

Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

Twenty-ninth session

Geneva, 6–8 November 2024

Item 9 of the provisional agenda

Regional advisory services and collaboration activities

Information paper No. 10

7 October 2024

Issue-Based Coalition on Environment and Climate Change

Note by the secretariat, UNEP and UNESCO, co-leads of the Coalition

Summary

This informal paper provides information to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Committee on Environmental Policy about environmental and climate-related activities of the United Nations system in Europe and Central Asia carried out by a coalition of United Nations entities.

The Committee might wish to take note of this information.

I. Introduction

1. The establishment of the United Nations Inter-Agency Issue-Based Coalition on Environment and Climate Change in Europe and Central Asia region (IBC) was first proposed at the Regional UN System meeting in May 2019. That meeting recognized that the region was facing numerous environmental challenges – such as the unsustainable use of natural resources, vulnerability to climate-induced natural hazards and the impacts of climate change, air pollution, biodiversity and habitat loss and the need for better transboundary cooperation – and decided to explore the opportunities to establish an IBC on environment and climate change.
2. Terms of reference for the IBC were presented to the Regional UN System meeting in December 2019 by the co-leads: UNECE, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The meeting agreed that the IBC would be active as of January 2020.
3. The IBC provides a regional platform for UN agencies to:
 - (a) Promote coordinated support to all Member States in Europe and Central Asia in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on climate change and other relevant multilateral environmental Agreements;
 - (b) Support United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) in the Europe and Central Asia region on environmental and climate change issues.
4. The Coalition is open to all UN agencies, funds and programmes. The current members are FAO, ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UN Habitat, UN Women, UNDP, UNDRR, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFCCC, UNICEF, UNOPS, WFP, WHO and WMO. It is supported by the Regional Development Coordination Office.
5. A website¹ makes available materials developed, with links to video recordings of many thematic webinars. Products and events are listed in annex to this document.
6. In total, the UN System in Europe and Central Asia region has set up seven Issue-based Coalitions, and two other thematic groups clustered around cross-cutting policy issues. These are overseen by the Regional Collaborative Platform for Europe and Central Asia (RCP).

¹ <https://uneuropecentralasia.org/en/ibc-environmental-coalition>

II. Main areas of activity

7. The activities of the IBC are organized under three pillars and are undertaken in response to requests by UNCTs, Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) or Resident Coordinators (RCs) themselves in UN programme countries, or the RCP.

Pillar 1: Strengthening environmental and climate change governance and implementing the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda

8. The IBC aims to build political momentum and advocate for enhanced and accelerated policy action to implement the environmental and climate change dimension of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda and enhance the ambition of the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) further to the Paris Agreement, in addition to advocating for environmental and climate change issues at the regional level, including through relevant regional intergovernmental processes, and with regional institutions such as the European Commission and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

9. The IBC focuses on working with UNCTs to strengthen national institutions responsible for environmental and climate change policy and governance, as well as to strengthen country capacities to accede to, implement and report on multilateral environmental and climate change agreements. In particular, the IBC:

- While using existing environmental and climate change processes and in collaboration with regional institutions, advocates at the regional level for strengthened and accelerated policy action and transition pathways to address regional priorities, such as enhanced ambition for climate change mitigation and adaptation, nature-based solutions, circular economy, just transitions and decent work, decarbonization and net-zero strategies, sustainable consumption and production, sustainable infrastructure and both sectoral and cross-sectoral approaches.
- Identifies key institutional and governance challenges for the environment and climate change within the programme countries, such as inter-institutional cooperation, enhancement of legal and regulatory frameworks, stakeholder engagement and human rights, and exchange good practice principles and approaches with the UNCTs. Also, links with intergovernmental processes, such as the Generation Equality Action Coalitions (“Feminist action for climate justice”) and the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan, which can serve as accountability tools.
- Assists UNCTs in strengthening country capacities to accede to, implement and report on global and regional multilateral environmental and climate change agreements.
- Examines environmental and climate risks and provides guidance on preparedness, prevention and risk reduction measures.

Pillar 2: Supporting countries in the environmental and climate change dimension of UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and Common Country Analysis (CCA) processes

10. The IBC aims to build on many other parallel supporting processes, such as UN custodian agencies for environment-, weather-, water-, climate change- and health and well-being related global indicator reporting to UN Statistical Division, the Secretary General’s annual report, the Global Sustainable Development Report, Sendai Framework reporting, UNEP’s Global Environment Outlook, the work of the human rights treaty-bodies, the Universal Periodic Review and the special procedures mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, the Shared Environmental Information System, other issue-based coalitions, Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS), environmental performance reviews and state-of-the-environment reports. In particular, the IBC:

- Creates a roadmap and schedule of various events and critical dates in country led UNSDCF processes to enable the pro-active involvement of the IBC to support UNCTs in programme countries.
- Applies a systematic approach to engage and inform the development and content of the CCAs, using the CCA companion to the UNSDCF Guidance, while recognizing the specific positions and roles of men and women and the importance of not perpetuating gender inequalities, and that CCAs and UNSDCFs should be based on circularity, equality and inter-generational solidarity and include systemic risk identification, assessment and reduction, when needed.

