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# 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.

## 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.

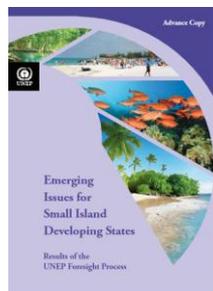
# Emerging Issues

## Identification Processes

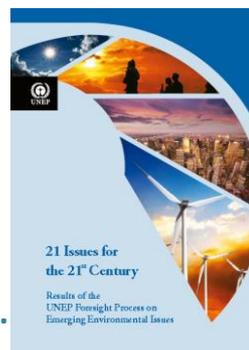
### 1. UNEP Foresight process



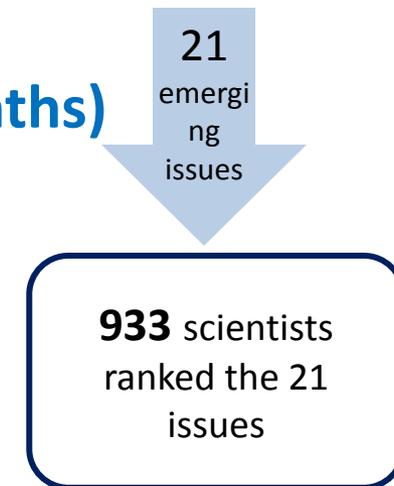
### Global foresight process in 2012 (8 months)



Similar but smaller process for SIDS emerging issues in 2014



With brief summary of each issue



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## 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

## 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

## 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 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

## Product line



UNEP United Nations Environment Programme environment for development

citizen science

### Getting involved: citizen science

#### Continuing to observe and record nature

Since prehistoric times people have observed and recorded the natural world in order to survive. However, curiosity about the world around us, and the pleasure we take in it, are other reasons we pay careful attention to and make records of flora and fauna, water bodies, and the weather and other phenomena. In China locust outbreaks have been tracked for thousands of years; in Japan the flowering of cherry trees has been marked for 1200 years. Successful agricultural harvests have always depended on knowing what to plant where, and how to make crops grow well.

Today people's inborn curiosity is increasingly being harnessed by science. Volunteers are collecting and/or analyzing data, as well as contributing to scientific studies in different ways. This is called *citizen science*. Simply put, this means public participation in scientific research. Citizen science can help researchers obtain a wide perspective and deep data. It helps answer complex questions about, for example, air pollution, biodiversity conservation, urbanization patterns, and changes in agricultural production and fisheries worldwide. Taking part in citizen science activities also raises awareness, increases local

### Realizing the Potential of Citizen Science

Explaining citizen science in three minutes. © TechHyou

Volunteers participating in research projects show their curiosity and passion for nature. © As specified here

Tap and swipe on the images to play slide show

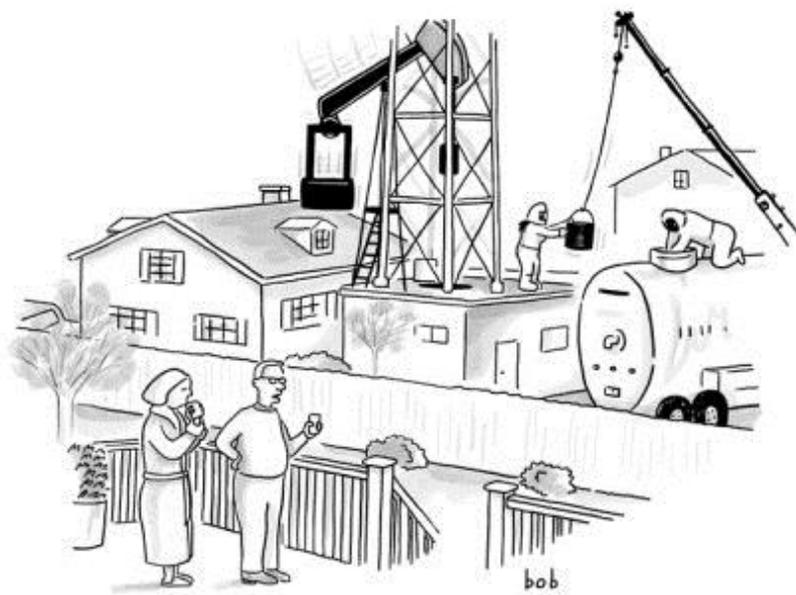
UNEP YEAR BOOK 2014

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

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

## SDGs context

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



*"When did the Fergusons start hydrofracking?"*



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**Thank you**