

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Facts about the organisation

Mandate and direction of operations

According to its mandate UNEP is to be the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda. The organisation is to promote the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serve as an authoritative advocate for the global environment. The directions of its operations include:

- analysing the state of the global environment and global and regional trends, providing policy advice and early warning information on environmental threats and catalysing and promoting international cooperation;
- furthering the development of international environmental law aiming at sustainable development;
- strengthening the coordination of environmental activities in the United Nations system, as well as its role as an implementing agency of the Global Environment Facility (GEF);
- providing policy and advisory services in key areas of institution-building to governments and other relevant institutions.

Under UNEP's Medium-term Strategy for 2010–2013, which has already begun to be implemented,

UNEP is to focus in the next few years on the following thematic priorities: climate change, disasters and conflicts, ecosystem management, environmental governance, harmful substances and hazardous waste, and resource efficiency – sustainable consumption and production.

Governance, organisation and Swedish participation

UNEP reports to the UN General Assembly through the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The General Assembly elects the Governing Council, which consists of representatives of 58 countries, for a four-year term. The Bureau, which has 5 members – one from each region, is elected every other year at the session of the Governing Council. The Governing Council meets every second year and a special session is held every other year. The regular Governing Council session adopts the work programme and budget for the coming two-year period. Part of the Governing Council Session consists of a policy forum for the world's environment ministers, the Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF).

Background to the Swedish assessments

In April 2007 Sweden adopted its first strategy for multilateral development cooperation. One of the strategy's recommendations is to make regular structured assessments of the multilateral organisations receiving Swedish support. The strategy's key concepts – relevance and effectiveness – are intended to guide the assessment of each organisation.

In spring 2008 assessments of multilateral organisations were conducted jointly by the Government Offices, Sida and Swedish embassies in developing countries. These assessments will be used as one of several inputs for budget decisions, the preparation of organisation strategies and policy dialogues. The main intention is for them to increase knowledge of the individual organisations and form a basis for following the development of each organisation. However, the assessments do not claim to be comprehensive. Nor should comparisons be made between organisations on the basis of this information. The forms for these assessments are being developed and routines for what information is to be gathered, assessed and reported are still being tested.



At UNEP headquarters in Nairobi the Executive Director and the Secretariat have continuous consultations with representatives of all member states with a representation in Kenya in the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the CPR. More informal consultations are also held in a number of working groups appointed by the CPR, in which Sweden normally participates and contributes very actively.

The are continuous bilateral and Nordic consultations with the UNEP Secretariat.

In addition to its headquarters in Nairobi, UNEP has 6 regional offices. It also has 8 liaison offices in important organisations and capitals. It has a total of approx. 950 employees.

Financial information

UNEP's estimated income for its work programme for 2008–2009 is USD 152 million. It also receives considerable earmarked support: for the biennium 2005–2006 core budget support accounted for around 38 per cent (approx. USD 120 million) of funding and earmarked contributions for around 62 per cent (approx. USD 195 million). In addition, UNEP implements projects funded by the GEF.

Swedish contributions	2005	2006	2007
Total paid in Swedish contributions, SEK million	85	51	95
- of which contributions from the Government Offices, SEK million	48	32	53
- of which multilateral/ bilateral support from Sida SEK million	37	19	42

In recent years, earmarked support of varying size – approx. SEK 50 million in 2007 – has been paid by the MFA, the Ministry of the Environment, Sida, the Swedish Chemicals Agency, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and the Swedish International Biodiversity Programme (SwedBio). A comparison of aggregate core budget support from 1992 to 2006 shows that Sweden is the seventh largest donor.

All of the Swedish support of USD 15 million provided in 2007 met OECD/DAC aid criteria apart from USD 650 000, approx. SEK 4 million.

Assessment

Relevance in relation to Swedish development objectives

UNEP is a very relevant organisation for Swedish development cooperation. Its relevance is increasing in view of the prominent position of environmental issues in broader UN reform work, as well as the

rising global interest in and understanding of the importance of global environmental issues. In addition to the environment, UNEP is highly engaged in several central components of Sweden's policy for global development, even though these areas do not figure as explicit objectives in UNEP's overall policy documents. Human rights are an integral part of UNEP's policies and programmes. UNEP contributes to good institutional development and effective structures for environmental management, which contribute to democracy and good governance. Gender equality is an overall priority in UNEP and is integrated in all policies and programmes. UNEP's watchword is 'Environment for Development' – environment as a driver of and pre-condition for sustainable economic development. UNEP is working together with UNDP to link poverty reduction and the environment, and the organisation is a leader in sustainable production and the environment. UNEP also does work on how the environment influences security and conflict risks.

