Assembly's Role as a Governance Architect*. 2022.



UNEA and UNEP are distinct entities. UNEA is the primary governing body and priority-setting mechanism of UNEP and does not operationalize these priorities itself.¹⁰ In contrast, UNEP undertakes programs, projects, and awareness campaigns and provides support to national governments to achieve environmental obligations in line with the priorities set out by UNEA.¹¹

Governance, Funding and Structure

All 193 United Nations Member States are represented in UNEA.¹² The Assembly meets every two years to set priorities for global environmental policy, discuss developments in the area of environmental legislation, and assist in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) (2015).¹³

Consisting of ten Ministers who each serve a two-year term and are selected based on geographical rotations, UNEA's Bureau is responsible for the general conduct of business.¹⁴ UNEA also has a Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR), a subsidiary inter-sessional organ of UNEA that meets at least four times a year.¹⁵ The CPR contributes to the preparation of the UNEA agenda, holds an advisory role in policy matters, and monitors the implementation of decisions.¹⁶ The CPR also holds discussions on key issues, promotes the inclusion of non-resident members of the Committee, and performs other tasks given by UNEA.¹⁷ The CPR consists of all accredited Permanent Representatives to UNEP and is led by a five-member Bureau that is elected for two years.¹⁸

UNEP relies on three main financial sources: earmarked funds, the Environment Fund, and the United Nations's regular budget.¹⁹ Earmarked funds, also known as earmarked contributions, are funds appropriated for specific projects, themes, or countries.²⁰ These funds aim to expand and/or replicate the results of United Nations Environment's work in more countries and in cooperation with more partners.²¹ The Environment Fund aids in maintaining the capacity, balance, and efficiency needed for UNEP to function.²² Earmarked contributions and the Environment Fund are comprised of voluntary contributions; hence, 95% of UNEP's income is received on a voluntary basis from Member States.²³ The United Nations' regular budget supports the regular work of UNEA and the UNEP Secretariat.²⁴

¹⁰ Office of the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. *UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme*. N.d.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² United Nations Environment Assembly. *About the United Nations Environment Assembly*. N.d.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ United Nations Environment Programme. *Committee of Permanent Representatives*. 2024.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ United Nations Environment Programme. *How is UNEP funded*. 2024.

²⁰ *ibid.*; United Nations Environment Programme. *Earmarked Contributions*. 2024.

²¹ *ibid.*

²² United Nations Environment Programme. *How is UNEP funded*. 2024.

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *ibid.*



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https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/17274/97_GC19_proceedings.pdf

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[https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/2997\(XXVII\)](https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/2997(XXVII))



United Nations, General Assembly. *The future we want (A/RES/66/288)*. 2012. Retrieved 27 October 2024 from: <http://undocs.org/en/A/RES/66/288>



1. Transforming Food Systems to Prevent Biodiversity Loss

"Without transforming our food systems, we will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, nor will we achieve our Paris Agreement targets."²⁵

Introduction

Biodiversity encompasses the wide array of life forms on Earth and the complex interactions among them, and is essential for ecosystems' health and food systems' sustainability.²⁶ It supports vital ecological processes, such as pollination, water purification, and nutrient cycling, which are crucial for sustainable food production and security.²⁷ The loss of biodiversity disrupts these processes, leading to decreased agricultural productivity and increased vulnerability to climate change.²⁸ For example, the widespread use of agrochemicals and monoculture farming has significantly reduced pollinator populations.²⁹ Therefore, integrating biodiversity conservation into food systems is vital for enhancing food security and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).³⁰

Food systems are a major driver of biodiversity loss, with food production responsible for up to 70% of the projected global biodiversity loss on land.³¹ This decline is mainly due to the expansion of agricultural land, intensive monoculture farming, and the excessive use of agrochemicals, which lead to the destruction of natural habitats, deforestation, and soil degradation.³² The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) reports that humans continue to lose approximately 10 million hectares of forests each year, mainly due to conversion to agriculture and other land uses, which significantly accelerates deforestation.³³

Transforming food systems is central to preventing further biodiversity loss.³⁴ It is not just about adopting new practices, as it requires a holistic approach that integrates biodiversity conservation into every aspect of the food production and consumption chain, ensuring the resilience and sustainability of ecosystems for future generations.³⁵ It involves addressing all elements of agrifood systems from production to consumption.³⁶ Approaches such as agroecology, sustainable land management, and agroforestry, can help create more resilient and sustainable food systems.³⁷

²⁵ United Nations, Secretary-General. *Statement of Action at the UN Food Systems Summit*. 2021.

²⁶ United Nations Environment Programme. *UNEP and Biodiversity*. 2020.

²⁷ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*. 2019. pp. 4-5.

²⁸ *ibid.* p. 4.

²⁹ *ibid.* p. 140.

³⁰ United Nations, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. *Agricultural Biodiversity*. 2024. p.1.

³¹ World Wildlife Fund. *Farming with biodiversity*. 2021. p. 13.

³² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Building a Common Vision for Sustainable Food and Agriculture: Principles and Approaches*. 2014.

³³ United Nations Environment Programme. *UN report: As the world's forests continue to shrink, urgent action is needed to safeguard their biodiversity*. 2020.

³⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*. 2019. pp. 3-5.

³⁵ *ibid.* p. 198.

³⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*. 2019. pp. 8-10.

³⁷ *ibid.* p. 36.



International and Regional Framework

The right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone for upholding fundamental human rights, including the right to food, and the conservation of biodiversity.³⁸ The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) sets a foundational standard for human rights, with Article 25 establishing that everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living, including food.³⁹ Building upon this, Article 11 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966) reinforces the right to adequate food, emphasizing the importance of continuous improvements in living conditions.⁴⁰ In 2021, the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) further advanced the scope of this right, recognizing the integral relationship between environmental sustainability, which is anchored in biodiversity, and human rights in its resolution 48/13 on “The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.”⁴¹ In 2022, the United Nations General Assembly strengthened this commitment affirming the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as essential for realizing fundamental human rights.⁴² As biodiversity loss disproportionately impacts vulnerable communities and ecosystems, states must prevent environmental degradation and protect biodiversity to ensure these rights are upheld.⁴³

The Rio Conventions at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, established three international environmental agreements that collectively address biodiversity loss, climate change, and desertification.⁴⁴ These conventions include the *Convention on Biological Diversity* (CBD), the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC), and the *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification* (UNCCD).⁴⁵ The CBD is the principal framework dedicated to biodiversity conservation, and establishes goals and mechanisms for the sustainable use of biological resources, and promotes the equitable sharing of benefits derived from genetic materials, such as plant resources used in agriculture and medicine.⁴⁶ One outcome of the CBD’s 15th Conference of the Parties is the *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework* (2022), which translates CBD’s broad objectives into specific, measurable targets aimed at halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030.⁴⁷ Complementing the CBD’s objectives, the UNFCCC addresses the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and food systems by enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience, and reducing vulnerabilities to climate-related shocks, as outlined in the *Paris Agreement* (2015).⁴⁸ Similarly, UNCCD complements

³⁸ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (A/HRC/RES/48/13)*. 2021. p. 2.

³⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

⁴⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966.

⁴¹ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (A/HRC/RES/48/13)*. 2021.

⁴² United Nations, General Assembly. *The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable Environment (A/RES/76/300)*. 2022.

⁴³ United Nations Environment Programme & Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Human rights and biodiversity: Key messages*. 2024.

⁴⁴ United Nations Climate Change. *The Rio Conventions*. N.d.

⁴⁵ United Nations, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. *The Rio Conventions*. 2023.