- Works with UNCTs to ensure environmental and climate change priorities are properly identified and presented in the CCAs for the programme countries in the region, with an initial focus on the countries implementing UNSDCF processes in 2020.
- Develops and maintains an IBC menu of services for UNCTs and other stakeholders, related to the environmental and climate change dimension of SDGs, across the UN system, based on the demands of RCs and UNCTs and on the capacities of the IBC members.

Pillar 3: Monitoring and reporting on the environmental and climate change dimension of SDGs

11. The IBC aims to share and streamline scientific data and information and existing tools across the UN family, with a focus on the implementation of the environmental and climate change dimension of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in Europe and Central Asia (while fully acknowledging the integrated nature of environment, social, health, economic and governance aspects).

12. This work includes reporting and follow-up (of data, statistics, indicators and Voluntary National Reports), which are critical inputs to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, with the purpose of supporting the regional UN system in building national capacity in countries for delivering on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. In particular, the IBC:

- Informs UNCTs preparing the CCAs about, and shares with them, relevant environmental and climate change data, statistics, existing tools and assessments, at both the national level and through global, regional and thematic assessments.
- Advises on what environment- and climate change-related knowledge products should be made available on the UN Regional Knowledge Management Hub 3 and ensures close cooperation with the Regional UN Coordination Group on Data and Statistics and the Issue-based Coalition on Gender Equality, among others, in the creation of new knowledge.

III. Themes

13. To date, the major themes have been:

- Mainstreaming of environment and climate change into UNSDCFs and CCAs, including guidance and training events
- Green transitions, including a five-part training series, but also within more targeted webinars
- Transboundary water cooperation and reviewing water-related activities in subregions
- Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution (air)
- Disaster risk reduction
- Links with social issues such as leaving no one behind, a just transition and education
- Greening the post-pandemic recovery
- Peer-learning roundtables on the above themes during the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

IV. Resources

14. The IBC is resourced by concerned staff taking on additional tasks, i.e. within existing resources and as an in-kind contribution.

15. Occasionally, members of the Coalition finance consultants to undertake studies or travel. In UNECE, this has been possible with targeted funding from the Regular Programme on Technical Cooperation, for example, of subregional reviews of UN initiatives on water cooperation and regional training webinars on the mainstreaming guidance and green transitions. In UNEP, this has been possible with core funding for Enhancing capacity of the RCOs and UNCTs, for example, on mainstreaming of biodiversity into CCAs and UNSDCFs across the region. In UNESCO, this has been possible through extrabudgetary funds.

Annexes

List of main, published document products

Type	Title	Release date
Policy brief	Climate change messages 2023	12/2023
Report	Executive Meeting Summary – November 2023 regional workshop IBC on Environment and Climate Change	11/2023
Report	Mapping of water-related activities of UN agencies implemented in Central Asia	8/2023
Information note	Overview of Green Transitions Training Programme	2/2023
Policy brief	The importance of a continued focus on climate action in support of UNCT engagement with Governments in Europe and Central Asia	10/2022
Policy brief	Together for warm homes and clean air	10/2022
Information note	Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation for Risk-informed and Climate-smart Development	10/2021
Guidelines	Guidance on integrating the Environment and Climate Change in Processes for United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks	7/2021
Information note	Gap Analysis on Integrating the Environment and Climate Change in Processes for United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks	7/2021
Report	Compendium of measures to green the post-pandemic recovery	1/2021
Guidelines	Summary Recommendations by the IBC on Environment and Climate Change on COVID-19 Recovery	8/2020
Information note	Queries to IBC on Environment and Climate Change Regarding COVID-19 Impact on the Environment	6/2020

List of events (online, except once where indicated)

Type	Title	Date
Multiple	Webinar on Incorporating Global Environment and Climate Change Agendas at The National Level	10 September 2024
Multiple	Webinar on climate-migration nexus with a focus on just and green transition (Turkmenistan UN Country Team)	4 July 2024
Membership meeting	Fifteenth meeting of the IBC on Environment and Climate Change	28 May 2024
Multiple	Webinar on Strengthening integration and coherence across the UNSDCF in Tajikistan	14 May 2024
Green transitions	Webinar on Just transitions from mining and fossil fuels to a green economy in Kazakhstan	16 April 2024
Forestry	Input to thematic workshop on sustainable forest management, Republic of Moldova	11 April 2024
Climate; Biodiversity	Peer-learning round table on SDG 13, Regional Forum on Sustainable Development – Solving the Rubik’s cube of the planetary crisis: lining up policy solutions for climate risks and biodiversity loss	13 March 2024
Membership meeting	Fourteenth meeting of the IBC on Environment and Climate Change	14 February 2024

