



## EMBARGOED UNTIL SATURDAY, JANUARY 23, 2016

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### QUICK FACT SHEET Environmental Performance Index - 2016 Launch

#### ABOUT THE EPI

- **What is the EPI?** The Environmental Performance Index (EPI) ranks countries' performance on high-priority environmental issues in two areas: protection of human health and protection of ecosystems. Complete report, data, and results are available at: [www.epi.yale.edu](http://www.epi.yale.edu).
- **Why the EPI?** Pioneering data-driven approaches to environmental policy in the last 15 years, the EPI has accelerated the global use of quantitative metrics to evaluate policy performance. Integrating new data and innovative indicators, the 2016 EPI provides a preliminary report card to track country commitments on the environment, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Climate Change Agreement adopted in 2015.

#### BEST & WORST PERFORMING COUNTRIES

##### Who's at the Top?

- **Finland** has taken the top spot, followed by **Iceland, Sweden, Denmark, and Slovenia**. These top five performers share smart policies that target improvements to their natural and built environments, along with strong commitments to renewable energy.
- **Finland's** top ranking stems from its societal commitment to achieve a carbon-neutral society that does not exceed nature's carrying capacity by 2050. Finland produces nearly two-thirds of its energy from renewable and nuclear power sources, which gave the Nordic nation an edge over other countries with similar environmental policies. The margins are razor-thin, with a total of 2.5 points (out of an 100-point score) separating the top 10 best performers in the 2016 EPI.

##### Who's at the Bottom?

- The 2016 EPI's poor performers include **Somalia** at last place (180th), followed, in ascending order, by Eritrea, Madagascar, Niger, and Afghanistan.
- These **African and South Asia nations** share long, troubled legacies of broad governance problems. The Index's bottom third, comprised mostly of African countries with a few South and East Asian nations, is a list of struggling states whose problems extend beyond their inability to sustain environmental and human health. These nations show that environmental performance is an issue of governance; only well-functioning governments are able to manage the environment for the benefit of all.

## How is the World Doing?

- Examining trends in environmental performance over the last decade, nearly every country has improved its EPI score.
- Countries already achieving high EPI scores, including those in Europe and North America, have the smallest gains in environmental performance, suggesting incremental improvements at high levels of achievement are difficult to make.
- Developing countries, particularly those in Sub-Saharan Africa, have seen the greatest gains in environmental performance over the last decade. Investments in clean water, sanitation, and energy infrastructure are the main contributors to improvements in these nations' scores.

## KEY FINDINGS BY ISSUE AREA



1. **HEALTH IMPACTS:** *Globally, more deaths occur due to poor air quality than to unsafe water quality. In 2013, unsafe water was responsible for 2% of global deaths (~1.24 million), while poor air quality was responsible for 10% of all global deaths (~5.52 million).* Economic development leads to improvement in some environmental areas, yet it is also associated with increased human health hazards. As nations become wealthier, their governments invest in sanitation infrastructure and fewer people are exposed to unsafe water, leading to fewer deaths from waterborne illnesses. But as countries develop, increased industrial production, urbanization, and motorized transport expose human populations to dangerous airborne compounds. Thus, deaths attributed to air pollution have risen steadily over the past decade in step with exposure.



2. **AIR QUALITY:** *More than 3.5 billion people - half of the world's population – are exposed to unsafe air quality.* Dangerous air pollution is not confined to any one country or group of countries – it is a global issue. A third of people exposed to poor air quality (1.3 billion) live in the East Asia and Pacific region. In China and South Korea, for instance, more than 50% of the population is exposed to unsafe levels of fine particulate matter. In India and Nepal, the percentage climbs to nearly 75%.



3. **WATER & SANITATION:** *The number of people lacking access to clean water has been nearly cut in half from 960 million in 2000 to 550 million today,* around 8% of the world's population. The United Nations recognize clean drinking water and sanitation as basic human rights, but 2.4 billion people lack access to sanitation.



4. **FISHERIES:** *34% of global fish stocks are overexploited or collapsed.* The stark decline of fish stocks shows that when measurement is poor or not aligned with proper management, countries misreport or fail to report catch data, and international policy targets are ad hoc and incomplete.



5. **BIODIVERSITY & HABITAT:** *15.4% of terrestrial habitats and 8.4% of marine habitats are protected.* Nations are less than 2% away from reaching global targets on biodiversity and habitat. Despite this progress, there is roughly a 3% global gap between Terrestrial Habitat Protection and

Species' Habitat Protection, suggesting that nationally designated protected areas do not always align with species preservation. Protected areas are often established on marginal lands, rather than in high-value areas where wildlife is forced out by agricultural development and human settlements.



6. **FORESTS: 2.52 million km<sup>2</sup> of tree cover was lost in 2014** – an area roughly twice the size of Peru. To reach the New York Declaration on Forest's goal to end deforestation by 2050, more rigorous action is needed to protect the world's forests.



7. **WATER RESOURCES: 23% of countries have no wastewater treatment.** Sustainable Development Goal 6 – to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all – aims to halve the proportion of untreated wastewater by 2030. More than 80% of the world's discharged wastewater is untreated when it's released into the environment. To lower this percentage and reach Goal 6, countries need to invest in wastewater treatment infrastructure.



8. **AGRICULTURE: Only 20% of countries meet targets for nitrogen use efficiency.** Nitrogen use efficiency directly enhances crop productivity while decreasing nitrogen runoff and associated environmental degradation. Excess nitrogen not taken up by crops enters the environment through nitrogen leaching, ammonia volatilization, and nitrous oxide emissions. This nitrogen pollution has negative impacts on air and water quality, leads to ozone layer depletion, and it exacerbates climate change.



9. **CLIMATE & ENERGY: Around one-third of countries scored on Climate and Energy are reducing their carbon intensity.** With 2015 being the hottest year on record, the impetus for all countries to address climate change could not be more urgent. Globally, carbon emissions are starting to decline, but more substantial action from all countries in line with the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement is needed to avoid catastrophic climate change. Most countries are not meeting this imperative.

*The EPI is produced biennially by researchers at Yale and Columbia universities, in collaboration with the World Economic Forum and with support from the Samuel Family Foundation and the McCall MacBain Foundation. Full details are available at: <http://epi.yale.edu>.*