⁴⁶ Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*. 2022.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Paris Agreement*. 2015.



these efforts by focusing on sustainable land management to combat desertification and mitigate drought, thereby contributing to the restoration of degraded lands, ensuring biodiversity, and enhancing food security.⁴⁹

Food systems transformation and preventing biodiversity loss are central to achieving the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)*.⁵⁰ The 2030 Agenda is a global framework aimed at eradicating poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring prosperity for all, by 2030.⁵¹ At its core are the 17 SDGs, which provide a blueprint for addressing critical global challenges.⁵² SDG 2 (zero hunger) aims to end hunger, ensure food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture through resilient practices that enhance ecosystems and support small-scale farmers.⁵³ SDG 15 (life on land) focuses on protecting and sustainably managing terrestrial ecosystems by combating deforestation, desertification, land degradation, and biodiversity loss to support sustainable development.⁵⁴

Role of the International System

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) addresses the intersection between biodiversity and the transformation of food systems in several ways.⁵⁵ In 2016, during its second session, UNEA addressed for the first time the link between food systems and their impact on the environment through resolution 2/9 on “Prevention, reduction and reuse of food waste.”⁵⁶ This resolution highlights how food waste and the resources used to produce food has serious environmental, social, and economic impacts while also straining waste management systems.⁵⁷ In 2022, the ministerial declaration at UNEA’s fifth session contextualized food systems transformation within international conventions.⁵⁸ More specifically, the ministerial declaration states that transitioning to sustainable food systems, in line with international conventions such as CBD and UNFCCC, will increase food security, with the added benefit of reducing biodiversity loss.⁵⁹

UNEA provides strategic guidance and support to UNEP’s work on preventing biodiversity loss.⁶⁰ UNEP’s Medium-term Strategy for 2022-2025 emphasizes its commitment to promoting sustainable natural

⁴⁹ Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. *The Global Land Outlook*. 2021.

⁵⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ United Nations Environment Assembly. *Ministerial declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its sixth session*. 2024. p. 3.

⁵⁶ United Nations Environment Assembly. *Prevention, reduction and reuse of food waste (UNEP/EA.2/RES.9)*. 2016. p. 2.

⁵⁷ *ibid.* p. 2.

⁵⁸ United Nations Environment Assembly. *Ministerial declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fifth session (UNEP/EA.5/HLS.1)*. 2021. p. 3

⁵⁹ *ibid.* p. 3.

⁶⁰ United Nations Environment Programme. *What you need to know about the UN Environment Assembly*. 2024.



resource management to address the decline in biodiversity.⁶¹ It focuses on transforming land and water use to reverse habitat loss while supporting sustainable food systems and agriculture practices that maintain healthy ecosystems.⁶² In this strategy, UNEP leverages its many sub-programmes to collaborate with other United Nations bodies, governments, and civil society on various, more specific issues, such as Nature Action which focuses on biodiversity and ecosystem restoration.⁶³ Nature Action implements UNEP's efforts to transition to sustainable food systems by integrating biodiversity into key agricultural sectors, restoring ecosystems, and promoting ecosystem-based adaptation.⁶⁴ These efforts are aimed at addressing the nature crisis, mitigating climate change, and ensuring a sustainable future by 2030.⁶⁵ UNEP also works to implement biodiversity-related conventions, and partners with scientific bodies, including IPBES and the CBD Secretariat to achieve the objectives of these conventions.⁶⁶

The CBD Secretariat thoroughly evaluates biodiversity initiatives, trends, and the efficacy of their implementation to prevent biodiversity loss, and publishes its findings in the Global Diversity Outlook (GBO) reports.⁶⁷ In its fifth publication of the Global Diversity Outlook in 2020, the CBD Secretariat explains the loss of biodiversity through factors like habitat degradation, climate change, pollution, invasive species, and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources.⁶⁸ To mitigate these consequences, the CBD Secretariat suggests expanding protected areas, restoring degraded habitats, reducing food waste, and addressing climate change through sustainable consumption patterns.⁶⁹ Through its reports, the CBD Secretariat provides guidance to Member States for assessing the impact of their food systems on biodiversity and reporting on their progress towards sustainable food systems.⁷⁰

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), often referred to as the Rome-based agencies (RBAs), work closely to promote biodiversity and sustainable food systems.⁷¹ The RBAs focus on different but complementary priorities.⁷² While FAO offers support to improve national agricultural policies, WFP focuses on strengthening local food systems by identifying supply chain and procurement opportunities, and IFAD mobilizes financial resources for smallholder farmers.⁷³ FAO's Scaling up Agroecology Initiative offers solutions to transform food systems to achieve the SDGs, including the protection of biodiversity, by providing support on the policy level to other United Nations agencies.⁷⁴ As WFP aligned its strategic priorities by incorporating issues like biodiversity in its strategic plan for 2022-2025, WFP programs, like the Climate Adaptation Innovation Accelerator Programme, aim to increase and facilitate the use of

⁶¹ United Nations Environment Programme. *The United Nations Environment Programme strategy for tackling climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, and pollution and waste from 2022—2025*. 2022. p. 30.

⁶² *ibid.* p. 30.

⁶³ *ibid.* pp. 29-31.

⁶⁴ United Nations Environment Programme. *Why does nature action matter?*. 2024.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ United Nations, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. *Global Biodiversity Outlook 5*. 2020. p. 1.

⁶⁸ *ibid.* p. 142.

⁶⁹ *ibid.* p. 142.

⁷⁰ *ibid.* p. 166.

⁷¹ United Nations, World Food Programme. *Rome-Based Agencies*. 2024.

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ United Nations, World Food Programme. *WFP strategic plan (2022-2025)*. 2021. p. 11.

⁷⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Scaling up Agroecology Initiative*. 2024.



drought-resilient crop varieties, agroforestry, improved processing methods, and sharing of climate information, all of which have contributed to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity within food systems.⁷⁵ IFAD raises awareness of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and incorporates biodiversity into its projects, illustrating its critical role in enhancing resilience for communities.⁷⁶ The IFAD Strategy on Biodiversity 2022–2025 aims to strengthen IFAD's capacity to assist Member States in promoting biodiversity and its sustainable utilization in rural areas, thereby delivering benefits to both natural ecosystems and the livelihoods of rural communities.⁷⁷

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is the leading multilateral fund for environmental issues, and prioritizes biodiversity loss among its core focus areas, while serving as a funding mechanism for international conventions like the CBD, UNCCD, and UNFCCC.⁷⁸ Initially co-managed by UNEP, UNDP, and the World Bank, GEF now collaborates with 18 agencies to implement projects across more than 160 countries.⁷⁹ Under its GEF-8 strategy for 2022 to 2026, GEF adopts an integrated approach to land degradation, focusing on restoring degraded lands, promoting sustainable land management practices, and enhancing ecosystem resilience.⁸⁰ For example, the Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land Management Initiative in Ghana restores degraded lands through water management systems in agricultural land, to improve local livelihoods.⁸¹ At the beginning of the project, in terms of financial management, it was found there was a poor link between financial outputs and physical outcomes.⁸² However, many of the indicators for evaluating results were achieved, and most of them exceeded, demonstrating the success of this initiative.⁸³

Preserving Biodiversity in Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use

The Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sector encompasses activities that heavily influence biodiversity and ecosystem health due to its reliance on land use and resource management.⁸⁴ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) defines AFOLU as the management of agricultural land, livestock, and forests, with practices ranging from crop cultivation to reforestation and agroforestry.⁸⁵ Additionally, the UNCCD Secretariat reports that land degradation affects nearly 3.2 billion people, with 40% of the world's land classified as degraded.⁸⁶ These practices threaten the survival of numerous species, with an estimated 1 million species currently at risk of extinction due to human

⁷⁵ World Food Programme. *WFP strategic plan (2022-2025)*. 2021. pp. 10, 26.

⁷⁶ Even. International Fund for Agricultural Development. *When it comes to protecting biodiversity, we must all do our part*. 2024.

⁷⁷ International Fund for Agricultural Development. *IFAD Strategy on Biodiversity 2022–2025*. 2022. p. 3.

⁷⁸ Lean. Global Environment Facility. *GEF: How it all began*. 2016.

