



United Nations System-wide Earthwatch

A broad UN initiative to coordinate, harmonize and catalyze environmental observation activities among all UN agencies for integrated assessment purposes.

Background

The United Nations System-wide Earthwatch mechanism is a broad UN initiative to coordinate, harmonize and catalyze environmental observation activities among all UN agencies for integrated assessment purposes. Through Earthwatch, UN agencies work together on global environmental issues, by exchanging and sharing environmental data and information. UNEP provides the Earthwatch secretariat. Earthwatch was established at the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm and reinforced by the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro and its Agenda-21 chapter on "Information for Decision-Making".

UNEP introduced Earthwatch, as a means of coordinating and acting as a catalyst for all environmental monitoring and assessment activities throughout the entire UN system. The *raison d'être* was and remains to provide 'integrated' information gathered from across the UN system relevant for policy-making by building essential partnerships across the UN system with the scientific community, governments and NGOs.

In June 1994, The first inter-agency Earthwatch Working Party agreed on the following mission statement for Earthwatch: *"The mission of the UN system-wide Earthwatch is to coordinate, harmonize and integrate observing, assessment and reporting activities across the UN system in order to provide environmental and appropriate socio-economic information for national and international decision-making on sustainable development and for early warning of emerging problems requiring international action. This should include timely information on the pressures on, status of and trends in key global resources, variables and processes in both natural and human systems and on the response to problems in these areas."*

Objectives

Earthwatch coordination is a service UNEP provides to the entire United Nations system in accordance with UN General Assembly resolutions, Agenda 21 and decisions of the former Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). This includes co-task manager with UN DESA for chapter 40 of Agenda 21: "Information for decision-making".

The UN System-wide Earthwatch Coordination secretariat established by UNEP in Geneva provides a central point of contact and liaison.

Through the Earthwatch website and other means, Earthwatch facilitates access to programmatic and environmental information and pertinent data held by all parts of the UN system. The network of Earthwatch partners strengthens the working relationships among UN organizations and with the environmental Convention Secretariats and appropriate international activities of governments and non-governmental organizations. Earthwatch also provides an interface with international research and observation programmes concerning the global environment.

The screenshot shows the website interface for the United Nations System-wide Earthwatch. It features a top navigation bar with the organization's name and a search bar. A left sidebar contains a vertical menu of categories such as Assessments, Indicators, Observation, Data, Emerging Issues, News, and Environmental Issues. The main content area is titled "Freshwater" and includes sections for "EMERGING ISSUES" and "MAJOR ASSESSMENTS". Under "MAJOR ASSESSMENTS", there are links to "WWAP" (World Water Assessment Programme) reports, including the "World Water Development Report 2" (WWAP, 2006) and the "World Water Development Report" (WWAP, 2003). There are also links to "Water Security: A Preliminary Assessment of Policy Progress since Rio" (WWAP/WWDR, 2001) and "GIWA" (Global Inshore Waters Assessment) reports. The website layout is clean and professional, with a blue and white color scheme.

Earthwatch Partners

United Nations Organisations

- > Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- > Global Environment Facility (GEF)
- > HABITAT - United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)
- > International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
- > International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
- > International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
- > International Labour Organization (ILO)
- > International Maritime Organization (IMO)
- > International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- > International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)
- > Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO

- > **United Nations Secretariat:**
 - United Nations Cartographic Section (UN DPI)
 - United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA):
 - United Nations Division for Sustainable Development (UNSD)*
 - United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)*
 - United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW)*
 - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
 - United Nations Information Systems Coordination Committee (ISCC)
 - United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
 - UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit*
 - International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR)

- > United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- > United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
- > United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- > United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)
- > United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE)
- > United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN ECLAC)
- > United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP)
- > United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN ESCWA)
- > United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- > United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- > United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- > United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
- > United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)
- > United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (OOSA)
- > United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR)
- > United Nations University (UNU)

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- > World Bank (WB)
- > World Food Programme (WFP)
- > World Health Organization (WHO)
- > World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)
- > World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
- > World Trade Organization (WTO)

Inter-agency Programmes

- > Global Climate Observing System (GCOS)
- > Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS)
- > Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS)
- > Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP)
- > Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
- > Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS)

Conventions

- > Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes
- > Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- > Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)
- > Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident; Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident (IAEA)
- > Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)
- > Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping (IMO)
- > Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar)
- > Ozone Secretariat (Vienna Convention and Montreal Protocol)
- > Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure (PIC)
- > United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
- > United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (LOS)
- > United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- > Joint web site of the Biodiversity-related Conventions

Non-Governmental Organizations

- > Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE)

About GRID-Europe

UNEP/DEWA/GRID-Europe is one of UNEP's major centres for data and information management, with a unique, "value-adding" mandate in the handling of global and regional environmental data, which in turn support the environment assessment and early warning activities of UNEP and its partners. Located in the "Maison Internationale de l'Environnement" or "International Environment House" (MIE/IEH) in Geneva, GRID-Europe serves as the unique francophone centre for the global GRID network. DEWA/GRID-Europe is supported by a "Partnership Agreement" between UNEP, the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) and the University of Geneva.