



We hope you enjoy these highlights of our work in 2017. For more details, please visit our combined Annual Report and Programme Performance Report online.  
[unenvironment.org/annualreport](http://unenvironment.org/annualreport)

Our mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

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## The third United Nations Environment Assembly

Over 4,000 heads of state, ministers, business leaders, UN officials, civil society representatives, activists and celebrities came together for the third UN Environment Assembly, which was held in Nairobi from 4-6 December under the overarching theme of pollution.

Ahead of the Assembly, UN Environment's Executive Director submitted his official report on pollution, *Towards a Pollution-Free Planet*. The report describes the challenges posed by global pollution, outlines current efforts to tackle the problem, and suggests 50 concrete actions that governments and other actors can take to clean up the planet.

By the time the Assembly closed, delegates had passed 13 resolutions, three decisions and, for the first time, a ministerial declaration. These outcomes included commitments to address marine litter and microplastics, prevent and reduce air pollution, eliminate lead poisoning from paint and batteries, protect water-based ecosystems from pollution, deal with soil pollution, and manage pollution in areas hit by conflict and terrorism. If every promise made at the summit is met, nearly 1.5 billion more people will breathe clean air, 30 per cent of the world's coastlines will be cleaned up, and \$18.6 billion will be mobilized for research, development and innovative programmes to combat pollution.

The Assembly hosted several events that brought together major players on environmental issues. The Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum convened representatives from more than 400 civil society organizations, while the Science, Policy, Business Forum highlighted key opportunities for green investment. The Sustainable Innovation Expo showcased the latest developments in environmental problem-solving, and the Nexus Dialogue on pollution, cities and health gave participants the chance to discuss cross-cutting solutions to critical urban challenges.



## #BeatPollution

UN Environment's #BeatPollution campaign, which ran for several months in the run-up to the meeting, presented to the Assembly nearly **2.5 million individual pledges** to clean up the planet, in addition to voluntary commitments from governments, civil society and businesses. The campaign resonated powerfully on social media, with #BeatPollution trending on Twitter during the Assembly.

Judi Wakhungu, who at the time was Kenya's Environment Minister, joins Erik Solheim in taking a stand against pollution at the third UN Environment Assembly.

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# Environmental sustainability is essential for global equity

## Foreword

António Guterres  
UN Secretary-General

The publication of this latest review of the work of UN Environment falls in the 70th anniversary year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While the right to a safe and healthy environment is not explicit in that landmark document, environmental sustainability is essential for global equity and many of the rights and freedoms listed in the Declaration, not least the rights to life, liberty and security. When the environment is compromised, lives are often endangered and people's opportunities for better standards of living are profoundly curtailed.

**When the environment is compromised, lives are often endangered and people's opportunities for better standards of living are profoundly curtailed.**

Throughout the past year, UN Environment campaigned on many fronts against the spiralling pollution of air, water and land around the world. Climate change, wildlife crime, micro-plastic pollution and land degradation are just a few examples of environmental ills that affect the health and well-being of communities and economies, global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and even the security of nations.

The consequences of failing to sensibly and effectively manage the environment are profound and far-reaching. That is why the work of UN Environment is so important. And it is why the 193 countries of the UN Environment Assembly committed to work towards a pollution-free planet. I commend this annual report to all who believe that attaining our fundamental rights entails clean air, healthy oceans, resilient ecosystems and a global environment managed sustainably for the benefit of people and planet.



UN Secretary-General António Guterres walks through Codrington town in Barbuda to see firsthand the devastation left behind by Hurricane Irma.



## It's time to move from commitment to action

## Foreword

Erik Solheim  
Executive Director,  
UN Environment Programme

In 2015, two residents of Mumbai, India's financial hub, started spending their weekends collecting the trash that had washed up along the city's Versova Beach. Two years later, their Saturday chore has turned into a movement that has inspired thousands to join their efforts. In 2017, the Versova Beach clean-up marked its 100th week. More than 7 million kilograms of plastic have now been collected.

This example from India demonstrates two very important realities of our time: that pollution is overwhelming our lives, and that when people are inspired, they act.

In 2017 the UN Environment Assembly recognized this reality, and the world's highest-level gathering on the environment put ending pollution at the top of the global political agenda. If all of the Assembly's commitments are met, more than a billion people will breathe cleaner air, many of the world's coastlines will be cleaner, and billions more will be mobilized for research into innovative programmes to combat pollution.

But as with all environmental challenges, no government can go it alone. Citizens need to be informed and inspired to change their behaviour and put pressure on their governments. In 2017, our #BeatPollution campaign galvanized millions of individual pledges to clean up the planet.

The year 2018 will be a decisive one, as we challenge ourselves to move from commitment to action, from challenge to opportunity.

Concrete steps from citizens and governments have to be complemented by business action. The message is clear: the private sector can make a profit from a healthy planet. In 2017, we signed an exciting agreement with BNP Paribas which will support smallholder projects, channeling much-needed capital into sustainable development. It will improve agriculture, regenerate land, and make smallholder farming

**Citizens need to be informed and inspired to change their behaviour and put pressure on their governments.**

sustainable and profitable for all. Almost every week we read of new business strategies to curb the use of single-use plastics, expand electric mobility and use cleaner energy. Through all of these developments, it has become abundantly clear that the Paris Agreement and global environmental consensus on the challenges facing our planet, remain stronger than ever. Thanks to the efforts of the Montreal Protocol, for the first time, scientists have found direct proof that the ozone layer is healing. And now we move to address bigger challenges with the coming into force of the Kigali Amendment to phase out substances that have a serious impact on our climate.

The coming together of people, governments and business has shown time and again that we can innovate our way out of any environmental challenge that we come across. But we have very little time left. 2018 must be the year in which we act together to ensure the health of our people, and our planet.



Erik Solheim, Head of UN Environment, joins Afroz Shah in his long-running efforts to clean up Mumbai's Versova Beach.

## Champions of the Earth

# 7 leaders receive UN's highest environmental accolade

Pioneering leaders from the worlds of government, business, research and grassroots activism were presented with the UN's highest environmental accolade, the Champions of the Earth Award, at the Gala Dinner of the third UN Environment Assembly in December. The annual award is presented to leaders whose actions have had an exceptional and positive impact on the environment.