⁷⁹ United Nations Environment Programme. *UNEP and the Global Environment Facility*. N.d.

⁸⁰ Global Environment Facility. *GEF-8 Strategic Positioning Framework*. 2022. p. 11.

⁸¹ Global Environment Facility. *Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land Management in Ghana*. 2024; World Bank Group. *Implementation Completion and Results Report*. 2021. p. 6.

⁸² World Bank Group. *Implementation Completion and Results Report*. 2021. p. 27.

⁸³ *ibid.* p. 13.

⁸⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Climate change mitigation options in agrifood systems: Summary of the Working Group III contribution to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report (AR6)*. 2023. p. 15.

⁸⁵ *ibid.* p. 18.

⁸⁶ Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. *High-Level dialogue on desertification, land degradation and drought*. 2021.



activities, as reported by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).⁸⁷

AFOLU is recognized as a key driver of biodiversity loss, as traditional agricultural practices, such as deforestation, monoculture farming, and intensive livestock rearing, result in habitat destruction and reduced ecological diversity.⁸⁸ Despite these impacts, AFOLU also holds significant potential to preserve biodiversity by implementing sustainable land management practices.⁸⁹ For example, agroforestry promotes both carbon sequestration and habitat diversity by integrating trees and shrubs into agricultural landscapes, while conservation agriculture practices, such as reduced tillage and crop rotation, protect soil health and foster a diversity of organisms within farmland.⁹⁰

UNEA, through its resolution 4/10 on "Innovation in biodiversity and land degradation," has underscored the critical role of sustainable land management within the frameworks of biodiversity protection and sustainable agricultural practices.⁹¹ This resolution emphasizes the adoption of innovative, ecosystem-based approaches that support sustainable development and combat land degradation.⁹² In particular, it encourages agroecological practices to mitigate biodiversity loss and land degradation while enhancing food security.⁹³ Similarly, UNEA resolution 5/5 on "Nature-based Solutions for Supporting Sustainable Development" further promotes nature-based solutions as an integrated approach to addressing biodiversity loss, climate change, and land degradation through ecosystem restoration and sustainable resource management.⁹⁴

UNEP promotes biodiversity conservation through collaborative initiatives with a strong focus on ecosystem restoration across the AFOLU sector.⁹⁵ In partnership with FAO and other agencies, UNEP participates in the Transformative Partnership Platform (TPP) on agroecology.⁹⁶ This platform was established in 2021 and focuses on integrating biodiversity into agricultural systems to foster sustainable food production and enhance ecosystem resilience.⁹⁷ As part of this effort, the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2019), spearheaded by UNEP, supports ecosystem restoration to bolster food security and biodiversity conservation by enhancing land productivity, particularly in regions prone to degradation due to unsustainable agricultural practices.⁹⁸ UNEP actively supports land restoration

⁸⁷ Purvis. Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. *A million threatened species? Thirteen questions and answers*. 2019.

⁸⁸ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Climate change mitigation options in agrifood systems: Summary of the Working Group III contribution to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report (AR6)*. 2023. p. 18.

⁸⁹ *ibid.* p. 1.

⁹⁰ *ibid.* pp. 8-9.

⁹¹ United Nations Environment Assembly. *Innovation on biodiversity and land degradation (UNEP/EA.4/RES.10)*. 2019.

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ *ibid.*

⁹⁴ United Nations Environment Assembly. *Nature-based solutions for supporting sustainable development (UNEP/EA.5/Res.5)*. 2022. p. 2.

⁹⁵ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Restoring Biodiversity 'Defining Challenge of Our Time', United Nations Official Says as Second Committee Takes Up Sustainable Development (GA/EF/3553)*. 2021.

⁹⁶ United Nations Environment Programme. *Rethinking Food Systems*. 2024.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*

⁹⁸ United Nations General Assembly. *United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) (A/RES/73/284)*. 2019. p. 5.



projects, such as the Great Green Wall Initiative across 11 countries in the Sahel region to restore 100 million hectares by 2030.⁹⁹ This includes partnerships with the African Development Bank and GEF to enhance climate resilience and food security despite challenges in funding and local engagement.¹⁰⁰ While this initiative has shown success, the challenges of limited local community engagement and sustained funding gaps have affected project consistency and scaling efforts across target regions.¹⁰¹

Sustainable land management practices are vital for preserving biodiversity and enhancing agricultural productivity.¹⁰² For instance, conservation agriculture, as endorsed by FAO, encompasses sustainable approaches to land use that maintain soil health and resource efficiency.¹⁰³ By reducing erosion, improving water retention, and promoting soil organic matter, these practices foster resilient ecosystems that support biodiversity.¹⁰⁴ In this context, pests can also destroy biodiversity and crops, leading to loss of biological diversity and reduced food production.¹⁰⁵ FAO defines integrated pest management as the use of diverse pest control methods, including biological control, habitat manipulation, and the use of resistant varieties, to minimize chemical pesticide use.¹⁰⁶

Forestry practices are crucial for biodiversity conservation, supporting ecosystem resilience and food security.¹⁰⁷ Sustainable forest management (SFM) is central to this effort, focusing on practices that maintain forest biodiversity, health, and vitality.¹⁰⁸ SFM aims to balance ecological integrity with human needs by integrating technical, economic, and social measures to safeguard forest ecosystems for current and future generations.¹⁰⁹ This approach ensures that forests continue to provide essential ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration, biodiversity protection, and water resource conservation, all of which are integral to sustainable agriculture and land use strategies.¹¹⁰ Diversified farming systems like agroforestry are essential in enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem productivity.¹¹¹ Agroforestry systems integrate trees and shrubs into agricultural systems, providing habitats for various species and improving ecosystem services like soil fertility and water management.¹¹² Similarly, permaculture integrates trees, crops, and animals, creating synergistic environments that enhance habitat diversity, reduce chemical inputs, and improve soil health.¹¹³

⁹⁹ United Nations Environment Programme. *The World's Biggest Ecosystem Restoration Project*. 2020.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. *New Observatory to Track Progress of Africa's Great Green Wall*. 2024.

¹⁰² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Sustainable Land Management*. 2024.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Integrated Pest Management (IPM)*. 2024.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Climate Smart Forestry for Food Security*. N.d.

¹⁰⁸ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Sustainable forest management*. 2024.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *FAO's Work on Climate Change*. 2019. p. 20.

¹¹² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Agroforestry*. 2024.

¹¹³ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Permaculture and community seeds production are key paths to a greener agriculture*. 2022.



Addressing the Impacts of Climate Change on Biodiversity Loss

Climate change drives biodiversity loss, and thus also affects food systems.¹¹⁴ For example, the adverse effects of climate change can cause the death of several species and forced migration of certain species to other favorable climate regions.¹¹⁵ This forced migration of species in turn affects their resilience in adapting to new climates.¹¹⁶ The impact of this on agriculture is that crops are more vulnerable to pests and diseases, because the animals that balance the ecosystem are fleeing extreme weather in search of more favorable climates.¹¹⁷

At the same time, the global food system is a major contributor to climate change as it is responsible for 30% of human-induced emissions.¹¹⁸ Food production practices prioritize cost reduction through increased use of fertilizers, energy, land, water, and pesticides, resulting in loss of biodiversity and agriculture is responsible for 86% of species being at risk of extinction.¹¹⁹ In 2023, the General Assembly adopted resolution 78/168 on “Agriculture development, food security and nutrition,” which highlights the importance of sustainable food systems in addressing environmental challenges and biodiversity loss.¹²⁰ It encourages Member States to focus on increasing efforts to support climate-sensitive agricultural practices by ensuring development finance for sustainable methods like agroforestry, conservation agriculture, and water management.¹²¹ It also encourages collaboration between scientists, policy makers, and entrepreneurs to adopt sustainable food production practices..¹²²

Innovative approaches to sustainable agriculture need to account for climate adaptation, resilience and mitigation.¹²³ UNEA’s resolution 4/10 on “Innovation on biodiversity and land degradation” emphasizes innovative approaches to biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management.¹²⁴ In this resolution, UNEA recommends that the impacts of climate change on biodiversity-based livelihoods, such as agriculture, need to be taken into account as Member States implement policies to mitigate the effects of climate change on food systems and biodiversity loss as a whole.¹²⁵ Following this resolution, UNEP has partnered with the &Green Fund, a foundation leveraging financial resources for green investments, as well as GEF, to ensure better access to finance for sustainable agriculture.¹²⁶ This partnership has allowed for important investments in deforestation-free agricultural production, most notably in Indonesia and Brazil.¹²⁷ Innovative approaches include using tools for modeling and risk analysis while underscoring

¹¹⁴ United Nations Environment Programme. *Food system impacts on biodiversity loss*. 2021. p. 7.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 7.

