

EPA and the United Nations Environment Program



The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) was created in 1972 following the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden. UNEP works within the UN family and with governmental and private organizations throughout the world coordinating global efforts to protect the environment. Its headquarters operation is located in Nairobi, Kenya.

EPA, the Department of State, and other federal agencies are represented on UNEP's Governing Council, which meets annually to set policy for the Program. EPA's representative to the 1978 and 1979 meetings of the Governing Council was Deputy Administrator Barbara Blum.

EPA contributes to several of UNEP's programs:

Earthwatch is UNEP's global environmental assessment program. It has three components:

- The Global Environmental Monitoring Service (GEMS) is the environmental monitoring component of Earthwatch. GEMS assists UN specialized agencies—the World Health Organization, the World Meteorological Organization, and the Food and Agriculture Organization—in initiating or establishing, with member countries, monitoring programs in areas such as climate, long range transport of pollutants, health, terrestrial renewable resources, and ocean phenomena. UNEP will use GEMS data to identify trends and changes in the global environment caused by human action.

Currently, EPA participates in GEMS projects on air and water pollution conducted by WHO and WMO.

- Infoterra is a worldwide referral service connecting users of environmental information with sources of assistance. The service operates through a network of national, regional, and international organizations which serve as Focal Points. Since 1975, EPA has operated the United States National Focal Point for Infoterra in its headquarters in Washington. It has produced a national directory of sources of environmental information, and refers questions on environmental problems from both American and foreign sources to experts in various fields.

- The International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals (IRPTC) is designed to facilitate sharing of data on toxic chemicals, and, eventually, to provide an early alert system to pass warnings about potential dangers of particular substances. The design of IRPTC calls for a Central Unit to process data on selected chemicals, an international register of existing data banks throughout

the world, and a network of National Correspondents to form communications linkages to UNEP and among member countries.

In 1978, EPA was designated U.S. National Correspondent. In this role, the Agency maintains an inventory of U.S. chemical registers, notifies IRPTC of major accidents involving chemicals, informs IRPTC of U.S. legislation and regulations on control of chemicals, and, to a limited extent, responds to inquiries from other countries when asked to by the IRPTC office.

Coordinating Committee on the Ozone Layer. At a 1977 conference in Washington, UNEP embarked on a major review of available knowledge to determine whether there is scientific evidence of depletion of stratospheric ozone. The meeting adopted a comprehensive "World Plan of Action on the Ozone Layer" and formed the Coordinating Committee on the Ozone Layer to implement that plan. EPA participates in annual meetings of the Committee.

The Industry and Environment Program surveys environmental problems associated with industrialization and produces assessment guidelines that nations can use for environmentally sound industrial development. The approach to date has focused mainly on pollution control in major industries: aluminum, pulp and paper, motor vehicles, agriculture, petroleum, iron and steel, and chemicals. EPA experts have participated in seminars in each of these areas, contributing significantly to the technical and policy review reports issued for each sector. EPA has also contributed materials and advice to an Industry and Environment Program project developing guidelines for industrial siting, with methods for assessing the environmental impact of industrial development.



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