### Policy leadership

**Michelle Bachelet**, President of Chile, for outstanding leadership in creating marine protected areas and boosting renewable energy



### Science and innovation

**Paul A. Newman** and NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, for outstanding contributions to the Montreal Protocol



### Inspiration and action

**Jeff Orlowski**, filmmaker, for his work to spread powerful environmental messages to a global audience



### Entrepreneurial vision

**Mobike**, for exploring market-driven solutions to air pollution and climate change



### Saihanba Afforestation

**Community**, for transforming degraded land into a lush paradise



### Lifetime achievement

**Wang Wenbiao**, Chairman of Elion Resources Group, for a lifetime of leadership in green industry

## Young Champions of the Earth sets out to find tomorrow's changemakers

2017 saw the launch of Young Champions of the Earth, an initiative that aims to breathe life into the ambitions of brilliant young environmentalists. In this inaugural year, six young people – one from each global region – were selected to receive \$15,000 in seed funding as well as targeted training and mentorship to help them put their ideas into action.



The first six Young Champions of the Earth were recognized at the Gala Dinner of the third UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi.

# Global treaties to protect people and planet

## Highlights from the Multilateral Environmental Agreements that UN Environment hosts

### Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer

22 parties have ratified the **Kigali Amendment**, meaning that the Amendment will enter into force on 1 January 2019.

To mark the 30th anniversary of the Montreal Protocol, the Ozone Secretariat launched the **Ozone Heroes campaign** in partnership with Marvel, the company behind some of the world's most beloved superheroes.

The **11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Vienna Convention**

and the 29th Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol were held in Montreal in November. The Conference of the Parties adopted 4 decisions, while the Meeting of the Parties adopted 29 decisions to enhance efforts to protect the ozone layer and mitigate climate change.

### Minamata Convention on Mercury

The **Minamata Convention on Mercury**, adopted on 10 October 2013, entered into force on 16 August 2017 following ratification by over 50 countries. The Convention is the first new global treaty on environment and health in nearly a decade.

The **1st Meeting of the Conference of the Parties** to the Convention was held in Geneva from 24-29 September.

### Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

At the **12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties**, which took place in Manila, the Philippines in October, the Parties adopted a record-breaking number of commitments, including the **Manila Declaration on Sustainable Development and Migratory Species**. The meeting was the Convention's largest gathering in its 38-year history.

### Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions

**1,600 participants from 170 countries** participated in Conferences of the Parties in Geneva from 24 April to 5 May.

**Over 60 decisions** were adopted to enhance and implement the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions' objectives on chemicals and waste.

### Convention on Biological Diversity

At the **21st meeting of the Convention's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice**, which was held in Montreal in December, **7 recommendations** were adopted on the 2050 Vision for biodiversity and the links between the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Convention prepares to celebrate its **25th anniversary in 2018**.

### Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

The **Joint Meeting of the Animals Committee and Plants Committee** was held in Geneva in July. The Committees adopted recommendations for animals and plants, as well as guidance on collaboration with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

The **69th meeting** of the Standing Committee was held in Geneva, Switzerland from 27 November to 1 December. Over **600 participants** attended the Standing Committee meeting.

# Senior Management Team



**Erik Solheim**  
UN Environment Programme  
Executive Director and  
Under-Secretary-General of  
the United Nations



**Ibrahim Thiaw**  
UN Environment Programme  
Deputy Executive Director  
and Assistant  
Secretary-General of the  
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**Juliette Biao  
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**Elliott Harris**  
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**Elizabeth  
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Director, Law Division  
Director a.i., Corporate  
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**Leo Heileman**  
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**Ligia Noronha**  
Director,  
Economy Division



**Barbara  
Hendrie**  
Director,  
North America Office



**Naysán Sahba**  
Director,  
Communication Division



**Jorge  
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Director,  
Governance Affairs Office



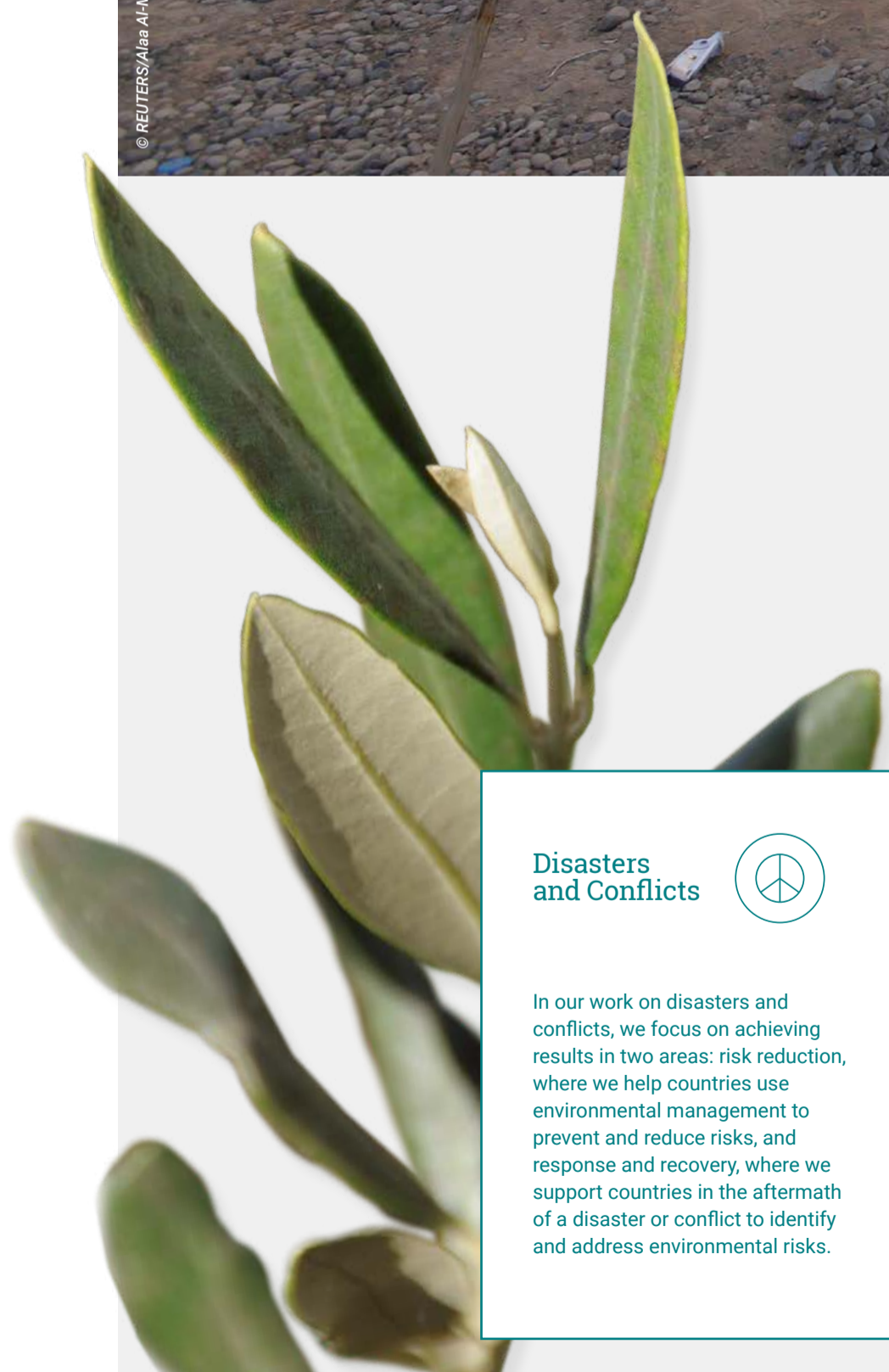
**Dechen Tsering**  
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Director,  
Ecosystems Division



