**Peace with nature**

BY J A M I L A H M A D 2023-05-06

SINCE its creation almost 80 years ago, the UN has served as a vehicle for coordinated collective action for global welfare and has offered mechanisms for socioeconomic development. Multilateralism has evolved gradually but extensively. With the focus on maintaining peace, the global body has also come to cover newer issues, in the light of increased interdependence.

The current triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature loss and pollution has become an international issue. The crisis is rooted in post-World War II industrialisation and the exploitation of natural resources under a development model that has come at a high cost to the environment.

It is no surprise that the world is trapped in a serious situation.

Extreme weather events, water shortages, food insecurity, the risk of pandemics and displacement of people due to climate change are worrisome manifestations of the threat to human life. The last few decades have been calamitous in terms of climate change and nature loss. Economies and societies are at the receiving end as poverty rises and job opportunities decrease.

The environmental polycrisis warrants a global response, that transcends national boundaries.

Environmental multilateralism is focused on delivering high-impact solutions. Building on the merits of existing arrangements and sensing the imperative for urgent action, environmental diplomacy has embraced other stakeholders. Today, representatives of youth, civil society, local authorities, businesses, indigenous communities, international financial institutions and other stakeholders often sit together with the relevant policymakers to discuss climate and environmental issues.

Inclusivity, transparency and a broadbased consensual approach are features of this environmental multilateralism.

At a time when other agendas appear to be caught in political logjams, environmental diplomacy has sailed relatively smoothly, producing elaborate international institutions and policy frameworks over the last five decades.

In 1972, the UN Conference on Human Environment established UNEP, the main environment authority in the UN system.

Severalglobalenvironmentalpolicyinstruments were adopted. These include: the 1985 ozone treaty which has contributed to the repair of the ozone layer, the conventions on climate change, biodiversity and desertification that emerged from the 1992 Earth Summit at Rio, agreements on hazardous waste and chemicals, etc. The Rio+20 summit in 2012 refreshed the environmental authority`s mandate and the fol-lowing year the General Assembly upgraded its 58-member governing council that became the UN Environmental Assembly.

Scientific bodies were founded for evidence-based research. Knowledge generation and knowledge sharing by the IPCC, IPBES, UNEP, WMO, FAO and others have underpinned policymaking.

Most states have signed and ratified environmental conventions and treaties, converting them into national laws and action plans. A global action plan contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encapsulates climate and environment as aninterlinked subject acrossallSustainable Development Goals. UN Secretary General António Guterres is to convene an SDG summit in September to `turbo-charge` this global development agenda. Another meeting will be convened to galvanise climate action.

The achievement by states of targets on climate and the environment will support the SDGs. Similarly, the timely implemen-tation of the SDGs will furnish hope for the well-being of the people and the planet. Despite the prevailing challenges, environmental multilateralism has continued to deliver.

Last year`s adoption of theMontreal-Kunming Global Biodiversity Framework and the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund for the climate are milestones that were reached under considerably difficult conditions.

However, while it is true that environmental diplomacy has incrementally enhanced multilateral endeavours for seeking peace with nature, more must be done as the planetary crisis shows few signs of abating. Through a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach, countries will need to ramp up their ambitions and take urgent action to deliver on them.

The UN has a vital role in fostering renewed international collaboration to find solutions to the myriad problems of the planet. As the UN chief has pointed out, strengthening multilateralism is the only way to a peaceful world. The value of working together for peace and development is greater than ever. Now is the time to boost multilateralism and promote multilateral cooperation for people`s well-being.  The wn~ter is director of intergovernmental affairs, United Nations Environment Programme.