

Foreword

“Grow now, clean up later”. That’s sadly been the business model for much of the world since the industrial revolution. It’s as if looking after environment is a needless distraction, but ultimately a nice add-on when economies are doing well, and when luxuries can be afforded.

The *Global Environment Outlook*, now in its sixth edition, has been a key driver of the shift in this mindset. Grounded in the best available science and real-world case studies, it underscores the fact that a healthy planet is a prerequisite for healthy people, and that is in turn the foundation of any healthy economy. And most importantly, it shows how it’s possible to win on all fronts.

In this drive towards a green economy, greater sustainability and the hope that we can thrive rather than merely survive, there has never been a more critical moment than now. The science and data are crystal clear on the multitude of challenges we face, but also the small window of opportunity we have to turn things around.

The *Global Environment Outlook* is therefore a roadmap to achieving the United Nations’ Agenda 2030, in which hunger and poverty are consigned to history, and where biodiversity, oceans, land and freshwater are protected and restored to health.

It makes it clear that achieving this requires a transformation in human lifestyles and productive activities: our industry, agriculture, buildings, transport and the energy system which powers them.

It means renewables like wind and solar must be the new norm, as must energy efficient, green buildings and transport. At the same time, this work also opens up huge economic opportunities – a new, better industrial revolution.

The task may be enormous, but we should also be inspired. Global environmental actions like the Montreal Protocol, our innovative defence against the hole in the Ozone layer, prove that we have the institutions and capacity to come together. The issue of plastics pollution has shown how diverse communities around the world – school children in Bali, coastal residents in Mumbai or surfers from Cornwall – can come together. After all, making the world a better place and cleaning up our act is a non-partisan, unifying cause we can all get behind.



Joyce Msuya
Acting Executive Director, UN Environment