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## Disasters and Conflicts



In our work on disasters and conflicts, we focus on achieving results in two areas: risk reduction, where we help countries use environmental management to prevent and reduce risks, and response and recovery, where we support countries in the aftermath of a disaster or conflict to identify and address environmental risks.



A man returns to his village in Qayyarah, Iraq after it was liberated from ISIL militants. The smoke in the background is from oil wells that were set ablaze by the militants.

OUR WORK | DISASTERS AND CONFLICTS

## Cleaning up the environmental hazards left by ISIL

When UN Environment head Erik Solheim approached Mosul in July 2017, shortly after Iraqi forces had ousted the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) from the city after a three-year occupation, he encountered extreme levels of pollution and environmental destruction.

“The smoke that billowed from the burning oil fields was so thick it blocked out the sun,” he said. “By the time I reached Qayyarah, where ISIL fighters had set fire to 19 oil wells, a film of black soot had settled over the Iraqi town like toxic snow.”

The fires have been extinguished, but the ISIL occupation has left behind a noxious cocktail of chemicals, heavy metals and other harmful waste. To set Mosul and its surroundings on the road to recovery, UN Environment carried

out a rapid scoping mission to identify the environmental hazards. The organization is also providing scientific advice and training to the Iraqi government on how to clear up the mess.

**In collaboration with partners, UN Environment is seeking to pilot the first debris-recycling project ever carried out in Iraq.**

Aside from the oil and sulfur pollution, satellite-based analysis by UN Environment and partners estimated the conflict-related debris at 11 million tonnes – equivalent to four times the weight of the Eiffel Tower. Factories, workshops, warehouses, homes and schools that ISIL had converted into ammunition manufacturing plants were littered with explosives and potentially toxic chemical products. Damage to Mosul’s

electricity network brought a high risk of contamination with polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs. And these were just some of the issues documented.

Now UN Environment is working with Mosul Municipality, UN-Habitat and technical partners to develop the most cost-effective way to manage the rubble. Initial modelling results show that recycling debris to use in reconstruction could save up to \$75 million dollars, limit harmful quarrying impacts and generate 750,000 days of work for Mosul’s long-suffering residents. In collaboration with partners, UN Environment is seeking to pilot the first debris-recycling project ever carried out in Iraq. If it succeeds, the approach could be applied in cities across the country that have been damaged by the conflict.

Working with leading international laboratories – Spiez of Switzerland and ALS Global of the United Kingdom – UN Environment has also trained over 40 Iraqi government experts to map and assess the risks from pollution hot spots created by the conflict, and to develop remedial action plans.

“Never has it been more important for the world to place the environment at the very heart of how we prevent, solve and respond to conflict,” Solheim said.

# OUR WORK

Disasters and Conflicts

Chemicals and Waste

Environment under Review

Ecosystem Management

Resource Efficiency

Climate Change

Resource Efficiency

Environmental Governance

OUR WORK | CLIMATE CHANGE

# Protecting climate and health from peatland fires in Indonesia

In recent years, peatland fires across Indonesia have blanketed towns, cities and forests with a thick haze, causing enormous health and environmental complications across South-East Asia. During their peak in 2015, forest and peatland fires in the Kalimantan and Sumatra regions, worsened by El Niño, emitted an estimated 16 million metric tons of carbon dioxide every day. This is equivalent to the daily emissions of the United States.

aims to reduce the number of fires and cut haze and greenhouse gas emissions in key fire-prone areas. The project is a collaboration between the United Nations Office for Project Services, UN Environment, the Government of Indonesia, USAID and two of the world's foremost research centres – the Centre for Climate Risk and Opportunity Management in Southeast Asia and Pacific at Bogor Agricultural University and the Earth Institute at Columbia University.

warning information, thus enabling better informed action, reduced fire risks and less suffering for the people of Indonesia. The problems often begin when farmers and companies use fire to clear the ground for new planting. This ignites the soil itself, burning deep into the ground and spreading across wider areas. That's why GAMBUT also works to educate local communities on the importance of peatland so they farm sustainably – without slashing and burning – and reduce the carbon footprint of their crops.

Air pollution from the 2015 fires affected 43 million people and hospitalized an estimated half a million for respiratory illnesses. Of about 2.6 million hectares of land that burned between June and October, 33 per cent were carbon-rich peatland ecosystems, which are home to orangutans and other endangered species.

**Peatlands are the most efficient carbon sink on the planet. Globally, they store up to 88.6 billion metric tonnes of carbon.**

GAMBUT runs a Fire Risk System, an early warning tool that uses socioeconomic and biophysical data coupled with climatic data, to predict where fires will occur, thus allowing fire officials to strategically target prevention efforts in those areas that need it most. In 2017, the project retrained 600 community firefighters in a course run by South African firefighters; they were also given improved equipment to cover five villages.

Peatlands are the most efficient carbon sink on the planet. Globally, they store up to 88.6 billion metric tonnes of carbon. Indonesian peat, holding 60 billion metric tonnes, accounts for most of this. Through the Global Peatlands Initiative, UN Environment and the Government of Indonesia are now helping other countries with the sound management and conservation of peatlands, which are found in over 180 countries.

