

International Agreements and Programmes

➤ Earth Summit- 1992

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was held in Rio on June 3–14, 1992, also known as the Rio Conference, aimed to develop strategies and measures to halt and reverse the effects of environmental degradation in the context of increased national and international efforts to promote sustainable and environmentally sound development in all countries. It was not only a focus and culmination of the efforts made by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly since 1989 but was also a continuation of the process that began with the 1972 Stockholm Conference that emphasized international cooperation on the environment. One hundred seventy-two countries participated in it, of which 108 were represented by heads of state or government.

States at UNCED also adopted a voluntary action plan called *Agenda 21*, so named because it is intended to provide an agenda for local, national, regional, and global action into the 21st century. UNCED Secretary General Maurice Strong called Agenda 21 "the most comprehensive, the most far-reaching and, if implemented the most effective program of international action ever sanctioned by the international community." Agenda 21 comprises hundreds of pages of recommended actions to address environmental problems and promote sustainable development. It also represents an experimental process of building consensus on a "global workplan" for the economic, social, and environmental tasks of the United Nations as they evolve over time.

Two international conventions **were presented and opened for signature at UNCED, each of which attracted signatures of representatives of more than 150 countries: *A Framework Convention on Climate Change, A Framework Convention on Biological Diversity.***

➤ Chemical Weapons Convention-1997

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is a multilateral treaty that bans chemical weapons and requires their destruction within a specified period of time. CWC negotiations started in 1980 in the UN Conference on Disarmament. The convention opened for signature on January 13, 1993, and entered into force on April 29, 1997.

The CWC is implemented by the **Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)**, which is headquartered in The Hague with about 500 employees. The OPCW receives states-parties' declarations detailing chemical weapons-related activities or materials and relevant industrial activities. After receiving declarations, the OPCW inspects and monitors states-parties' facilities and activities that are relevant to the convention, to ensure compliance.

The CWC is open to all nations and currently has 193 states-parties. Israel has signed but has yet to ratify the convention. Three states have neither signed nor ratified the convention (Egypt, North Korea and South Sudan).

Example:

Some chemicals which have been used extensively in warfare but have numerous large-scale industrial uses such as phosgene are highly regulated, however, certain notable exceptions exist. Chlorine gas is highly toxic, but being a pure element and extremely widely used for peaceful purposes, is not officially listed as a chemical weapon. Other chemicals, such as white phosphorus, are highly toxic but are legal under the CWC when they are used by military forces for reasons other than their toxicity.

Key points of the Convention

- Prohibition of production and use of chemical weapons
- Destruction (or monitored conversion to other functions) of chemical weapons production facilities
- Destruction of all chemical weapons (including chemical weapons abandoned outside the state parties territory)
- Assistance between State Parties and the OPCW in the case of use of chemical weapons
- An OPCW inspection regime for the production of chemicals which might be converted to chemical weapons
- International cooperation in the peaceful use of chemistry in relevant areas

➤ Ramsar Convention

The Convention on Wetlands, called the Ramsar Convention, is the intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The Convention was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and came into force in 1975. Since then, almost 90% of UN member states, from all the world's geographic regions, have acceded to become "Contracting Parties".

Wetlands are among the most diverse and productive ecosystems. They provide essential services and supply all our fresh water. However they continue to be degraded and converted to other uses. Wetlands are vital for human survival. They are among the world's most productive environments; cradles of biological diversity that provide the water and productivity upon which countless species of plants and animals depend for survival.

Wetlands are indispensable for the countless benefits or "ecosystem services" that they provide humanity, ranging from freshwater supply, food and building materials, and biodiversity, to flood control, groundwater recharge, and climate change mitigation. The Convention uses a broad definition of wetlands. It includes all lakes and rivers, underground aquifers, swamps and marshes, wet grasslands, peatlands, oases, estuaries, deltas and tidal flats, mangroves and other

coastal areas, coral reefs, and all human-made sites such as fish ponds, rice paddies, reservoirs and salt pans.

Under the “three pillars” of the Convention, the Contracting Parties commit to:

- ✓ Work towards the wise use of all their wetlands;
- ✓ Designate suitable wetlands for the list of Wetlands of International Importance (the “Ramsar List”) and ensure their effective management;
- ✓ Cooperate internationally on transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems and shared species.

➤ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

The **United Nations Environment Programme** (UNEP) is a programme of the United Nations, that coordinates the organization's environmental activities and assists developing countries in implementing environmentally sound policies and practices. It was founded by **Maurice Strong**, its first director, as a result of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference) in June 1972 and has overall responsibility for environmental problems among United Nations agencies; however, international talks on specialized issues, such as addressing climate change or combating desertification, are overseen by other UN organizations, like the Bonn-based Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

UNEP's activities cover a wide range of issues regarding:

- ✓ the atmosphere,
- ✓ marine and terrestrial ecosystems,
- ✓ environmental governance
- ✓ and green economy.

