

Background Note

Business Dialogue for Environmental Sustainability

A joint vision for delivering the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through a strengthened UNEA as the leading authority on the environment

Wednesday, 25 May 2016

14:30 - 17:40hrs (SIE2016 Marquee)

United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2)

Nairobi, Kenya

Background

1. The private sector is becoming more aware of the global environmental challenges and the need for a universal solution as reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is a plan of action for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership, which all countries and stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement. The business sector, ranging from microenterprises to cooperatives to multinationals, is expected to play a pivotal role in achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that define the 2030 Agenda. Ultimately, the private sector will be an active source of innovative solutions in tackling the sustainable development challenges.

2. In light of the increasing engagement of the private sector in developing ideas and solutions to address these environmental challenges, the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), the United Nations' lead authority on the environment, provides a unique platform through which different stakeholders can work together to determine the path that will ensure an inclusive green economy and sustainable development.

3. The *Business Dialogue for Environmental Sustainability* will target leaders of the private sector who will be given the opportunity to engage with multiple stakeholder representatives, such as governments and civil society, who are aspiring to contribute to sustainable development and the SDGs.

4. The *Dialogue* will include three moderated panel discussions linking leaders of the private sector with policymakers to look at the global environmental challenges, discuss innovative solutions and recommend partnerships for achieving sustainable development. It will address the quest for the 'sustainability' and how to enable circular economies and sustainable lifestyles .

Objectives of the *Business Dialogue*

5. The *Dialogue* will specifically discuss the role of the private sector in advancing the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda. It will address the need to rethink and redesign current and future products and transform business strategies and managerial mindsets.

6. The *Dialogue* will reflect on the outcomes of the nine thematic events that will have taken place in the Sustainable Innovation Expo (SIE2016) as well as the *Symposium on Mobilizing Investment for Sustainable Development*. It will provide a unique opportunity for ministers of

environment, leaders of the private sector and civil society organizations to engage on a “joint vision” that will contribute to building the foundation of a roadmap that will define the systemic and institutional approach for engaging the business community as a long-term partner for achieving sustainable development and an inclusive green economy.

7. **Main messages** will include points such as the following:
 - **How will the private sector make choices and transform business models so that the sustainability of the planet’s natural resources is not comprised?**
 - **Policy coherence and integration will necessitate a “joint vision” that is a radical transformation in how policy-makers and private actors operate** and prioritize issues relating to sustainable development, the use of natural resources and protection of the environment.

Format and outcome of the event:

8. **Opening Statements - Setting the context on challenges and opportunities for private-sector engagement in delivering the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda.** This opening session will highlight that the SDGs are a call for worldwide action among governments, private sector and civil society to end poverty and create a life of dignity and opportunity for all within our planet’s ecological boundaries. The 17 SDGs present an opportunity for business-led solutions and technologies to be developed and implemented to address the world’s biggest sustainable development challenges.

Session 1: Panel discussion - Challenges and Trends

This session will take the format of a moderated-panel discussion in which key panelists will discuss the role the private sector has in achieving sustainable development. The panelists will set the context of the 2030 Agenda and the drive for sustainable development and discuss the challenges that the private sector faces and which were highlighted in the nine SIE2016 thematic events and in the Symposium on Mobilizing Investments for Sustainable Development.

The panel discussion will address questions, such as the following:

- *The role of the private sector in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*
 - Why does sustainable development and the SDGs matter for businesses?
 - How is the framework provided by the SDGs transforming the way in which businesses shape their strategies, operations, and relationships?
- *Explore challenges*
 - How is business impacted by sustainability challenges? How do we understand the links between environmental sustainability and the private sector’s strategies, operations, and relationships? Where are the gaps in our knowledge, i.e. in innovation and/or science? Competition sometimes does not allow for businesses to operate sustainably. How can this be addressed? (Could touch on the roles of government and civil society.)

Session 2: Sectoral Panel Discussion on Transformative Actions and the Business Case

The Moderator of this session will pose leading questions to shape strategic thinking to maximize interaction among participants. The panelists will be given 40 minutes to discuss and identify sustainability solutions to address the challenges and trends identified from Session 1. The audience is also invited to contribute and to ask questions (20 minutes). More specifically, it will:

- *Explore opportunities*
 - How can these challenges and risks be turned into opportunities?
 - How to identify future business opportunities in the move towards sustainable development?
 - Can the private sector do it alone?

Session 3: Way Forward: A 'Joint Vision' and Collaborative Partnerships

In this final session of 60 minutes, the *Business Dialogue* will define the elements of a 'Joint Vision' that will fuel a global call for action and an inspired vision of strengthened future collaboration/partnerships with the private sector in institutions like UNEP. The call for action will reflect concrete commitments, which will be followed up during the next iterations of *the Business Dialogue*. More specifically, it will:

- *Explore partnerships*: How can we build on these opportunities to shape collaborations/partnerships? And which would be the key elements of successful partnerships to deliver the environmental dimension of the SDGs?

Proposed Programme

The *Business Dialogue* will be centered on three moderated panel discussions which will feature the following different panellists:

Time	Session
14:30 – 14:40	Opening Statement (10 mins)
14:40 – 15:40	Session 1: Panel Discussion on Challenges and Trends (60 mins)
15:40 – 16:40	Session 2: Panel Discussion on transformative actions (60 mins) The panel discussion will look at the major sectors that are reflected in the nine SIE2016 thematic events to identify sustainability solutions/opportunities that were the outcomes of those events and that address the challenges and trends deliberated in Session 1.
16:40 – 17:40	Session 3: Way Forward: A Joint Vision and Collaborative Partnerships (60 mins) Panelists will explore partnership opportunities, defining what would be the key elements needed for successful partnerships that can deliver on the environmental dimension of sustainable development. Ultimately, the <i>Dialogue</i> will set the foundation and targets/commitments for the next UNEA.