"By preventing peatland fires, we can keep this carbon in the ground where it belongs and protect the health and livelihoods of millions of Indonesians," said Tim Christophersen, UN Environment's lead expert on forests and climate change.

So, there are very good reasons for minimizing the burning of peatlands – which is one of the goals of the Generating Anticipatory Measures for Better Utilization of Tropical Peatlands (GAMBUT) project. GAMBUT

UN Environment and Indonesia's Peatland Restoration Agency developed an action plan for the 2017 fire season that involved disseminating fire early



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Climate change



In our work on climate change, we focus on achieving results in three areas: climate resilience, low-emission growth and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+).

**Peatlands, such as this one in Kalimantan, Indonesia, are the world's most efficient carbon sinks. UN Environment and the Government of Indonesia are supporting the sound management and conservation of peatlands, which are found in over 180 countries around the world.**



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## OUR WORK | ENVIRONMENT UNDER REVIEW

# Bosnia and Herzegovina looks to clear the air



© Dejan Miholjic / UN Environment

The Tuzla coal-fired power plant releases tens of thousands of tonnes of sulphur dioxide and other pollutants into the air each year.

It's like a scene from a dystopian movie: smoke belching from squat towers, fading the green hills behind the power plant to grey and settling like a shroud over the city below.

Yet this is reality for the residents of Tuzla and surrounding villages in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the nation's largest coal-fired power station is choking its residents. According to World Health Organization data, Tuzla has the second-worst air pollution in Europe. Across Bosnia and Herzegovina, 44,000 years of life are lost each year due to particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide and ozone pollution.

But there is hope on the horizon, for Tuzla and the rest of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as UN Environment and the Global Environment Facility team up to improve air quality in the country.

Working with two institutes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the project has rehabilitated air quality monitoring stations in Ivan Sedlo and Banja Luka, and procured two new stations in Prijedor and Goražde. All available stations are now connected to a unified online platform that monitors air quality data in real time. This new system of data collection has made it possible for the government to issue air pollution warnings and monitor the effectiveness of actions to improve the air.

Fresh efforts to raise awareness and stimulate solutions will also take place under the UN Air Quality Initiative and Response. AirQ software will provide data linking air pollution with specific health effects, helping to drive

policy responses. New air quality monitoring stations are planned for urban areas. The nation is also considering joining Breathe-Life, a campaign run by UN Environment and partners that urges cities and countries to pledge concrete action to clean up their air.

Roughly 7 million people die each year from air pollution, and work such as that being done in Bosnia is crucial to save lives. The air quality resolution agreed on at the UN Environment Assembly aims to improve data quality and create the conditions for clean energy and transport, which will help address the problem. UN Environment stands ready to help countries create affordable air quality networks, and to support them in identifying,

prioritizing and addressing key sources of air pollution.

Across Bosnia and Herzegovina, 44,000 years of life are lost each year due to particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide and ozone pollution.

## Environment under Review



In our work to keep the environment under review, we aim to bridge the gaps between the producers and users of environmental information so that science can be better linked with policies. We focus on achieving results in three areas: assessments, early warning and information management.

## OUR WORK | RESOURCE EFFICIENCY

# Resource efficiency transforms Ugandan tannery and town

At first glance, it isn't obvious why Chris Isingoma looks so proud of himself as he sits behind the SWITCH Africa Green stall at the UN Environment headquarters in Nairobi. He is chatting to delegates taking a break from negotiations at the third UN Environment Assembly, occasionally waving around one of the bleached-white objects jumbled on the table before him.

Once you listen, the reason for Chris's pride becomes clear. These innocuous-looking items, which turn out to be dog chews, are the fruits of a resource-efficient transformation underway with the assistance of UN Environment's SWITCH Africa Green programme and partners, the Uganda Cleaner Production Center and the Ugandan government.

Skyfat Tannery, where Chris works, received training and technical support to implement

cleaner production and resource efficiency measures. The resulting changes to business practices have saved his company hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, created green jobs in the Ugandan town of Jinja and cleared up an environmental hazard all in one stroke.

“Disposing of the waste was expensive. I had to find a solution.”

Chris is Process Manager at the tannery, which once had a huge waste problem. In tanneries, hides are swollen using sulfates, which make the hide split into two parts, one of which is not useable for leather products. For years, the tannery dumped the hide splits at a private site, costing it money and creating a stink that turned the locals against the plant.

“We produced 60 tonnes of waste per day, and Jinja is a very small town,” says Chris. “Disposing of the waste was expensive. I had to find a solution.”

Empowered by his training and support, Chris started by contacting a South African company to make gelatine from his splits. They took 120 tonnes of splits per month, setting the tannery on a path that would transform its business and community. Chinese companies were the next to get involved.

The initial investment has paid itself back in spades. Each year, the company now saves \$380,000 on waste disposal and brings in \$580,000 from sales of the oxidized splits. The tannery employs 250 people – paid for by what was once waste.

Skyfat Tannery is a good example of the sustainable consumption and production patterns that the European Union-funded SWITCH Africa Green is trying to create. The project is run by

UN Environment, the UN Development Programme and the UN Office for Project Services. In 2015, it provided grants of up to \$250,000 to each of 34 projects in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, South Africa and Uganda.

## Resource efficiency



UN Environment's work on resource efficiency aims to make global supply chains more sustainable; promote an enabling policy environment to help countries make the transition to inclusive green economies; and empower countries, businesses, civil society and individuals to live and consume sustainably.



OUR WORK | CHEMICALS AND WASTE

# World agrees to end mercury menace

**S**hinobu Sakamoto sat in her wheelchair, brows furrowed and eyes squeezed shut with effort as she forced out each word.

"I was exposed to mercury pollution when I was in my mother's womb," she said. "I was born with fetal Minamata disease in 1956. Many people are still suffering and struggling ... we must protect women and unborn children from toxic pollution."

Sakamoto's body may be failing her, but her will is iron strong. She endured a 24-hour journey from Minamata to Geneva to deliver her passionate message to the first Conference of the Parties of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, which takes its name from the worst mercury poisoning incident in history.

**The convention is now accelerating action to control mercury emissions.**

The convention, which entered into force in August 2017 and is hosted by UN Environment, is now accelerating action on controlling mercury emissions from industry, banning new mercury mining, and reducing mercury use in artisanal and small-scale gold mining. Concerted international action under the convention is an intensification of previous efforts such as UN Environment's Global Mercury Partnership. And it comes not a moment too soon.

