



Nairobi/Brussels 14 February 2013 - To mark the 40th anniversary of the organization, UNEP has launched [*UNEP The First 40 Years*](#), a book by award-winning conservationist Stanley P Johnson covering forty years of UNEP's history.

The book - which is not an official UN history - charts the evolution of UNEP from its inception at the landmark Stockholm conference of 1972 to its position today at the heart of the global environmental movement.

“UNEP has come a long way from a small secretariat of around a dozen people, housed initially above a supermarket in downtown Nairobi, to the truly global institution we see today,” said Mr. Steiner. “Mr. Johnson’s account charts UNEP’s growth in comprehensive detail; at the same time it serves as a fascinating history of the growth in awareness of the many environmental problems the world faces and the efforts put in place to tackle them.”

Mr. Johnson commented that he “was absolutely delighted to have the honour of putting UNEP’s history down on paper, describing the twists of turns that have led to what is now a well-established authority on our global environment.”

The book ranges across an extraordinarily wide front; from early efforts to clean up dangerously polluted oceans, adopt urgent action to save the ozone layer, prevent the harmful dumping of toxic waste, protect biodiversity and save endangered species and fauna, to today’s efforts to promote the Green Economy.

The book takes the reader behind the scenes to witness first-hand the role played by UNEP in

complex and often-fraught negotiations resulting in landmark treaties such as the Mediterranean Action Plan and subsequent Regional Seas Programme, the 1983 Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the epoch-defining 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal.

Based on interviews with key actors at the time, such as former Kenyan Foreign Minister Dr. Njoroge Mungai, the book also details the delicate diplomatic manoeuvring which resulted in the fledgling organization becoming the first UN body to be headquartered in the developing world.

“Kenya always has been and remains an extremely welcoming host,” said UNEP Spokesperson and Director of Communications Nick Nuttall. “Today, few question what a far-sighted decision it was to place the headquarters of a UN body in the developing world, but this narrative reminds one how radical it was at the time and the key role Kenyan diplomats played in that decision.”

Additional links:

- [UNEP Homepage](#)
- [UNEP 40th Anniversary website](#)
- [UNEP The First 40 Years \(pdf\)](#)