



# Environmental cooperation pathways in coordinated pandemic response for **UNECE** and **OSCE**:

present challenges and future outlook

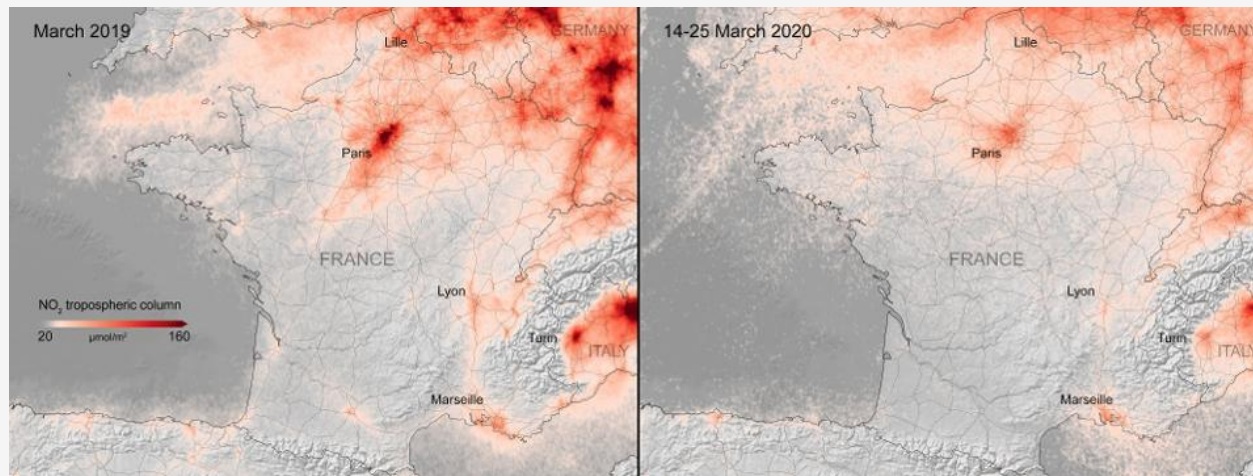


# Environmental cooperation pathways

coordinated pandemic response



- Environmental damage is driven by human activity.
- As the pandemic has limited our economic activities, consumption and movement, pollutant emissions and natural resource use have slowed, and the rate of environmental damage has fallen in most areas.



# Environmental cooperation pathways

coordinated pandemic response



- Atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations still rising
- Increased use of plastics, notably in packaging
- Postponement of vital negotiations on global environmental governance in the expected climate and biodiversity “super year”
- As people lose their livelihoods, increased poverty will likely lead more people to turn to unsustainable harvesting of natural resources
- Once pandemic eases, pressure on the environment will resume
- Risk that recovery investment goes to brown industries and less green finance available

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- Need to **build back better** economies, create jobs and support businesses
- Bear in mind that better air quality, water & sanitation, waste management and biodiversity protection, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions, each **reduce vulnerability and increase resilience and sustainability**
- Air quality, for example – 3 factors possibly increasing vulnerability
  1. Elevated levels of air pollution are associated with increased risk of several diseases linked with greater severity of COVID-19 symptoms and worse prognoses
  2. Pollution inflames and damages airways and make lungs more susceptible to infection
  3. Fine particulates may provide a vector for the virus



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- Invest to create jobs in geographically-spread, labour-intensive green industries:
  - Increasing the energy efficiency of buildings, by retrofitting existing buildings, or more efficient construction; bulk purchasing or installation programmes; insulation of buildings; change boilers, lighting and appliances with energy-efficient substitutes
  - Installation of solar panels (water-heating and electricity-generation)
  - Development of electrical infrastructure to support renewable energy
  - Extension of agroforestry practices; tree-planting, including in urban areas
  - Soft infrastructure for active mobility
- Invest in the long term:
  - Water supply and wastewater disposal systems, including for resilience to disease
  - Management of different waste types, including health care waste, and recycling
  - etc. ...

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- Numerous initiatives in cities and countries and internationally
- UN teams in countries with economies in transition carrying out socioeconomic assessments of the pandemic's impacts
- New interagency Issue-based Coalition on Environment and Climate Change for Europe and Central Asia to coordinate messages from UN to our country teams and their inputs to national responses
- Coalition brings together 18 UN entities, co-led by UNECE, UNEP and UNESCO
- [www.unece.org/runcwelcome/un-cooperation-in-the-unece-region.html](http://www.unece.org/runcwelcome/un-cooperation-in-the-unece-region.html)





- EEA, UNECE and OSCE-supported Aarhus Centres have been working on e-Government and Open Data frameworks in Caucasus and Eastern Europe
  - National road maps have to be rolled out.
  - Essential for informed and targeted risk assessment, decision-making and public awareness.
  - Leading to greater resilience, transparency and public confidence in government, awareness and engagement
  - OSCE and Aarhus Centres have important role to play in supporting capacity building of both authorities and the public on using ICTs for public participation
- UNECE and OSCE cooperate on mine tailings safety projects in Central Asia – for greater resilience and less vulnerability
- UNECE and OSCE are supporting Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in introducing environmental assessment systems – more resilience and better-informed decisions

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- UNECE and OSCE have cooperated in supporting Azerbaijan and Georgia to reach an agreement on the Kura River – joint body would boost cooperation for protection and sustainable use of water resources, thus increasing resilience
- UNECE, OSCE and others were planning panel on transboundary water cooperation during the 2<sup>nd</sup> High-level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, Dushanbe in June 2020
- With UNDP, building resilience in Dniester River basin, helping Republic of Moldova and Ukraine adapt to climate change impacts, allocate water and restore ecosystems, as well as dialogue and cooperation
- UNECE and OSCE support the bilateral Chu-Talas Water Commission, helping Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to find joint water management solutions in a basin that is highly vulnerable to climate change, thus increasing resilience





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