¹¹⁷ United Nations Environment Programme. *Rethinking Food Systems*. 2024.

¹¹⁸ United Nations Environment Programme. *Our global food system is the primary driver of biodiversity loss*. 2021.

¹¹⁹ United Nations Environment Programme. *Food system impacts on biodiversity loss*. 2021. p. 7.

¹²⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Agriculture development, food security and nutrition (A/RES/78/168)*. 2023. p. 14.

¹²¹ *ibid.* p. 14.

¹²² *ibid.* p. 14.

¹²³ United Nations Environment Assembly. *Innovation on biodiversity and land degradation (UNEP/EA.4/RES.10)*. 2019. p. 2.

¹²⁴ *ibid.* p. 2.

¹²⁵ *ibid.* p. 3.

¹²⁶ United Nations Environment Assembly. *Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/10 on innovation on biodiversity and land degradation: Report of the Executive Director (UNEP/EA.5/10)*. 2020. p. 3.

¹²⁷ United Nations Environment Programme. *UNEP partners with &Green Fund*. 2020.



the importance of these efforts for effective adaptation to climate change, and land restoration..¹²⁸ For example, FAO developed the Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation (TAPE) as a comprehensive resource for information on how agroecology affects the environment.¹²⁹ FAO maintains TAPE as an informative tool for governments, and other stakeholders in agriculture and food production to have a knowledge-sharing platform for best practices in sustainable food and agricultural systems.¹³⁰

Policies focusing on water management and infrastructure provide an innovative approach to protecting biodiversity within food systems.¹³¹ In its sixth session, UNEA adopted resolution 6/13 on “Effective and inclusive solutions for strengthening water policies” to achieve sustainable development in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.¹³² Integrated water resources management in agriculture and climate-resilient water infrastructure can alleviate water stress, which facilitates the transition to sustainable food systems, and the incorporation of sustainable agroecological practices.¹³³ The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework sets targets specifically to restore and conserve inland waters and to combat freshwater degradation, which threatens biodiversity.¹³⁴ Additionally, community-based flood risk management is essential for enhancing the resilience of rural populations against floods.¹³⁵ Piloted by rural communities, community-based flood risk management promotes national disaster risk management policies, playing a critical role in implementing flood risk and disaster management efforts at the local level.¹³⁶

Conclusion

Food systems significantly impact biodiversity, contributing to its decline, which can be prevented through sustainable agricultural practices and mitigating the effects of climate change, through guidance from UNEA, supported by the international system and guided by the Rio conventions.¹³⁷ In particular, the CBD and the most recent Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework provide a foundation for the transition to sustainable food systems by setting global targets and action plans.¹³⁸ Sustainable land management in the AFOLU sector helps preserve biodiversity, with UNEP emphasizing ecosystem restoration, agroforestry, and agricultural productivity.¹³⁹ Likewise, sustainable agriculture and policies

¹²⁸ United Nations Environment Assembly. *Progress in the implementation of resolution 4/10 on innovation on biodiversity and land degradation: Report of the Executive Director (UNEP/EA.5/10)*. 2020. p. 2.

¹²⁹ Food and Agriculture Organization. *Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation (TAPE)*. 2024.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*

¹³¹ United Nations Environment Assembly. *Effective and inclusive solutions for strengthening water policies to achieve sustainable development in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution (UNEP/EA.6/RES.13)*. 2024. p. 2.

¹³² *ibid.* p. 3.

¹³³ *ibid.* p. 2.

¹³⁴ Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*. 2022. p. 9.

¹³⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *The State of Food and Agriculture: Integrated Water Resources Management*. 2023. p. 19.

¹³⁶ *ibid.* p. 19.

¹³⁷ United Nations Environment Programme. *Our Global Food System is the Primary Driver of Biodiversity Loss*. 2021.

¹³⁸ Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*. 2022.

¹³⁹ United Nations Environment Programme. *For the People and Planet: The United Nations Environment Programme strategy for tackling climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, and pollution and waste from 2022—2025*. 2022. p. 30.



focused on climate adaptation, resilience, and water management are essential to combat biodiversity loss driven by the global food system and climate change impacts.¹⁴⁰

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research to address this topic, they should consider: What strategies UNEA can employ to enhance global partnerships for advancing sustainable agricultural practices? In what ways can UNEA promote inclusive participation of stakeholders in the transition to sustainable food systems? What policies can be implemented to balance biodiversity conservation with the need for sustainable food production and food security? How can other United Nations bodies collaborate with UNEA to support the implementation of international biodiversity agreements? How can international financing be leveraged to support biodiversity-friendly agricultural practices? How can UNEA and its partners better monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of agricultural policies aimed at protecting biodiversity? In what ways can UNEA better facilitate the sharing of best practices and knowledge between countries to promote agroecology and other sustainable farming methods?

¹⁴⁰ United Nations Environment Assembly. *Ministerial declaration of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its sixth session*. 2024. p. 2.



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2. Environmental Recovery in Areas Affected by Armed Conflict

Introduction

Armed conflict often inflicts severe, long-lasting, and irreversible environmental damage.¹⁴¹ This destruction not only devastates natural habitats and ecosystems but also has far-reaching consequences for human health, extending beyond the immediate conflict zone and continuing long after the fighting has ceased.¹⁴² For instance, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) identified that Sudan's protracted civil wars have exacerbated environmental degradation, particularly impacting agriculture and accelerating deforestation, with the nation losing 11.6% of forest cover between 1990 and 2005.¹⁴³ UNEP also estimates that more than 39 million tonnes of debris have resulted from the war in Gaza, some contaminated with dangerous materials such as unexploded bombs, asbestos, and other hazardous substances, posing health challenges.¹⁴⁴

While there is currently no universal approach on how to mitigate the effects of armed conflict on the environment, UNEP and the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) continuously develop strategies to aid Member States in their recovery and prevention efforts.¹⁴⁵ Environmental recovery refers to the process of restoring and revitalizing the natural environment that has been damaged or destroyed as a result of armed conflict.¹⁴⁶ The international community recognized that it must prioritize environmental assessments, strengthen environmental law, promote sustainability, and increase cooperation to address environmental damage caused by armed conflicts.¹⁴⁷ UNEA, which serves as the highest-level global decision-making body on environmental issues, has supported mitigation efforts through resolutions, emphasizing integrating environmental rights into national policies and fostering research on the links between conflict, insecurity, and environmental challenges.¹⁴⁸

Armed conflicts have significant negative impacts on renewable resources, particularly contributing to land degradation and pollution, loss of biodiversity, and increased resource scarcity.¹⁴⁹ Resource scarcity occurs when the demand for renewable resources, such as water and cropland, outstrips the available supply within a particular region.¹⁵⁰ These conflicts often result in the destruction of critical infrastructure and the disruption of supply chains, leading to severe resource scarcity and exacerbating humanitarian

¹⁴¹ United Nations Environment Assembly. *Environmental assistance and recovery in areas affected by armed conflict (UNEP/EA.6/L.12)*. 2024.

