

Fifth Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme V): delivering for people and the planet

Third global meeting of national focal points

Online, 4-5 November 2026

Item 5 of the provisional agenda¹

Partnerships and stakeholder engagement: Summary of the consultation meeting of partners and stakeholders of the Montevideo Programme V

Note of the secretariat

1. Introduction

1. In its resolution 4/20 of 15 March 2019, the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) adopted the fifth Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law for the decade beginning in 2020 (Montevideo Programme V). The [Montevideo Programme V](#) recognizes amongst its focus areas the need to support collaboration and the promotion of partnerships and stakeholder engagement in the field of environmental law, promoting public participation. Moreover, it entrusts the UNEP secretariat of the Programme to foster the active participation of the relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the Programme.

2. Under the guidance of the steering committee for implementation of the Montevideo Programme V, a partners and stakeholders' consultation was convened on 22 September 2026 from 14:00 to 16:00 (EAT). This consultative meeting was held virtually and brought together partners and stakeholders of the Programme, with the support of the UNEP secretariat. The consultation offered a forum for partners and stakeholders to identify environmental law and governance trends, challenges, needs and emerging issues from their perspectives, to inform the implementation of the Programme during its remaining period, and consider specific activities to inform UNEP's work in environmental law and governance, as well as the Programme's midterm review mandated by UNEA resolution 4/20, in line with the [UNEP medium-term strategy 2026-2029](#) and [programme of work](#). The consultation also provided an opportunity to discuss partners and stakeholders' engagement in the Montevideo Programme V, including in the context of the Programme's [Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy](#).

3. The following questions guided the consultation:

- a. In your view, what emerging environmental law and governance issues from your perspective or that of your constituency warrant attention from the Montevideo Programme V, and what specific actions would you recommend?
- b. Based on existing modalities of engagement with partners and stakeholders, how would you / your constituency wish to strengthen your engagement under the Montevideo Programme V to achieve its objectives?

4. Following the consultation, the UNEP secretariat prepared the present summary that serves as background to agenda item 5 of the provisional agenda of the third global meeting of national focal points.

¹ UNEP/Env.Law/MTV5/GNFP.3/1.

Section 2 summarizes the key areas identified by partners and stakeholders and proposed suggestions on how to strengthen their engagement in the Programme's implementation.

5. Building on the outcomes of the partners and stakeholders' consultation, during the third global meeting, national focal points, partners and stakeholders are invited to provide further guidance to the UNEP secretariat on any additional environmental law and governance trends, challenges, needs and emerging issues and proposed ways to strengthen partners and stakeholders' engagement in the Programme's implementation during its remaining period, subject to available resources.

2. Key areas identified by partners and stakeholders

6. Partners and stakeholders participating in the consultation have identified the following areas for consideration by the Programme during its remaining period:

- a. **Environmental rights, legal protection of environmental human rights defenders (EHRDs) and stakeholders' participation in environmental decision-making.** Partners and stakeholders recognized the important role of EHRDs and civil society actors in advancing effective and inclusive environmental rule of law and in promoting and enforcing environmental rights, including through documenting breaches of environmental duties and supporting effective monitoring and implementation of legal obligations through community-based initiatives. At the same time, persistent barriers continue to limit their ability to participate meaningfully in environmental decision-making and to contribute to legal enforcement, monitoring and evaluation. EHRDs, in particular, continue to face risks of intimidation and harassment, alongside barriers to accessing justice and effective legal protection.

Building on existing work, the Montevideo Programme V could further strengthen this area by facilitating information exchange, sharing good practices and building capacity across jurisdictions. Such efforts could help promote civil justice and compliance, clarify available legal remedies, and strengthen public and community-based participation in environmental decision-making. Particular attention could be given to how these issues are being addressed through relevant regional processes, including the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as through the implementation of relevant multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and instruments, including the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement) and the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention).