Human activities have doubled the amount of mercury in the top 100 metres of the oceans in the last 100 years. We continue to release an estimated 2,960 tonnes every year. We are poisoning our planet, and so ourselves. Work under the convention is now beginning in earnest. The conference adopted guidance to assist in the control and reduction of mercury emissions from artisanal and small-scale gold-mining, with support to member states on the table. Another guidance document specifies ways to reduce atmospheric mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants, waste incineration plants, metal smelters and cement plants.

The Global Environment Facility is funding eight countries with a sizeable gold mining sector. The \$45.2 million in funding will be managed by implementing agencies, including UN Environment, to support policies and market incentives favouring gold that uses less or no mercury in its extraction.



© Veeraj Villalanza / UN Environment



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## Chemicals and Waste



In our work on chemicals and waste, we focus on supporting countries to develop the policies and institutional capacity to manage chemicals and waste soundly, helping countries and other stakeholders manage chemicals and waste and implement related multilateral environmental agreements.

OUR WORK | ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

# New laws and practices solve water challenges on island states



In São Tomé and Príncipe, UN Environment works with communities and a local organization to fight erosion and floods in the Rio Pravaz basin.

**S**amuel Taylor Coleridge, in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, immortalized the line, "Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink".

His poem spoke of a becalmed ship, adrift on salty water that could not tame the thirst of the sailors onboard. But the phrase perhaps resonates with many Small Island Developing States, which face serious water issues despite the glittering seas that surround them.

These nations struggle with freshwater scarcity and contamination, over-exploitation and poor management of water resources. Providing clean drinking water, sanitation services, and effluent and solid waste management is also a challenge.

However, Comoros, Cabo Verde, Mauritius, Maldives, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Seychelles – six such nations – are turning around their fortunes with the support of a UN Environment-United Nations Development Programme project funded by the Global Environment Facility.

The project has demonstrated strategies and practices on Integrated Water Resources Management, benefiting over 300,000 community members on the islands and leading to policies and legislation in all six countries, meaning more impact is to come. The work in São Tomé and Príncipe gives a clear flavour of the overall successes of the project.

The nation's Rio Provaz basin is the main source of water for domestic and industrial use in the town of Neves. Pollution – discharges from agriculture alongside practices such as washing clothes, bathing, defecating and disposing of





Tuna and other fish that sit at the top of the marine food chain are often heavily contaminated with mercury.

OUR WORK | ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

# Backing the environmental defenders who protect human rights

Every week, at least three people are killed defending their right to a clean and healthy environment. According to the last count by British newspaper The Guardian, 188 environmental defenders were killed in 2017.

The organization also backs them by promoting the environmental rule of law, of which human rights is a key component.

For every defender murdered, many more risk their livelihoods, food security or homes when they take a stand and struggle for a basic human right.

Phyllis Omido, a Kenyan who worked in a smelting factory in Owino Uhuru, Mombasa, didn't even know she was an environmental defender when she started asking questions about why people in her community – including her own son – were getting sick. When Phyllis discovered lead poisoning was to blame, she ignored death threats to make sure everyone knew that the factory was releasing lead waste into the water supply and air.

**“I was beaten, arrested, and, on a number of occasions, jailed when I demanded to have the lead smelter shut down and the owners held accountable.”**



UN Environment works with partners around the world to strengthen the ability of states and citizens to link human rights and the environment. The organization helps countries to strengthen laws and their implementation to protect environmental rights and those defending them. It also works with judges to improve access to justice in environmental matters.

In March 2018, UN Environment launches its first global

campaign on environmental rights to raise awareness of the need to protect, promote and respect our right to a clean and healthy environment.

waste – and increased competition for water between communities and industry meant the basin could not meet demand.

“The biggest challenge is to distribute good quality water to the population,” said Carlos Vilanova, the nation’s Minister of Infrastructures, Natural Resources and Environment. “In order to do this, we must manage water in the best way possible.

With direct support from the project team, the country has put into practice a new national plan to manage its water resources. The plan covers water efficiency, watershed protection, water demand management, the incorporation of water resources management into land-use planning and development, institutional reforms and a budget to enact the plan.

“With the support of [this] project, we are looking at concepts like integrated watershed management as a way to secure water quality and availability for the population,” said Vilanova. “This project is also greatly helping us in raising awareness and changing the population’s attitude and behaviors to keep our freshwater supply clean.”

**“The biggest challenge is to distribute good quality water to the population.”**



## Ecosystem Management

In our work on ecosystem management, we focus on helping countries incorporate the value and long-term functioning of ecosystems in their planning and accounting frameworks. We also support countries to use an ecosystem approach to managing their terrestrial, aquatic and marine environments.

## Environmental Governance



UN Environment works to strengthen institutions and improve environmental governance by improving coherence and synergies within the UN system and between multilateral environmental agreements; supporting national efforts to develop and enforce laws and strengthen institutions to achieve environmental objectives; and helping countries integrate environmental sustainability into their development planning.

“I was beaten, arrested, and, on a number of occasions, jailed when I demanded to have the lead smelter shut down and the owners held accountable,” she said.

Omido refused to back down. The factory was closed in April 2015 following a prolonged public outcry. The Centre for Justice, Governance, and Environmental Action, founded by Omido, has launched litigation against the factory owners.

UN Environment in December 2017 brought Omido to the third UN Environment Assembly to relate her experience and connect her with journalists, diplomats and other activists.

Bringing together defenders and raising their profile is just one strand of UN Environment’s

Anti-lead campaigners in Kenya wear t-shirts that declare “we have a voice”.



# Prominent voices support UN Environment's work

Through their broad influence and sizable networks, UN Environment's goodwill ambassadors help us inspire action, reach new audiences and raise awareness of critical environmental issues. In 2017, Gisele Bündchen and Don Cheadle spread our message to more than 4 million people on World Environment Day, while Lewis Pugh, our Patron of the Oceans, successfully lobbied for stronger policies on marine pollution. We also gained some new and prominent voices for change.

British singer-songwriter **Ellie Goulding** became our latest Global Goodwill Ambassador. Goulding took up her new role in Nairobi, shortly before travelling to the Maasai Mara and the Kenyan coast to learn about threats facing wildlife and local communities. She also co-hosted the Environment Assembly Gala Dinner, where she announced the inaugural class of Young Champions of the Earth.

