Emerging Issues
Emerging Issues

Why looking at emerging issues?

To ensure that emerging environmental issues of global and regional significance are timely and regularly brought to the attention of decision makers and considered in assessment and policy processes.
Emerging Issues

What UNEP considers as an “Emerging Issue”

- A environmental or environmental-related issue that is not yet generally recognized but could have major impact on human wellbeing and the environment.

- An issue that is recognized as very important by the scientific community, but are not yet receiving adequate attention from the policy community.

- The issue could be positive or negative. Significant opportunities may be lost or undesired effects may occur in future, if not addressed.

- Recognized as ‘emerging’ based on ‘newness’, but not necessarily issues that are unheard of or that comes as a surprise.
Emerging Issues

Identification Processes

1. UNEP Foresight process

- Canvass of UNEP community
  - 68 emerging issues
- Foresight Panel
  - 22 members from the scientific community
  - 95 emerging issues
  - Foresight Panel debated the issues

Global foresight process in 2012 (8 months)

Similar but smaller process for SIDS emerging issues in 2014

With brief summary of each issue

933 scientists ranked the 21 issues

21 emerging issues, ranked

21 emerging issues
Emerging Issues

Identification Processes

2. An identification process running alongside the **Global Environment Outlook (GEO)** process at the regional level

- Involved more than 400 experts and representatives from 85 countries
- Questionnaire + information manually gathered during the conferences
- More than 200 diverse emerging issues identified
Emerging Issues

Example of criteria used in identifying emerging issues

- **Regional relevance** - The issue must be critical to the sustainable development of the region of focus
- **Policy relevance** – the issue is recognized as important in the region but has not yet had adequate policy attention
- **Urgency** – requires immediate action by policy makers or others stakeholders in the region
- **Evidence-based** – including scientific and traditional knowledge
- **Newness** – as a result of new knowledge, new technologies, new scale of impact, heightened awareness, new solution found
Emerging Issues

What do we do with the identified issues?

- Considered and analysed in the GEO process
- Considered and analysed in other assessment processes
- In-depth assessment reports of selected issues
- Brief analyses of selected issues

To be considered in policy processes, e.g. UN Environment Assembly, national/regional processes
Emerging Issues

Emerging issues we are working on

2016
- Microplastics (UNEA Res.1/6)
- Illegal Trade in Wildlife (UNEA Res.1/3)
- Loss and Damage to Ecosystem Services
- Role of Financial Sector in advancing environmental sustainability
- Climate variability and toxin accumulation in crops
- Zoonosis
- Dust and Sandstorm

2017
- Undecided, but many potential ones, e.g.
- Extractives (Oil/Gas/Mineral)
- Environment and Displacement
Emerging Issues

**Product line**

**UNEP Frontiers Report** in form of App eBook produced annually (assorted topics)

In-depth reports of selected topics (printed/PDF)
Emerging Issues

SDGs context

To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, it is critical to anticipate risks in advance by monitoring changes.