- b. **Gender responsiveness and intersectionality.** Partners and stakeholders identified several existing and emerging environmental law and governance issues requiring an improved integration of gender-responsive approaches and increased stakeholder engagement. These include the governance of critical minerals for the energy transition and carbon markets; the regulation of plastics and chemicals pollution, which disproportionately impacts women and Indigenous Peoples; land degradation and desertification; and the protection and enforcement of environmental rights, including the protection of women environmental human rights defenders (EHRDs), and their intersections with displacement, inequality and conflict.

The Montevideo Programme V could support these areas by providing guidance and sharing good practices on strengthening gender-responsiveness in environmental rule of law. This could include guidance on embedding gender considerations, including gender and youth-disaggregated data, into legal assessments and legislative development, as well as capacity building for judiciaries and enforcement authorities on access to environmental information and access to justice. The Programme could also promote gender-responsiveness in broader environmental governance, including in the implementation of MEAs. This could include facilitating information sharing and raising awareness of the gender dimensions of Conference of the Parties (COP) decisions and their implications for implementation, including by building on existing tools such as [InforMEA](#). It could also support dedicated training and gender-responsive legal capacity building to strengthen MEA implementation.

- c. **Education in environmental law and the role of environmental law clinics.** Partners and stakeholders recognized the Montevideo Programme V's existing engagement with environmental law clinics as an important opportunity to strengthen environmental education through stakeholder engagement and expand the Programme's outreach to civil society actors. Environmental law clinics

can provide valuable platforms to promote partnerships and foster exchanges of knowledge and information among stakeholders on: comparative legal research and analysis across jurisdictions; training and capacity building for the next generation of legal practitioners; and support to stakeholders seeking access to justice and legal remedies. One area identified by partners and stakeholders where these clinics could bring added value is in clarifying the role of international judicial advisory opinions and their implications for environmental rule of law at the national level. Building and expanding on existing initiatives, the Programme could further strengthen stakeholders' participation in environmental law clinics, including the participation of Indigenous Peoples, women and youth. The Programme could also support with strengthening the links between the work of these clinics and its country-level capacity-building efforts, helping to translate their insights and expertise into meaningful policy and legal reforms at the national level.

- d. Science-policy interfaces and the role of citizen science.** Partners and stakeholders emphasized the role of citizen science in supporting the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental law. While national science-policy interfaces are well established across many geographical contexts and thematic areas, and contribute to monitoring and implementing environmental action, they are not always formally recognized or integrated into environmental legal frameworks. The Montevideo Programme V could further support this area by working with partners and stakeholders to develop and disseminate accessible good practices, toolkits and other resources to inform the establishment or strengthening of national science-policy interfaces and their integration with environmental legal systems, including in the context of MEAs implementation, with particular attention to contexts in the Global South.
- e. Environmental health and industrial pollution.** Partners and stakeholders emphasized the need to address the environmental impacts of industrial pollution and waste, promoting environmental health through circular economy approaches in high-impact sectors, such as mining, and a just energy transition, including in a transnational context. Building on existing work, the Montevideo Programme V could further engage partners and stakeholders in this area by supporting legal and regulatory responses that: address fragmentation across legislation and regulatory frameworks; advance transparent and sustainable supply chains informed by responsible business practices that uphold environmental rule of law; and strengthen access to legal remedies for stakeholders and communities disproportionately affected by pollution and waste, particularly where monitoring capacity is limited and enforcement is uneven.
- f. Strengthening stakeholder engagement in the implementation of the Montevideo Programme V.** Partners and stakeholders highlighted the importance of building on the Programme's existing Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy to enhance their engagement in the Programme's implementation. This could include opportunities for engagement in technical legal assistance and capacity-building initiatives at the country-level, as well as, where appropriate, in monitoring and evaluating the results of the assistance provided through the Programme. Dedicated and regular consultations with partners and stakeholders were highlighted as a positive example of meaningful engagement. Similarly, the Programme could strengthen links between stakeholders and national focal points to promote greater inclusivity, participation and ownership of country-level results. Youth engagement, in particular, was identified as an area deserving dedicated attention, recognizing the vital role young people play in researching and generating environmental knowledge, while creating meaningful opportunities for their voices to inform and shape national environmental decision-making processes.