Former French Prime Minister **Laurent Fabius** became UN Environment's new Patron on Environmental Governance. Fabius, who also served as president of the successful 2015 Paris climate negotiations, adds unrivalled experience and diplomatic weight to the push for international consensus on critical environmental challenges.

**Vijay Shekhar Sharma**, founder of India's largest mobile-first financial services conglomerate Paytm, became UN Environment's Patron for Clean Air. Sharma, who took on his new role at the Environment Assembly, will elevate

UN Environment's work to combat air pollution around the globe.

British adventurer and presenter **Ben Fogle** became UN Environment's new Patron of Wilderness. Fogle will use his new role to highlight the pressures and impacts on Earth's wildest corners.

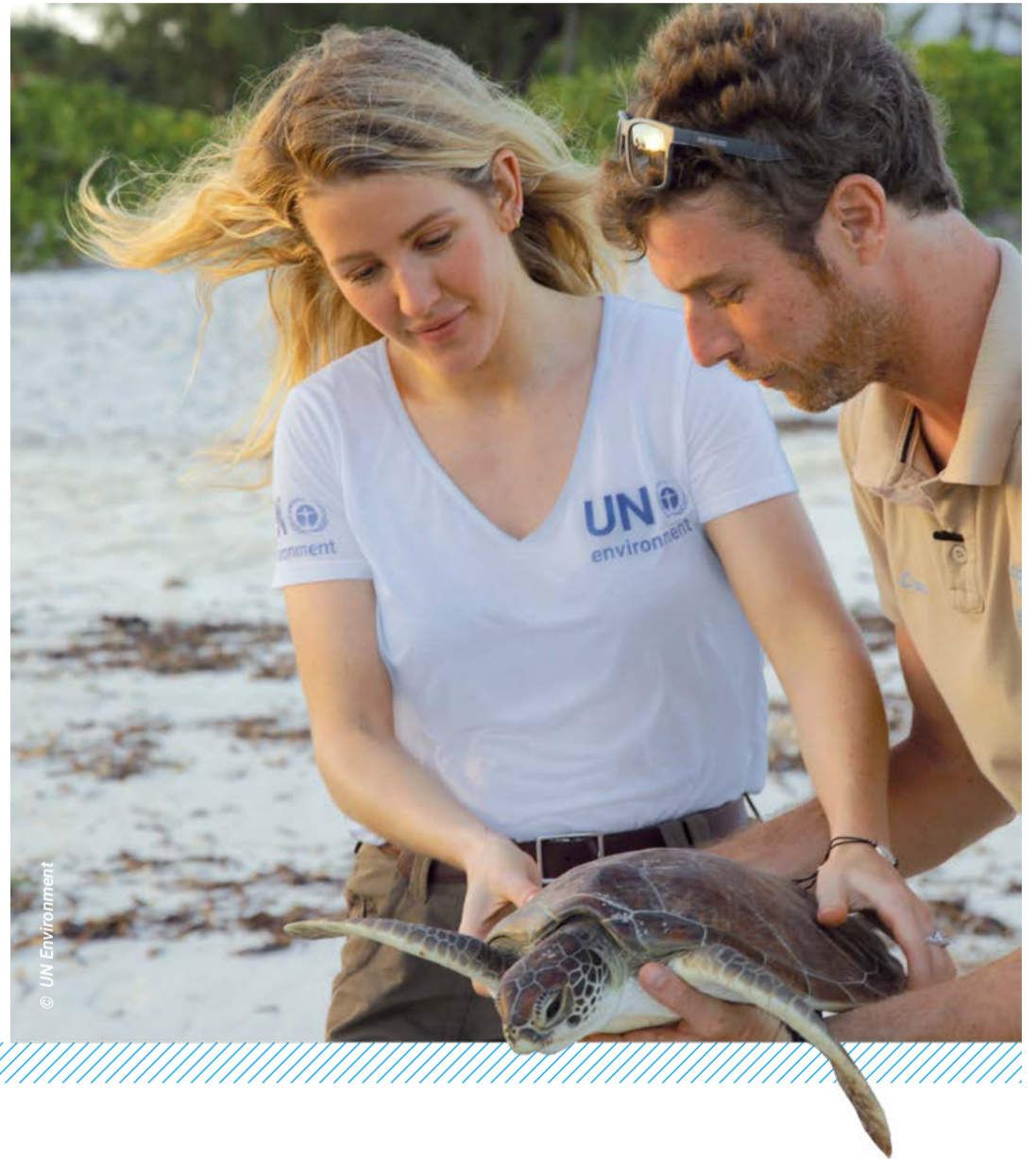
Former Miss Asia Pacific, actor, producer, entrepreneur and environmentalist **Dia Mirza** became UN Environment's Goodwill Ambassador for India. In her new role, Mirza co-hosted the Environment Assembly Gala Dinner. As an Ambassador, she plans to continue her work to promote solutions to environmental issues in India and around the world.

Actor **Adrian Grenier** became UN Environment's new Goodwill Ambassador for North America. Through his Lonely Whale Foundation, Grenier is an important advocate for reducing single-use plastic and promoting supply chain innovation.

Chinese actor and producer **Li Chen** became UN Environment's Goodwill Ambassador for China. Chen aims to build partnerships and raise awareness on environment and health issues, including air pollution in China.

Russian adventurer **Fyodor Konyukhov** became UN Environment's Goodwill Ambassador for Russia, with a focus on tackling pollution in Russia and beyond.

*UN Environment Goodwill Ambassador Ellie Goulding helps Casper van de Geer from Local Ocean Trust release a sea turtle back into the ocean during her visit to the Kenyan coast in December. The animal had been turned in by a fisherman, who had inadvertently trapped it in his net.*



# Joining forces with forward-thinking partners



*UN Environment partnered with Chinese company Mobike to organize an awareness-raising bike ride through downtown Nairobi ahead of the third UN Environment Assembly*

Working hand-in-hand with key partners enables UN Environment to reach new audiences and multiply our efforts to protect the planet and ensure sustainable prosperity for all.

## Civil society

Seventy-one civil society organizations became accredited to UN Environment in 2017, raising the total number of accredited organizations to 416 as of the end of the year.

As accredited organizations, these groups had the opportunity to actively engage with Member States and provide their professional expertise in the run-up to the third Environment Assembly. Submissions from civil society helped to inform the Ministerial Declaration, relevant resolutions and in particular the Executive Director's Report on Pollution.