¹⁴² *ibid.*

¹⁴³ United Nations Development Programme. *Crisis Prevention and Recovery Report 2008: Post-Conflict Economic Recovery - Enabling Local Ingenuity*. 2008. p. 23.

¹⁴⁴ United Nations Environment Programme. *Damage to Gaza causing new risks to human health and long-term recovery - new UNEP assessment*. 2024.

¹⁴⁵ United Nations Environment Programme. *Rooting for the environment in times of conflict and war*. 2019.

¹⁴⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the International Law Commission. Protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts (A/74/10)*. 2019. pp. 214-215.

¹⁴⁷ United Nations Environment Assembly. *Environmental assistance and recovery in areas affected by armed conflict (UNEP/EA.6/L.12)*. 2024.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ United Nations Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action. *Toolkit and Guidance for Preventing and Managing Land and Natural Resources Conflict, Environmental Scarcity and Conflict: Renewable Resources and Conflict*. 2012.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.* p. 29.



crises.¹⁵¹ Violent conflict also wreaks havoc on resources through targeted destruction, displacement-driven environmental degradation, and the collapse of resource management.¹⁵² For instance, following decades of conflict in Rwanda, the rural areas are now grappling with intense population pressure and land scarcity, resulting in land fragmentation, excessive farming, and overgrazing.¹⁵³ Consequently, the country faces critical challenges of land shortage, degraded and eroded soil, and low agricultural yields, which may impede overall growth prospects.¹⁵⁴ Resource-rich countries, such as those involved in conflicts in Nigeria, Sudan, Peru, and Sierra Leone, often experience higher levels of environmental damage due to their natural resources, which can fuel both conflict and severe environmental harm.¹⁵⁵

Post-conflict recovery efforts often encounter structural issues, such as disrupted institutions, weakened governance, and additional resource-driven conflicts, which hinder the rebuilding process.¹⁵⁶ Unfair allocation of renewable resources like water and land post-conflict often result in tensions that can erupt into more violence, especially along ethnic, national, or social lines, limiting the recovery process.¹⁵⁷ For instance, the World Bank noted that following the end of Burundi's civil war in 2005, 75% of court cases in Burundi's collines (the nation's local administrative units) were related to land ownership.¹⁵⁸ The influx of refugees from neighboring countries intensified these conflicts and historical land records were frequently lost during periods of unrest, and land was often seized or granted as reward, creating complex and contested claims.¹⁵⁹ Recovery efforts are further impeded by poor management of natural resources, which often exacerbates governance and economic challenges.¹⁶⁰ Specifically, the failure to address environmental degradation and mismanagement of resources can reignite tensions, especially in resource-dependent economies.¹⁶¹

International and Regional Framework

A safe and protected environment that guarantees access to essential needs is a fundamental human right.¹⁶² The right to social protection, where governments work together to ensure everyone can enjoy economic, social, and cultural rights that support human dignity and potential, is detailed in article 22 of

¹⁵¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Protection in Armed Conflict*. 2024.

¹⁵² United Nations Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action. *Toolkit and Guidance for Preventing and Managing Land and Natural Resources Conflict, Environmental Scarcity and Conflict: Renewable Resources and Conflict*. 2012. p. 27.

¹⁵³ *ibid.* p. 30.

¹⁵⁴ Ahmadnia et al. World Bank Group. *Defueling Conflict - Environment and Natural Resource as a Pathway to Peace*. 2022. p. 21.

¹⁵⁵ United Nations Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action. *Toolkit and Guidance for Preventing and Managing Land and Natural Resources Conflict, Environmental Scarcity and Conflict: Renewable Resources and Conflict*. 2012. pp. 17-25, 35, 54, 79, 91.

¹⁵⁶ United Nations Development Programme. *Crisis Prevention and Recovery Report 2008: Post-Conflict Economic Recovery - Enabling Local Ingenuity*. 2008. p. 23.

¹⁵⁷ Ahmadnia et al. World Bank Group. *Defueling Conflict - Environment and Natural Resource as a Pathway to Peace*. 2022. p. 52.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.* p. 18.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.* p. 16.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.* p. 18.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.* p. 18.

¹⁶² United Nations, General Assembly. *The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (A/RES/76/300)*. 2022.



the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948).¹⁶³ Additionally, article 25 of the UDHR recognizes that everyone has the right to basic necessities like food, clothing, housing, and healthcare, as well as protection from poverty and hardship.¹⁶⁴ Article 7 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966) identifies the right to safe and healthy working conditions for all people.¹⁶⁵ The *Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment* (1972) proclaims that a healthy environment is crucial for human well-being and global economic prosperity and protecting and improving it is a worldwide priority for governments.¹⁶⁶ Article 4 of the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* (1992) mentions that in order to achieve sustainable development, environmental considerations must be fully integrated into the development process rather than being treated as a separate issue.¹⁶⁷ Additionally, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, adopted in 2015, established the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to guide global development, which include SDG 15 (life on land) for the protection, restoration, and promotion of the sustainable use of terrestrial systems.¹⁶⁸ Further, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 76/300 (2022) on “the Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment,” affirming a clean, safe, and healthy environment as a human right.¹⁶⁹

The international community distinguishes between International Armed Conflict (IAC) and Non-International Armed Conflict (NIAC).¹⁷⁰ The 1899 *Hague Convention (II) with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land*, the first codification of customary international law regarding violent conflict, defined war as a conflict between two nations based on a declaration of war.¹⁷¹ The 1949 *Geneva Conventions*’ common article 2 effectively establishes what constitutes an IAC by setting the parameters for when these conventions apply, reflecting the international legal system’s focus on IAC.¹⁷² The *Geneva Conventions* apply in “all cases of declared war or of any other armed conflict,” implying that an IAC is any armed conflict between states, regardless of a formal declaration of war.¹⁷³ An NIAC as described by article 3 of the *Geneva Conventions* applies to armed conflicts without international character, requiring adherence to rules of war.¹⁷⁴ This often involves hostilities between government forces and organized

¹⁶³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966.

¹⁶⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (A/CONF.48/14/Rev.1)*. 1972. p. 3.

¹⁶⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1 (Vol. I))*. 1992. p. 2.

¹⁶⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

¹⁶⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (A/RES/76/300)*. 2022.

¹⁷⁰ International Committee of the Red Cross. *How is the Term "Armed Conflict" Defined in International Humanitarian Law? International Committee of the Red Cross Opinion Paper 2024*. 2024. p. 6.

¹⁷¹ International Committee of the Red Cross. *Convention (IV) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land. The Hague, 18 October 1907*. 1907. p. 1.

¹⁷² International Committee of the Red Cross. *How is the Term "Armed Conflict" Defined in International Humanitarian Law? International Committee of the Red Cross Opinion Paper 2024*. 2024.

¹⁷³ *ibid.* p. 9.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.* pp. 13-16.



armed groups or between multiple organized non-state armed groups.¹⁷⁵ Article 1 of the 1977 *Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions* further requires a higher level of violence than mere unrest to qualify as an NIAC.¹⁷⁶ For instance, organized groups must act collectively over time, and government forces must use extraordinary means to maintain public security.¹⁷⁷

An established legal framework for environmental protection in armed conflict zones is vital to promote post-conflict environmental restoration efforts.¹⁷⁸ The *Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques* (1976) forbids the use of combat tactics that could intentionally alter the earth's physical properties to harm other nations, especially if the damage is severe or widespread.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, article 35 of the 1977 *Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions* prohibits the use of warfare methods that could cause extensive, long-lasting environmental destruction and bans environmental attacks as retaliation.¹⁸⁰ General Assembly resolution 47/37 (1992) on "protection of the environment in times of armed conflict" urges Member States to strictly adhere to and incorporate the existing international laws on safeguarding the environment during armed conflict.¹⁸¹ Following this resolution, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) produced an initial set of guidelines in 1994, which outlined and clarified existing international legal protections.¹⁸² The guidelines also aimed to clarify International Humanitarian Law (IHL), which are rules that govern the conduct of nations during IAC.¹⁸³ These guidelines were intended to be implemented through military training and national laws to minimize environmental damage.¹⁸⁴ The *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court* (1998) uses similar language to that expressed by ICRC, explicitly outlining that deliberately attacking, knowing that it will cause excessive civilian harm or environmental damage compared to the expected military benefit, is a serious violation of international law.¹⁸⁵ Rule 44 of the ICRC's collection of *Customary International Humanitarian Law: Volume 1* (2009), further mandates that military forces must take steps to

¹⁷⁵ International Committee of the Red Cross. *How is the Term "Armed Conflict" Defined in International Humanitarian Law? International Committee of the Red Cross Opinion Paper* 2024. 2024. p. 16.

