

The United Nations Environment Programme's sixth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) is the most comprehensive report on the global environment since 2012. Its accompanying Technical Summary shows that the environmental situation globally is deteriorating with increasingly negative effects for human health and well-being.

A Healthy Planet Supports Healthy People

- GEO-6 shows that a healthy environment is both a necessity and a foundation for economic prosperity, human health and wellbeing. It addresses the main challenge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: that no one should be left behind, and that all should live healthy, fulfilling lives for the full benefit of all, for both present and future generations.
- The healthy planet needed to attain sustainable development is put at risk by production and consumption patterns which lead to increased use of resources and associated environmental destruction and which, when combined with growing population, are worsening planetary health. This comes with increasingly serious consequences, in particular for poorer people and regions.
- The world is not on track to achieve the environmental component of the Sustainable Development Goals or other internationally agreed environmental goals by 2030. It is also not on track to deliver long-term sustainability by 2050. Urgent action and strengthened international cooperation are needed to restore and safeguard planetary and human health.



An Increasingly Unhealthy Planet Affects Everyone's Health

- Air pollution, currently the cause of between 6 and 7 million untimely deaths per year, is projected to continue to have significant harmful effects on health, and still cause between 4.5 million and 7 million untimely deaths annually by 2050.
- Biodiversity loss from land-use change, habitat destruction, overexploitation and illegal wildlife trade, pollution and climate change is driving a mass eradication of species, which compromises Earth's natural integrity and its capacity to meet human needs.
- Marine plastic litter, including microplastics, occurs at all levels of the marine environment and appears in fisheries and shellfish at alarming

levels and frequency. The long-term adverse impact of marine microplastics on the marine system is not yet known, nor that on human health through the consumption of fish and marine products.

- Land degradation is an increasing threat for human well-being and ecosystems, especially for those in rural areas who are most dependent on land. Land degradation hotspots cover approximately 29 per cent of land globally, where some 3.2 billion people reside.
- Approximately 1.4 million people die annually from preventable diseases, such as diarrhoea and intestinal parasites, that are associated with polluted drinking water and inadequate hygiene.
- Antibiotic-resistant infections are projected to become a major cause of death worldwide by 2050. Affordable, widely available wastewater treatment technologies to remove antibiotic residues could have huge benefits for all countries. Even greater efforts are needed to control mismanagement of antibacterial drugs at source, in both human and agricultural use.
- The harmful impact of improper use of pesticides, heavy metals, plastics and other substances are of significant concern, as such compounds appear in alarmingly high levels in our food supply. They primarily affect vulnerable members of society, such as infants, who are exposed to high levels of chemicals. The impact of neurotoxins and endocrine-disrupting chemicals is potentially multigenerational.

Despite some Success Stories, Policy Measures Lag Behind

- Current environmental policy alone is not enough to address those challenges. Urgent cross-sectoral policy action, through a whole-of-society approach, is needed to address the challenges of sustainable development.
- Achieving internationally agreed environmental goals on pollution control, clean-up and efficiency improvements is crucial, yet alone is insufficient to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Transformative change is needed to enable and combine long term

strategic and integrated policymaking while building bottom up social, cultural, institutional and technological innovation.

- The key features of effective environmental policies for sustainable development include integrated objectives, science-based targets, economic instruments, regulations and robust international cooperation.



A Healthy Planet and Healthy People are Synergetic: Achieving Transformative Change

- Transformative change that will enable us to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and other internationally agreed targets includes a tripling of the current rate of carbon reduction as we head towards 2050, a 50 per cent increase in food production and the adoption of healthy and sustainable diets across all global regions.
- The transformative changes needed to achieve sustainable development will be most successful when they are just, respect gender equality, recognize that there will be different impacts on men, women, children and the elderly, and take into account inherent societal risks.
- Sustainable outcomes can best be achieved by combining objectives for resource-use efficiency, with ecosystem-based management and improved human health, drawing on scientific, indigenous, and local knowledge.

