

This is a section of [doi:10.7551/mitpress/12373.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/12373.001.0001)

The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution

UNEP at Fifty

By: Maria Ivanova

Citation:

*The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution:
UNEP at Fifty*

By: Maria Ivanova

DOI: [10.7551/mitpress/12373.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/12373.001.0001)

ISBN (electronic): 9780262363242

Publisher: The MIT Press

Published: 2021



The MIT Press

SERIES FOREWORD

This is at once an odd and exhilarating time to be alive. Our species, *Homo sapiens*, has had roughly 350,000 years on the planet. For most of that time our ancestors barely registered as a quiet voice in a teeming chorus. No more. Now, a human cacophony threatens the ecological foundations upon which all life rests, even as technological wonders point the way toward accelerating expansion. We find ourselves at a moment of reckoning. The next handful of decades will determine whether humanity has the capacity, will, and wisdom to manufacture forms of collective life compatible with long-term ecological realities, or whether, instead, there is an expiration date on the grand human experiment.

The One Planet book series has been created to showcase insightful, hope-fueled accounts of the planetary condition and the social and political features upon which that condition now depends. Most environmental books are shackled by a pessimistic reading of the present moment or by academic conventions that stifle a writer's voice. We have asked One Planet authors to produce a different kind of scholarship. This series is designed to give established and emerging authors a chance to put their best, most astute ideas on display. These are works crafted to show a new path through the complex and overwhelming subject matters that characterize life on our New Earth.

The books in this series are not formulaic. Nor are they Pollyannaish. The hope we have asked for from our authors comes not from overly optimistic accounts of ways forward, but rather from hard-headed and clear-eyed accounts of the actions we need to take in the face of sometimes overwhelming odds. One Planet books are unified by deep scholarly engagement brought to life through vivid writing by authors freed to write from the heart.

Thanks to our friends at the MIT Press, especially to Beth Clevenger, for guiding the One Planet series into existence, and to the contributing authors for their extraordinary work. The authors, the Press, and we, the series editors, invite engagement. The best books do more than convey interesting ideas: they spark interesting conversations. Please write to us to let us know how you are using One Planet books or to tell us about the kinds of themes you would like to see the series address.

Finally, our thanks to you for picking up and diving into this book. We hope that you find it a useful addition to your own thinking about life on our One Planet.

Sikina Jinnah and Simon Nicholson

© 2021 Massachusetts Institute of Technology

This work is subject to a Creative Commons CC-BY-NC-ND license.

Subject to such license, all rights are reserved.



This book was set in ITC Stone Serif, Stone Sans, and Avenir by Westchester Publishing Services. Printed and bound in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Ivanova, Maria (Maria H.), author.

Title: The untold story of the world's leading environmental institution :

UNEP at fifty / Maria Ivanova ; foreword by John W. McDonald

Description: Cambridge, Massachusetts : The MIT Press, [2021] | Series: One planet |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020015014 | ISBN 9780262542104 (paperback)

Subjects: LCSH: United Nations Environment Programme—History. | Environmental protection—International cooperation—History.

Classification: LCC TD169 .I86 2021 | DDC 363.7/056—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020015014>

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1