It has played a significant role in developing international environmental conventions, promoting environmental science and information and illustrating the way those can be implemented in conjunction with policy, working on the development and implementation of policy with national governments, regional institutions in conjunction with environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs). UNEP has also been active in funding and implementing environment related development projects.

- UNEP frequently uses the alternative name UN Environment

➤ Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

The **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**, known informally as the **Biodiversity Convention**, is a multilateral treaty. The Convention has three main goals including: the conservation of biological diversity (or biodiversity); the sustainable use of its components; and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources.

In other words, its objective is to develop national strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. It is often seen as the key document regarding sustainable development.

The Convention was opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro on 5 June 1992 and entered into force on 29 December 1993. CBD has two supplementary agreements - Cartagena Protocol and Nagoya Protocol.

The **Cartagena Protocol** on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty governing the movements of living modified organisms (LMOs) resulting from modern biotechnology from one country to another. It was adopted on 29 January 2000 as a supplementary agreement to the Convention on Biological Diversity and entered into force on 11 September 2003.

The **Nagoya Protocol** on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization (ABS) to the Convention on Biological Diversity is a supplementary agreement to the Convention on Biological Diversity. It provides a transparent legal framework for the effective implementation of one of the three objectives of the CBD: the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. The Nagoya Protocol on ABS was adopted on 29 October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan and entered into force on 12 October 2014, 90 days after the deposit of the fiftieth instrument of ratification. Its objective is the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources, thereby contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.



➤ CITES

CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) also known as the **Washington Convention**) is an international agreement between governments. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.

Today, 182 **countries** and the European Union implement **CITES** and it accords varying degrees of protection to more than 35,000 [species](#) of animals and plants.

News and highlights

- 7 November 2019: CITES publishes ambitious programme of work for 2020-2022
- 4 October 2019: CITES Secretary-General commends outcomes of first high level conference on illegal wildlife trade in the Americas
- 20 September 2019: CITES welcomes new UN General Assembly resolution on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife
- 29 August 2019: Music to your ears: CITES CoP18 moves towards strengthened regulations for tropical trees, as well as cautious exemptions for rosewood musical instruments
- 29 August 2019: CITES going full steam ahead to ensure sustainable use of marine resources

➤ UNFCCC-1992

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an intergovernmental treaty developed to address the problem of climate change. The Convention, which sets out an agreed framework for dealing with the issue, was negotiated from February 1991 to May 1992 and opened for signature at the June 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) — also known as the Rio Earth Summit. The UNFCCC entered into force on 21 March 1994, ninety days after the 50th country's ratification had been received. By December 2007, it had been ratified by 192 countries.

Dates: 4 Jun 1992 – 9 May 1992

Location: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; New York, United States

Depositary: Secretary-General of the United Nations

Signatories: 165

Effective: 21 March 1994

Parties to the Convention continue to meet regularly to take stock of progress in implementing their obligations under the treaty, and to consider further actions to address the climate change threat. They have also negotiated a protocol to the Convention. The Kyoto Protocol was first agreed in December 1997 in Kyoto, Japan, although ongoing discussions were needed between 1998 and 2004 to finalize the “fine print” of the agreement.

THE UNFCCC :

Conference of the Parties: Parties to the UNFCCC continue to adopt decisions, review progress and consider further action through regular meetings of the Conference of the Parties (COP).

Secretariat: The Conference of Parties and the Convention goals are supported by various bodies and organizations. This includes a Permanent Secretariat with various duties set out under Article 8 of the UNFCCC.

Subsidiary Bodies: A number of subsidiary bodies also advise the COP. The Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA) links scientific, technical and technological assessments, the information provided by competent international bodies, and the policy-oriented needs of the COP.

Financing and the Global Environment Facility: The UNFCCC includes provision under Article 10 for a financial mechanism to support developing countries and countries with economies in transition to a market economy in implementing the Convention. Parties to the UNFCCC decided that the Global Environment Facility (GEF) should act as the financial mechanism, given its expertise in this area.

Expert Groups and Other Constituted Bodies: The Convention is also supported by a number of expert groups and other constituted bodies like, Least Developed Country Expert Group (LEG), the Expert Group on Technology Transfer, and the Executive Board of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and Joint Implementation Supervisory Committee.

The Conference of the Parties also cooperates with, and is supported by, numerous other international organizations and other groups, including scientific bodies, UN agencies, and other conventions. These include the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which publishes comprehensive reviews on climate change science every five to six years, as well as other technical reports and papers.

Note: Kyoto protocol and Montreal protocol both are covered under greenhouse effect and ozone layer depletion topic.