¹⁷⁶ Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law applicable in Armed Conflicts. *Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II)*. 1977.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ United Nations Environment Programme. *Protecting the Environment During Armed Conflict: An Inventory and Analysis of International Law*. 2009.

¹⁷⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques (A/RES/31/72)*. 1976. p. 3.

¹⁸⁰ Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law applicable in Armed Conflicts. *Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I)*. 1977.

¹⁸¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Protection of the environment in times of armed conflict (A/RES/47/37)*. 1992.

¹⁸² International Committee of the Red Cross. *Guidelines on the protection of the natural environment in armed conflict rules and recommendations relating to the protection of the natural environment under international humanitarian law, with commentary*. 2020.

¹⁸³ *ibid.* p. 14.

¹⁸⁴ United Nations Environment Programme. *Protecting the Environment During Armed Conflict: An Inventory and Analysis of International Law*. 2009. p. 8.

¹⁸⁵ United Nations Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court. *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*. 1998. Article 7.



prevent or minimize accidental environmental harm during operations.¹⁸⁶ This obligation holds even when the full environmental impact of specific military action is uncertain.¹⁸⁷

ICRC and the International Law Commission (ILC) assist in developing and enforcing international environmental law.¹⁸⁸ ICRC updated its guidelines in 2020, designating sensitive areas off-limits, promoting IHL rules for environmental protection, and sharing best practices with other nations.¹⁸⁹ ILC adopted final draft principles in 2020, consisting of 27 principles divided into parts covering general principles, principles during armed conflict, occupation, and post-conflict.¹⁹⁰ General Assembly resolution 77/104 on “protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts” (2022) includes an annex of these 27 principle guidelines, all focused on maintaining environmental security during and after armed conflicts.¹⁹¹ These principles focus on mitigating environmental damage in NIAC zones, which prohibit states from using environmentally destructive techniques as weapons of war.¹⁹² The principles also demand that states respect and protect the environment of occupied territories, taking steps to prevent significant environmental damage that could harm local populations.¹⁹³ The final stage involves the implementation of the principles by Member States, which can be achieved through domestic legislation and incorporating them into military and training manuals.¹⁹⁴

Role of the International System

UNEA, the General Assembly, and UNEP promote the international environmental framework for security and recovery during and after armed conflicts.¹⁹⁵ UNEA resolution 3/1 on “pollution mitigation and control in areas affected by armed conflict or terrorism” (2018) focuses on preventing and minimizing environmental damage and pollution of natural habitats and water sources caused by armed conflict or terrorism.¹⁹⁶ UNEA resolution 2/15 on “protection of the environment in areas affected by armed conflicts” (2022) highlights the importance of regional and international collaboration to uphold international law while addressing the consequences of displacement caused by conflict.¹⁹⁷ Further, UNEA resolution 6/12 on “environmental assistance and recovery in areas affected by armed conflict” (2024) encourages

¹⁸⁶ International Committee of the Red Cross. *Customary International Humanitarian Law - Volume 1 : Rules*. 2009. p. 147.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.* p. 147.

¹⁸⁸ United Nations Development Programme. *Partnership in Action – UNDP and UNHCR Cooperation on Forced Displacement and Statelessness*. 2024. pp. 13, 23.

¹⁸⁹ International Committee of the Red Cross. *Guidelines on the protection of the natural environment in armed conflict rules and recommendations relating to the protection of the natural environment under international humanitarian law, with commentary*. 2020. p. 16.

¹⁹⁰ International Law Commission. *Summaries of the Work of the International Law Commission. Protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts*. 2024.

¹⁹¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts (A/RES/77/104)*. 2022.

¹⁹² United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the International Law Commission. Protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts (A/74/10)*. 2019. pp. 213-214.

¹⁹³ *ibid.* pp. 213-214.

¹⁹⁴ International Union for Conservation of Nature. *New Legal Protections for the Environment in relation to Armed Conflict*. 2022.

¹⁹⁵ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Press Release. UN Environment Assembly advances collaborative action on triple planetary crisis*. 2024.

¹⁹⁶ United Nations Environment Assembly. *Pollution mitigation and control in areas affected by armed conflict or terrorism (UNEP/EA.3/Res.1)*. 2018. pp. 2-3.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.* pp. 2-3.



Member States to consider ILC's principles on environmental protection during armed conflicts and to explore ways to improve environmental aid and recovery in war-torn regions.¹⁹⁸ In 2016, the General Assembly also worked with UNEP to establish 6 November as the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict, focused on raising global awareness for this issue.¹⁹⁹

UNEP, as the United Nations' foremost environmental authority, provides important environmental support to Member States before, during, and after global crises, including armed conflict.²⁰⁰ UNEP's Environmental Cooperation for Peacebuilding Programme focuses on environmental aspects of conflict and post-conflict recovery, supporting peace efforts by identifying how natural resources can cause conflict or promote peace, and offering solutions.²⁰¹ UNEP is also responsible for data collection and post-conflict environmental assessments, publishing 25 post-conflict assessments since 1999.²⁰² These reports outline land degradation and biodiversity concerns following war, as evidenced in the 2003 post-conflict environmental assessment of Afghanistan, which found heavy damage to wetlands, forests, and soil resources from military activity.²⁰³ Similarly, UNEP's 2007 Sudan post-conflict environmental assessment outlines that wildlife populations and their habitats suffered significant decline following decades of conflict, with northern and central Sudan experiencing severe habitat loss due to agricultural expansion and deforestation.²⁰⁴

Cooperation between regional bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other United Nations agencies helps mitigate rising tensions between Member States and bolsters post-conflict recovery efforts.²⁰⁵ Regional legal precedents, especially in cases involving Indigenous communities in Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Brazil, have established the right to a healthy environment through collective efforts.²⁰⁶ Within the European Union, the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) was established in 2003 as a collaborative effort involving UNEP, UNDP, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, and the Regional Environment Center for Central and Eastern Europe.²⁰⁷ Its purpose is to address environmental challenges that threaten security, stability, and well-being across Europe by promoting coordinated efforts

¹⁹⁸ United Nations Environment Assembly. *Environmental assistance and recovery in areas affected by armed conflict (UNEP/EA.6/L.12)*. 2024. p. 2.

¹⁹⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Observance of the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict (A/RES/56/4)*. 2001.

²⁰⁰ United Nations Environment Programme. *About the United Nations Environment Programme*. 2024; United Nations Environment Programme. *Response and Recovery*. 2024.

²⁰¹ United Nations Environment Programme. *Environmental Cooperation and Peacebuilding*. 2024.

²⁰² United Nations, Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. *UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme*. N.d.

²⁰³ United Nations Environment Programme. *Afghanistan Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment*. 2003. p. 48.

²⁰⁴ United Nations Environment Programme. *Sudan Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment. Synthesis Report*. 2007. pp. 4, 8.

²⁰⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the International Law Commission. Protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts (A/74/10)*. 2019. pp. 229-233.