Type	Title	Date
Membership meeting	Thirteenth meeting of the IBC on Environment and Climate Change	21 November 2023
Multiple	Issue-based Coalition on Environment and Climate Change Workshop 2023 – Deep dive into three thematic priorities: climate change, green and just transition and biodiversity (in-person, Istanbul)	12–14 September 2023
Biodiversity	Webinar on together for the nature-positive transition: Incorporating the Global Biodiversity Framework into UNSDCF processes	27 June 2023
Multiple	Webinar on disability-inclusive climate change adaptation and DRR materials, and innovative “green schools” solutions (Turkmenistan)	21 June 2023
Multiple	Introductory webinar on the nexus of climate action and leaving no one behind (Georgia)	5 June 2023
Membership meeting	Twelfth meeting of the IBC on Environment and Climate Change	31 May 2023
Water	Informal discussion on water cooperation in Central Asia	17 February 2023
Green transitions	Training Programme on Green Transitions, workshop 5: Enabling policies and strategic frameworks	29 November 2022
Membership meeting	Eleventh meeting of the IBC on Environment and Climate Change	22 November 2022
Green transitions	Training Programme on Green Transitions, workshop 4: Plastics	10 November 2022
Green transitions	Training Programme on Green Transitions, workshop 3: Circular Economy	27 October 2022
Green transitions	Training Programme on Green Transitions, workshop 2: Energy	18 October 2022
Green transitions	Training Programme on Green Transitions, workshop 1: Finance	22 September 2022
Membership meeting	Tenth meeting of the IBC on Environment and Climate Change	21 June 2022
Climate; Disasters	Side event to the 2022 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on “Partnerships to address Climate Change, Extreme Events and Disaster Risk Reduction towards Sustainable Development Goals”	7 April 2022
Biodiversity	Peer-learning round table during the 2022 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on “Action to protect and restore terrestrial ecosystems”	7 April 2022
Membership meeting	Ninth meeting of the IBC on Environment and Climate Change	8 March 2022
Mainstreaming	Training webinar on mainstreaming environment and climate change into UNSDCF processes – approaches and tools for mainstreaming (Eastern Europe & the Caucasus)	27 January 2022
Mainstreaming	Training webinar on mainstreaming environment and climate change into UNSDCF processes – approaches and tools for mainstreaming (South-Eastern Europe)	20 January 2022
Mainstreaming	Training webinar on mainstreaming environment and climate change into UNSDCF processes – approaches and tools for mainstreaming (Central Asia)	13 January 2022
Mainstreaming	Training webinar on mainstreaming environment and climate change into UNSDCF processes – mainstreaming entry points (all regions)	9 December 2021

Type	Title	Date
Membership meeting	Eighth meeting of the IBC on Environment and Climate Change	30 November 2021
Water	Webinar on preventing water conflicts through transboundary water cooperation	25 October 2021
Membership meeting	Seventh meeting of the IBC on Environment and Climate Change	21 September 2021
Mainstreaming	Launch of the mainstreaming “Guidance on Integrating the Environment and Climate Change in Processes for UNSDCFs”	1 July 2021
Membership meeting	Sixth meeting of the IBC on Environment and Climate Change	22 June 2021
Air	Webinar on “Air pollution from domestic heating in Serbia – impacts, challenges and solutions”	26 May 2021
Membership meeting	Fifth meeting of the IBC on Environment and Climate Change	11 February 2021
Pandemic	Issue of “Measures to green the post-pandemic recovery”	31 January 2021
Climate; Disasters	Issue of a “Review of Good Practices on Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation for Risk-informed and Climate-smart Development”	31 January 2021
Pandemic	Webinar on promoting measures to green the post-pandemic recovery	19 January 2021
Membership meeting	Fourth meeting of the IBC on Environment and Climate Change	6 November 2020
Membership meeting	Third meeting of the IBC on Environment and Climate Change	4 September 2020
Pandemic	Issue of “Summary recommendations by the Coalition on COVID-19 recovery”	20 August 2020
Water	Webinar on transboundary water cooperation, based on examples from Drin and Drina River basins	7 July 2020
Membership meeting	Second meeting of the IBC on Environment and Climate Change	17 June 2020
Introductory	Subregional meeting with Resident Coordinators and Country Teams in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Turkey	3 June 2020
Introductory	Subregional meeting with Resident Coordinators and Country Teams in South-Eastern Europe	28 May 2020
Water	Webinar on the World Water Development Report on Water and Climate Change	27 May 2020
Introductory	Subregional meeting with Resident Coordinators and Country Teams in Central Asia	12 May 2020
Membership meeting	First meeting of the IBC on Environment and Climate Change	21 April 2020
Introductory	Launch of the Coalition at a special session of the Regional United Nations System Meeting chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General	20 March 2020