

Background note on the

Special address of the Executive Director of UNEP

First regular session of the Executive Board

Tuesday, 28 February, 10:00

Hybrid event in the Auditorium at WFP headquarters and on Zoom

In her remarks, UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen will draw attention to the triple planetary crisis facing humanity – climate change, nature and biodiversity loss and pollution and waste – seeking to draw links with humanitarian action and the critical need to build long-term resilience of people and communities.

UNEP is the global authority mandated to set the environmental agenda, promote the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serving as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.

For WFP, turning the tide against hunger and achieving SDG 2 depends on progress towards climate action to ensure stable food availability by strengthening the adaptive capacity of food systems to climate variations (SDG 13). WFP also contributes to SDG 15 by rehabilitating and greening degraded land through soil and water conservation measures.

WFP and UNEP exchanged letters in 2020 envisioning that a collaboration between the parties would result in improved adaptation to climate change, food security and nutrition, as well as healthier agricultural and other ecosystems in the target countries and communities.

The urgency to collaborate has increased exponentially since 2020. For example, in the Eastern Africa region where we witness a historic drought and needs are on the rise. Indeed, governments are reaching out to United Nations agencies to collaborate and support on problems that require systemic change. As such, WFP and UNEP are strengthening their collaboration in accordance with their respective mandates and areas of expertise to address issues on the food systems-agriculture-environment nexus.

WFP and UNEP agree that environmental degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change remain pressing issues and must be jointly addressed through: i) enhanced adaptation and mitigation actions; ii) supporting communities and nations to address nature-induced conflicts and natural disasters, which are becoming more frequent and more damaging with the warming climate; and iii) maintaining healthy, productive and resilient ecosystems, necessary for providing a large range of ecosystem services such as water resources and productive food systems.

We are starting to see the great potential of this global collaboration through country examples. In Kenya, UNEP and WFP have drafted a joint concept note on addressing water scarcity and resilience to drought, which has resulted in the Government of Kenya requesting the agencies to host a round table on this topic. Similarly, in Somalia, devastatingly affected by the drought, UNEP and WFP are starting to joint fundraise to address resilience to drought.