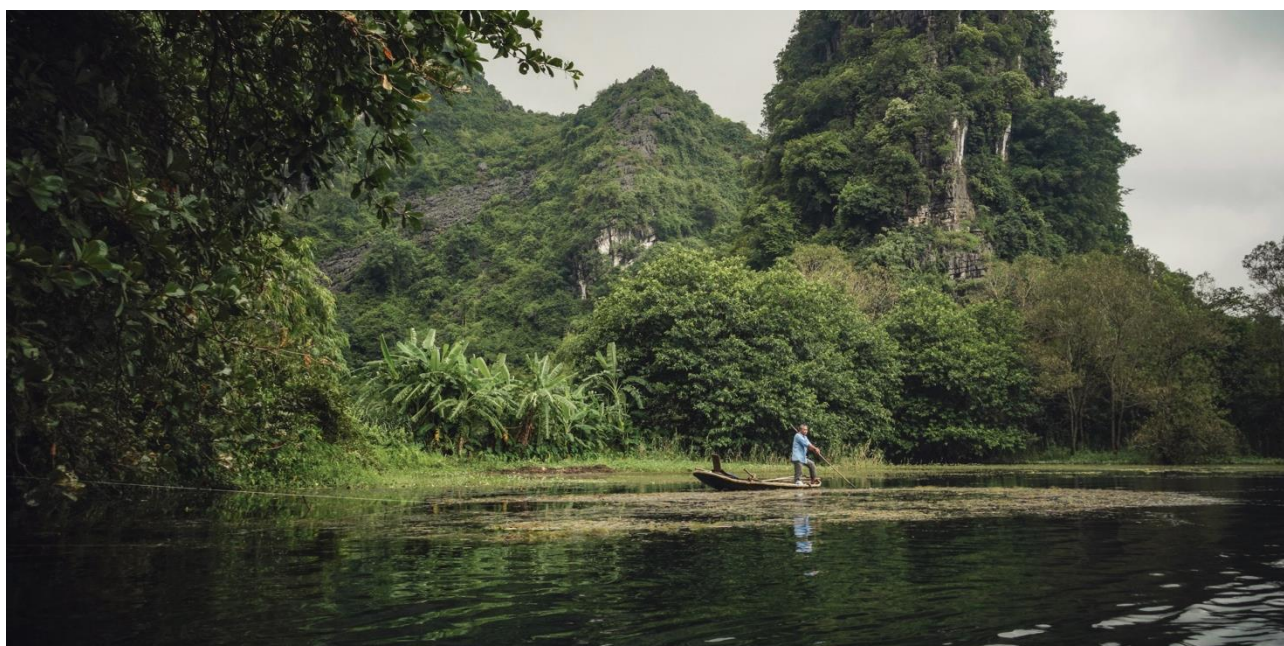
- Food, energy and transport systems, urban planning and chemical production are primary examples of systems of production and consumption that need innovative, effective and integrated policies.
- Innovations are part of the solution but can also create new risks and have a negative environmental impact. Where relevant scientific evidence is insufficient to inform decision-making, precautionary approaches can reduce threats of serious or irreversible damage.
- Agreement on desired pathways for transformative change under conditions of uncertainty can be fostered by coalitions between Governments, businesses, researchers and civil society.
- Sustainable development is more likely to be achieved through new modes of governance and adaptive management that give greater priority to the environmental component of the Sustainable Development Goals, while promoting gender equality and education for sustainable production and consumption.

Data and Knowledge for a Healthy Planet

- Data from satellites, combined with monitoring on the ground, can enable quicker actions across the world, in response to extreme weather events, for example. Widening access to data,

information and knowledge and improving the infrastructure and capacity to utilize that knowledge will enable those data to be put to the most effective use.

- More investment in indicators that combine different data sources and clearly define gender and inequality aspects will facilitate better-designed policy interventions and their evaluation.
- Further developments are needed in environmental and natural resource accounting to ensure that environmental costs are integrated into economic decision-making for sustainability.
- Utilizing the ongoing data and knowledge revolution and ensuring the accuracy and validity of those data to support sustainable development, combined with international cooperation, could transform capacities to address challenges and accelerate progress towards sustainable development.
- Most important of all is the need to take bold, urgent, sustained, inclusive and transformative action that integrates environmental, economic and social activity to set society on the pathway to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, multilateral environmental agreements, internationally agreed environmental goals and other science-based targets.



Interested in getting involved? Contact the **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration team** at **UnDecade@un.org** or visit our website **decadeonrestoration.org** and spread the word.

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