²⁰⁶ United Nations Environment Programme. *Protecting the Environment During Armed Conflict: An Inventory and Analysis of International Law*. 2009. p. 49.

²⁰⁷ United Nations Interagency Framework Team for Preventative Action. *Toolkit and Guidance for Preventing and Managing Land and Natural Resources Conflict. Renewable Resources and Conflict*. 2012. p. 86.



and sustainable solutions.²⁰⁸ By assessing environmental risks in conflict-prone regions, ENVSEC designs and implements strategies to reduce tensions and improve living conditions.²⁰⁹ This involves close cooperation with governments, experts, and NGOs.²¹⁰ Additionally, many NGOs globally, like the Conflict and Environment Observatory, lead efforts to expose the environmental impacts of conflicts, advocating for stronger protections and supporting recovery initiatives in war-affected regions.²¹¹

Biodiversity Loss and Recovery in Areas Affected by Armed Conflict

The destruction of infrastructure, land, and natural habitats during armed conflict often leads to exacerbated environmental degradation and biodiversity loss.²¹² It also results in the increased depletion of natural resources as the demand for these resources rises exponentially.²¹³ For example, UNEP reported that the decades of conflict in Afghanistan have led to more than half of their forests being destroyed with over 95% of deforestation in some areas.²¹⁴ In Vietnam, millions of acres of land became unfit for reforestation when sprayed with defoliant 'Agent Orange' by the U.S. military during the Vietnam War.²¹⁵ ICRC has declared the environment to be a "neglected victim of armed conflict" with 90% of significant armed conflicts between 1950 and 2000 occurring in countries with biodiversity hotspots.²¹⁶

The depletion of natural resources has led to the displacement of communities, loss of traditional livelihoods, and social unrest perpetuating cycles of conflict and impeding environmental recovery.²¹⁷ Resource scarcity and competition may force people to move to neighboring communities, regions, or countries.²¹⁸ The United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Joyce Msuya, reported that a record-breaking displacement of over 110 million people globally was recorded in 2023, with more than 33,000 civilian deaths in armed conflict.²¹⁹ This mass migration can cause soil erosion, deforestation, water depletion, and pollution.²²⁰ Least developed countries are often the ones to host large

²⁰⁸ United Nations Interagency Framework Team for Preventative Action. *Toolkit and Guidance for Preventing and Managing Land and Natural Resources Conflict. Renewable Resources and Conflict*. 2012. p. 86.

²⁰⁹ *ibid.* p. 86.

²¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 86.

²¹¹ United Nations Interagency Framework Team for Preventative Action. *Toolkit and Guidance for Preventing and Managing Land and Natural Resources Conflict. Renewable Resources and Conflict*. 2012. p. 87; Conflict and Environment Observatory. *About*. 2024.

²¹² Jha. VIJ Books (India) PVT Limited. *Armed Conflict and Environmental Damage*. 2014.

²¹³ *ibid.*

²¹⁴ United Nations Environment Programme. *Why we need to protect biodiversity from harmful effects of war and armed conflict*. 2018.

²¹⁵ King. Cable News Network. *U.S. in first effort to clean up Agent Orange in Vietnam*. 2012.

²¹⁶ International Committee of the Red Cross. *Natural environment: Neglected victim of armed conflict*. 2019; Walker. JusticInfoNet. *War, law and biodiversity: a race against time*. 2020.

²¹⁷ United Nations Environment Programme. *Convention on Biological Diversity. Text and Annexes*. 2011; United Nations Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action. *Toolkit and Guidance for Preventing and Managing Land and Natural Resources Conflict, Environmental Scarcity and Conflict: Renewable Resources and Conflict*. 2012.

²¹⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Refugees and the Environment*. 2001.

²¹⁹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *Ms. Joyce Msuya, ASG for Humanitarian Affairs and deputy ERC, on behalf of Mr. Martin Griffiths, USG for Humanitarian Affairs and ERC - Annual Briefing to the Security Council on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 21 May 2024*. 2024.

²²⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Refugees and the Environment*. 2001.



numbers of refugees and face difficulties protecting environmentally sensitive areas.²²¹ This can further destabilize entire regions and hinder recovery efforts.²²² In this context, the *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification* (1994) was established, which promotes sustainable land management practices in areas impacted by mass migration, including the development of local land governance plans.²²³

In response to the growing internal disturbances caused by natural hazards and armed conflict, various organizations have developed resolutions and guiding principles to safeguard the environment and its inhabitants.²²⁴ The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other humanitarian partners, has developed recommendations for a conflict-sensitive approach to disaster risk reduction (DRR).²²⁵ The recommendations include calls for Member States to ensure that their national policies reach local communities and to leverage DRR as a platform for advancing broader dialogues on peacebuilding and conflict resolution.²²⁶ Furthermore, the *Convention on Biological Diversity* (1993), adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, legally binds States parties to rehabilitate ecosystems and promote the conservation of vulnerable species.²²⁷ Regarding peacekeeping efforts, the 2005 Environmental Guidelines of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees emphasize the importance of environmental considerations in their operations as this has a direct impact on the well-being of people living in that area.²²⁸

Without sustainable guidance and preservation efforts, ecosystems may take decades to recover from the impacts of conflict-induced destruction.²²⁹ This can hinder peacebuilding and peacekeeping initiatives, exacerbating the suffering of those affected by armed conflict.²³⁰ The current trajectory of biodiversity loss may undermine the progress of the SDGs, including SDGs 2 (zero hunger), 3 (good health and well-being), 6 (clean water and sanitation), and 11 (sustainable cities and communities).²³¹ Initiatives like the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration provide a framework for countries and communities to actively restore the environment and prevent conflicts through sustainable management practices.²³² The evaluation of existing guidelines outlined in UNEA resolution EA.6/L.12 on “environmental assistance and recovery in areas affected by armed conflict” (2024), along with the

²²¹ Harper. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *A critical time for refugees and their environment (again)*. 2016.

²²² United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Ms. Joyce Msuya, ASG for Humanitarian Affairs and deputy ERC, on behalf of Mr. Martin Griffiths, USG for Humanitarian Affairs and ERC - Annual Briefing to the Security Council on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 21 May 2024. 2024.

²²³ United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. *Convention. Overview*. N.d.

²²⁴ United Nations Environment Programme. *Convention on Biological Diversity. Text and Annexes*. 2011.

²²⁵ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. *Scaling up Disaster Risk Reduction in Humanitarian Action 2.0: Recommendations for the Humanitarian Programme Cycle*. 2021.

²²⁶ *ibid*.

²²⁷ United Nations Environment Programme. *Convention on Biological Diversity. Text and Annexes*. 2011.

²²⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees et al. *UNHCR Environmental Guidelines*. 2005.

²²⁹ United Nations Environment Assembly. *Environmental assistance and recovery in areas affected by armed conflict (UNEP/EA.6/L.12)*. 2024.

²³⁰ Kong et al. International Review of the Red Cross. *Remedying the environmental impacts of war: Challenges and perspectives for full reparation*. 2023.

²³¹ United Nations Environment Programme. *Facts about the nature crisis*. 2024.