Internal effectiveness

UNEP is assessed as having relatively good internal effectiveness. Extensive internal reforms are under way to improve UNEP's internal and external effectiveness. To outside observers the reforms seem to be progressing rapidly and a good foundation has already been laid for more results-based work, including through the Strategic Plan. Nevertheless this is a comprehensive, long-term process, and it will take time for the effects of the reforms to be fully apparent.

In the area of structural factors UNEP has come a long way. However, signals from inside the organisation suggest that the high ambitions of UNEP leadership have difficulty in making an impact on all parts of the organisation. The reforms have gained pace with regard to methods for results-based management, but it is still too early to assess the outcome in several areas concerning monitoring and the reporting of results.

One clear difference now compared with a few years ago is how UNEP is viewed by Swedish authorities. Over and above the Government Offices, the main authorities cooperating with UNEP are Sida, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, the Swedish Chemicals Agency and the Swedish International Biodiversity Programme, and they all have a positive or very positive picture of UNEP. Several draw attention to the change that has already taken place and are satisfied with reporting on how the work is being conducted. However, they would like to see more and better qualitative analyses in reporting and monitoring.

External effectiveness

UNEP's external effectiveness is assessed as relatively good, but with the reservation that UNEP is a mainly

normative organisation so that in some respects different metrics have to be used to measure external effectiveness than for operational organisations. UNEP has no field offices and its own field operations are limited, which Sweden sees as being in line with its mandate. UNEP does not provide any loans or grants, working instead in a catalytic and advisory role in close cooperation with other multilateral organisations and institutions with a field presence. One good example is UNEP's cooperation with UNDP to promote the integration of environmental considerations in national development strategies and to assist in capacity-building and institutional development.

UNEP's operations are largely governed by the objectives set up in the organisation's programme of work. UNEP's Programme Performance Report shows a continued increase in the implementation rate of its programme of work, 94 per cent in the period 2006–2007, and a decrease in deviations from the work programme. A very large proportion of targets set have been achieved or exceeded, a very small proportion of targets have not been achieved. UNEP's annual project evaluation shows that, overall, delivery on targets is satisfactory and the results are of good quality. However, the evaluations show that many projects do not have enough financial and staff resources, and that too many projects have unrealistic ambitions. In comparison with other implementing agencies, the GEF Evaluation Office makes a somewhat poorer assessment of UNEP's GEF projects – only 67 per cent were rated as 'moderately satisfactory'.

UNEP participates in harmonisation and coordination processes through the UN Environmental Management Groups, the UN Development Group and One UN, work to increase UN coordination at country level and other fora. UNEP is a transparent organisation that shows great interest in cooperating and exchanging information with other actors.

Trends

Extensive internal reforms are under way to improve UNEP's internal and external effectiveness. One obstacle to the reforms is UNEP's severely limited resources. For example, staff training in results-based management and similar matters requires more resources, and specifically resources that are not earmarked for special policy issues.

However, one important sign that the reforms are beginning to bear fruit and that confidence in UNEP is growing is that several countries are now increasing their contributions. The trend is also for more and more countries to give a larger share of their support to the Environmental Fund instead of to earmarked action. UNEP's new resource mobilisation strategy is very promising since it means that all contributions over and above core budget support will be reserved for the priority areas established in the Strategic Plan.

There is increasing support in the international community for a stronger UNEP with more resources. The Secretary-General's High-Level Panel, which is working for greater coherence in the UN system, has proposed strengthening the role of UNEP. This is a central aspect of the process that is now under way to strengthen the international environmental architecture. The Executive Director has now once again increased efforts to revitalise the UN Environment Management Group as a forum for better coordination of and coherence in the growing volume of environmental work being done by the UN. Cooperation with other UN agencies and the World Bank has expanded and improved markedly in recent years.



REGERINGSKANSLIET

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