UN Environment's partnerships with foundations, in particular, increased considerably in 2017. Several of these new partners provided funding that enabled civil society representatives, particularly from developing countries, to prepare for and participate in the third Environment Assembly.

## Business

In 2017, UN Environment signed more than 20 memorandums of understanding with key private sector partners, including leading businesses in industries such as lighting, telecommunications, global finance, social media, materials science and data management.

The year also saw the announcement of groundbreaking new initiatives with business partners. At the World Economic Forum in January, UN Environment and Ant Financial, one of China's biggest financial technology companies, launched the Green Digital Finance Alliance. The initiative aims to harness digital technologies to catalyse finance for global environmental challenges.

In October, UN Environment and Rabobank announced the creation of a \$1-billion-dollar facility to finance sustainable agriculture using a combination of public and private funding. And in December, UN Environment and BNP Paribas signed a milestone agreement to establish a network of Sustainable Finance Facilities, collaborative partnerships to raise development capital to drive sustainable economic growth in emerging economies.

# Calling the world to action

UN Environment's campaigns inform and inspire people around the globe to act on behalf of the planet.



**Breathe Life**  
www.breathelife2030.org

**BREATHE LIFE**

Air pollution contributes to more than 6 million deaths every year, making it the single biggest environmental health risk of our time. The Breathe Life campaign, which UN Environment runs alongside the World Health Organization and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, aims to partner with cities around the world to encourage them to take action to clean up the air we breathe by 2030. In 2017, Oslo, London and Washington, DC were among the two dozen cities and regions that signed on and set ambitious goals for air quality. In total, BreatheLife cities have committed to more than 60 actions to reduce air pollution, improving the environment and health of 20 million people around the world.



**Clean Seas**  
www.cleanseas.org

**clean seas**  
Turn the tide on plastic

With more than 8 million tons of plastic entering the oceans every year, our oceans could contain more plastic than fish by 2050. Launched in February 2017, the Clean Seas campaign is the UN's most ambitious effort yet to tackle marine pollution. More than 30 governments have already joined the campaign and committed to specific measures to tackle marine plastic pollution. Clean Seas has also secured major partnerships with key players such as DELL and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and is working to establish an industry-wide working group to reduce plastic pollution.

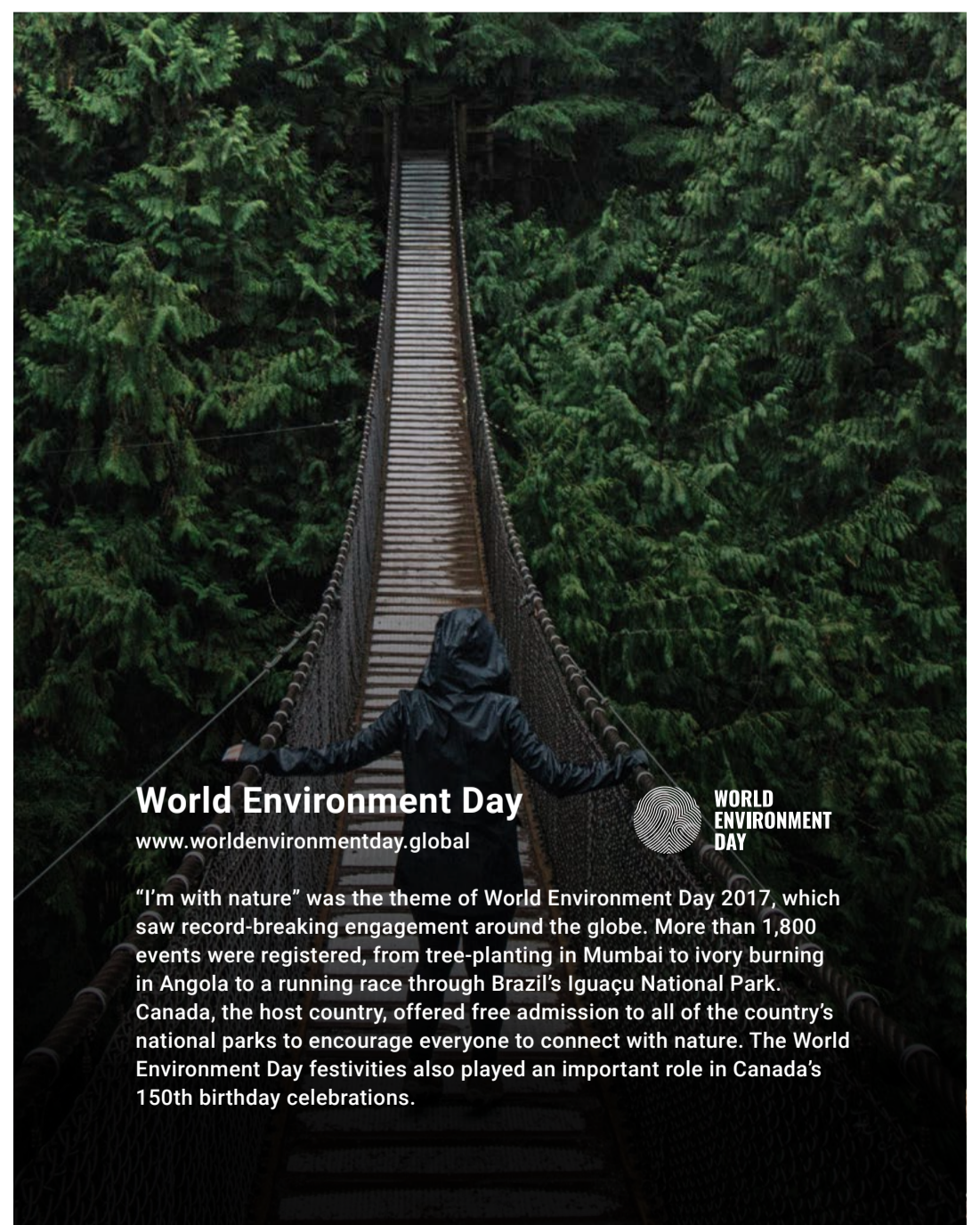
© Galatée films



**Wild for Life**  
www.wildfor.life

**WILD FOR LIFE**

The illegal trade in wildlife is driving species such as elephants, rhinos, tigers, helmeted hornbills and pangolins to the brink of extinction. The Wild for Life campaign aims to mobilize individuals, businesses and governments around the world to use their sphere of influence to help end the illegal trade in wildlife products. In 2017, the campaign reached more than 1.2 billion people through some 4.5 million interactions on social media. Several species in the campaign have received greater protection through international regulations. The campaign was awarded the prestigious 2017 People's Voice Webby Award for best green website.