²³² United Nations Environment Programme et al. *Action Plan for the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030*. 2023.



progress made towards SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), will ensure the effectiveness of these initiatives.²³³ Guidelines included in General Assembly resolution 77/104 will help to determine whether current recovery methods adequately promote environmental sustainability and resilience in post-conflict recovery.²³⁴ Additionally, UNEP has been working with various Member States individually to strengthen their post-conflict environmental recovery.²³⁵ For instance, in 2018, UNEP and the Iraqi government initiated a cross-ministry team that could address conflict-induced pollution.²³⁶ The program aims to improve the government's ability to handle future environmental emergencies.²³⁷

Challenges to Post-Conflict Recovery Efforts and Future Redirection

Existing environmental recovery resolutions may fall short of providing long-term sustainable solutions for environmental recovery, leaving affected Member States dependent on external help.²³⁸ UNEA resolution 3/1 on "pollution mitigation and control in areas affected by armed conflict or terrorism" (2018) calls for collective action among Member States to mitigate the consequences of conflict but lacks concrete measures to ensure adherence.²³⁹ Strong assessment processes can help gauge the success of post-recovery programs, considering long-term effects on environmental health and community resilience.²⁴⁰ The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, conducted by UNEP in collaboration with the European Commission, World Bank, and other United Nations entities, performs one such test.²⁴¹ This assessment pinpoints the main environmental threats to livelihoods, security, and health after a crisis has occurred and offers suggestions to national authorities on how to mitigate such threats.²⁴² While most post-conflict countries share some commonalities, their varying levels of income, social inequalities, natural resources, and conflict-related damage require tailored policies for effective recovery.²⁴³ Regional environmental policies such as the *Nature Restoration Law* of the European Union and the *African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources* (1968), are tailored to specific geographical needs and circumstances, all while contributing to the long-term and sustained recovery of degraded ecosystems.²⁴⁴

²³³ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Sustainable Development Goal 16*. N.d.; United Nations Environment Assembly. *Environmental assistance and recovery in areas affected by armed conflict (UNEP/EA.6/L.12)*. 2024

²³⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts (A/RES/77/104)*. 2022.

²³⁵ United Nations Environment Programme. *Rooting for the environment in times of conflict and war*. 2019.

²³⁶ *ibid.*

²³⁷ *ibid.*

²³⁸ Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. *Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*. 2019.

²³⁹ *ibid.* pp. 1-2.

²⁴⁰ United Nations Environment Programme. *Post-crisis environmental assessment*. 2024.

²⁴¹ *ibid.*

²⁴² *ibid.*

²⁴³ United Nations Development Programme. *Crisis Prevention and Recovery Report 2008: Post-Conflict Economic Recovery - Enabling Local Ingenuity*. 2008. pp. 9-10.

²⁴⁴ European Union Law. *Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulation (EU) 2022/869*. 2024; Organisation of African Unity. *African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources*. 1968.



Climate change is a risk multiplier and serves as a hindrance to post-conflict recovery.²⁴⁵ By disrupting agriculture and reducing water supply, it can exacerbate vulnerability in conflict-affected zones, leading to recovery efforts being divided between conflict resolution and climate crisis mitigation, indirectly fueling further conflict.²⁴⁶ In 2013, the United States National Academy of Sciences concluded that climate change leads to an increase in interpersonal violence and conflicts between communities.²⁴⁷ Evidence from past and present armed conflicts also alludes to the parallel relationship between conflict and climate.²⁴⁸ The disproportionate impact of climate change on vulnerable populations exacerbates social inequality and intensifies geopolitical tensions over limited resources, posing significant challenges to post-conflict environmental recovery and peacebuilding.²⁴⁹ Addressing climate change and conflict resolution simultaneously is essential for achieving environmental sustainability and socioeconomic resilience.²⁵⁰ To address this issue, Member States like Somalia are prioritizing energy infrastructure recovery to boost economic growth and reduce poverty following decades of climate- and resource-related conflicts.²⁵¹ The country is investing in a solar power plant in the city of Baidoa to address unreliable and expensive energy supply, improve living conditions, and support economic development.²⁵²

UNEP has conducted post-crisis environmental assessments requiring on-site investigations, laboratory testing, and cutting-edge technology to identify major threats to health, the environment, and security.²⁵³ Additionally, UNEP provides guidance to national authorities on how to mitigate these risks and move forward.²⁵⁴ Since 1999, they have conducted these in several nations and areas, such as Afghanistan, Sudan, the occupied Palestinian territories, and more recently, Ukraine.²⁵⁵ In 2022, UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen confirmed the harm of war with the initial screenings of environmental hazards and prioritized the end of the devastation; A Preliminary Review of the Environmental Impact of the Conflict in Ukraine was also devised as part of a precursory process by UNEP to assist Ukraine in recovery from the conflict.²⁵⁶ A comprehensive approach to environmental recovery emphasizes capacity

²⁴⁵ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Climate change recognized as 'threat multiplier', UN Security Council debates its impact on peace*. 2019.

²⁴⁶ United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *Climate Insecurity Impacts on Children and Armed Conflict: A Discussion Paper*. 2023; Anderson. Greenly. *Does climate change make conflict more likely?*. 2024.

²⁴⁷ Hsiang et al. United States National Academy of Sciences. *Quantifying the Influence of Climate on Human Conflict*. 2013.

²⁴⁸ Sova. United Nations World Food Program USA. *The First Climate Change Conflict*. 2020; Al Sharif. Sada. *Climate Change and Conflict: A Perfect Storm in Sudan's Countryside*. 2024.

²⁴⁹ United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *Climate Insecurity Impacts on Children and Armed Conflict: A Discussion Paper*. 2023; Anderson. Greenly. *Does climate change make conflict more likely?*. 2024.

²⁵⁰ United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *Climate Insecurity Impacts on Children and Armed Conflict: A Discussion Paper*. 2023.

²⁵¹ EMC Consultants. *Environmental and Social Impact Assessment Kube Energy Somalia, Baidoa Solar PV Plant*. 2022. pp. 12-14.

²⁵² *ibid.* pp. 12-14.

²⁵³ United Nations Environment Programme. *Post-crisis environmental assessment*. 2024.

²⁵⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵⁵ *ibid.*

²⁵⁶ United Nations Environment Programme. *The Environmental Impact of the Conflict in Ukraine: A Preliminary Review*. 2022; United Nations Environment Programme. *UN warns of toxic environmental legacy for Ukraine, region*. 2022.



building and conflict prevention to enable communities to manage their resources sustainably and reduce their dependence on external assistance.²⁵⁷

Conclusion

Armed conflicts inflict severe environmental harm, biodiversity loss, and social instability.²⁵⁸ A safe environment with access to essential needs is a fundamental human right.²⁵⁹ Armed conflict harms the natural environment, leading to widespread destruction of natural resources, biodiversity loss, and long-term consequences for human well-being and peacebuilding efforts.²⁶⁰ While existing environmental recovery resolutions provide some solutions, addressing this issue requires resolutions to enforce international humanitarian law, as well as solutions to the compounded challenges of climate change and mass migration.²⁶¹ Strategies to mitigate biodiversity loss and recover biodiversity damage, due to conflict or migration, are paramount to addressing the large-scale environmental impacts of armed conflict.²⁶² Recognizing this, UNEA and UNEP have established multiple international and regional frameworks for environmental protection and provide support to Member States before, during, and after armed conflict.²⁶³ UNEA's primary focus on this issue is to promote international discussion on the environmental effects of conflict and post-conflict recovery, examine how natural resources can influence conflict or peace, and propose both immediate and long-term solutions.²⁶⁴

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: How can UNEA help to enforce international law on this issue? How do Member States ensure post-conflict environmental recovery through national initiatives and guidelines? What best practices can be adopted across Member States to prevent and mitigate the impact of armed conflict on the natural environment? What can be done to address the issue of post-conflict mass migration and resource scarcity? How can delegates address the challenges to post-conflict recovery efforts and build on the existing guiding principles to handle environmental recovery more effectively?

²⁵⁷ United Nations, Peacebuilding Support Office. *UN Peacebuilding: an Orientation*. 2010.

²⁵⁸ Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. *Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*. 2019.

²⁵⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (A/HRC/RES/48/13)*. 2021.

²⁶⁰ Jha. VIJ Books (India) PVT Limited. *Armed Conflict and Environmental Damage*. 2014.

²⁶¹ United Nations Environment Programme. *Rooting for the environment in times of conflict and war*. 2019.

²⁶² Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. *Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*. 2019.

²⁶³ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Press Release. UN Environment Assembly advances collaborative action on triple planetary crisis*. 2024.

²⁶⁴ *ibid.*



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