**World Environment Day**  
www.worldenvironmentday.global

**WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY**

"I'm with nature" was the theme of World Environment Day 2017, which saw record-breaking engagement around the globe. More than 1,800 events were registered, from tree-planting in Mumbai to ivory burning in Angola to a running race through Brazil's Iguazu National Park. Canada, the host country, offered free admission to all of the country's national parks to encourage everyone to connect with nature. The World Environment Day festivities also played an important role in Canada's 150th birthday celebrations.



© Jason Cooper

# Highlights from the year

## Minamata Convention comes into force

The Minamata Convention on Mercury – the first new global environmental health treaty in nearly a decade – came into force in August. The convention commits its signatories to tackling the harmful effects of mercury, which has been used in mining, dentistry and lighting, among other industries. Signed by 128 countries, the convention takes its name from Minamata, Japan, the site of the most severe mercury poisoning disaster in history.

## G7 embraces sustainable finance

UN Environment was at the table when environment ministers from the world's seven richest countries met to discuss their priorities for the years ahead. At their annual summit in June, the ministers declared sustainable financing "fundamental" to achieving global climate and development goals. They also acknowledged UN Environment's contributions on green finance, and pledged – in their five-year roadmap on resource efficiency – to fully participate in the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, which UN Environment hosts.

## Environment Assembly delivers a win for the planet

Over 4,000 heads of state, ministers, business leaders, UN officials, civil society representatives, activists and celebrities came together for the third UN Environment Assembly, which was held in Nairobi from 4-6 December under the overarching theme of pollution. By the time the Assembly closed, delegates had passed 13 resolutions, three decisions and, for the first time, a ministerial declaration. UN Environment's #BeatPollution campaign presented to the Assembly nearly 2.5 million individual commitments to clean up the planet.

## Record number of UN entities become climate neutral

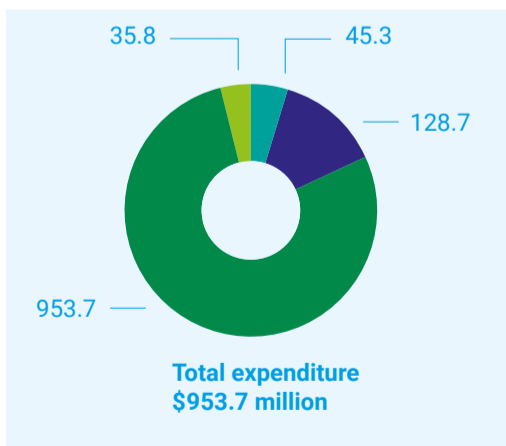
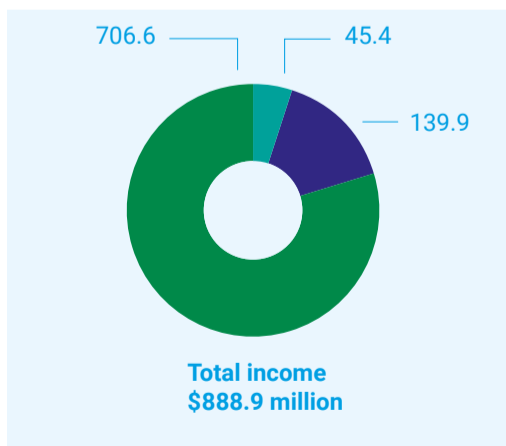
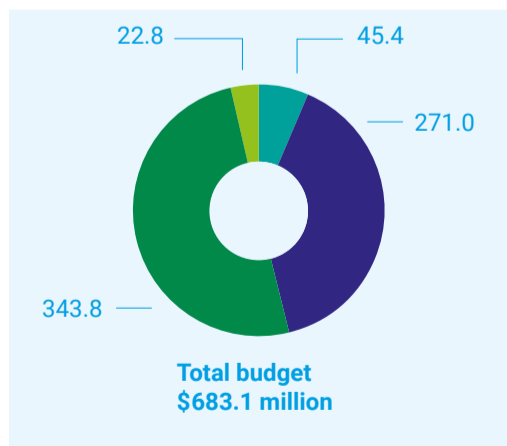
According to the 2017 edition of the *Greening the Blue Report*, a record number of United Nations entities – 39 – have now become climate neutral, thanks to a mix of emissions reductions and carbon credit purchases. The report also noted an uptick in recycling across the UN system, with 30 per cent of all waste now being recycled, reused, recovered or composted. The progress comes ten years after the adoption of the UN's Climate Neutral Strategy, which called on UN Environment's Executive Director, as chair of the UN's Environment Management Group, to support the shift towards more sustainable practices across the UN system.

## Ozone Convention celebrates 30 years

The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the first treaty to have been ratified by every nation on Earth, celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2017. With the ozone hole already on its way to recovery, parties to the Protocol are targeting hydrofluorocarbons, a group of chemicals that are powerful catalysts of climate change. In 2017, more than 20 Parties ratified the Kigali Amendment, which tackles hydrofluorocarbons, reaching the threshold required for the Amendment to take effect on 1 January 2019.

# A snapshot of our finances

\* 2016 - 2017 financial status in USD millions  
\* Data extracted on 15 January 2018



● Regular Budget ● Environment Fund ● Earmarked Contributions ● Programme Support Cost

## top 5

### CONTRIBUTORS TO THE ENVIRONMENT FUND

1. Germany \$8.3
2. France \$7.6
3. Netherlands \$6.4
4. United States \$6
5. Sweden \$4.9

\* in USD millions

### CONTRIBUTORS TO EARMARKED FUNDING

1. Global Environment Facility \$138.1
2. European Commission \$29.9
3. Green Climate Fund \$24.6
4. Germany \$23.1
5. Norway \$9.1

## MORE INFORMATION



We hope you enjoy these highlights of our work in 2017. For more details, please visit our combined Annual Report and Programme Performance Report online.  
[unenvironment.org/annualreport](http://unenvironment.org/annualreport)

\* All dollar (\$) amounts refer to US dollars.  
\* The term 'one billion' in this report refers to one thousand million.  
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