

# **2017 Sustainable Innovation Expo**

## ***UN Environment Assembly's platform for engaging entrepreneurs and innovators***

The third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (4-6 December 2017) will continue to provide a platform for the private sector to engage with Ministers of the Environment and all other relevant stakeholders through the 2017 *Sustainable Innovation Expo*. The *Expo* is the Environment Assembly's platform for sharing the latest on innovation and technology from both public and private sectors, on sourcing investment and on contributing to the solutions that address the world's environmental challenges while protecting the ecological boundaries of the planet for future generations.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The UN Environment Assembly, the UN's highest-level decision-making body on the environment, provides a unique platform for building crucial partnerships by convening different stakeholders from government, civil society and the private sector to determine the path that will address the shared and unprecedented environmental challenges the world is facing and deliver on the environmental dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals.

At the second session of the UN Environment Assembly (23-27 May 2016), the private sector was engaged as never before in the *2016 Sustainable Innovation Expo*, which was facilitated by UN Environment's Governance Affairs Office and took place in parallel with the Assembly.

The *Expo*, which was located at the Fountain Area, brought together policymakers, civil society and the business community in nine thematic panel discussions over three days. Panelists focused on some of the most critical and prevalent issues in today's world. These included sustainable energy; healthy oceans; air quality; rapid urbanization; big data and innovation; natural capital; and waste management.

The nearly 600 participants to the *Expo* included Chief Executive Officers of major companies, institutional investors, foundations, banks, insurance companies, civil society representatives and thought leaders from non-governmental organizations, and think tanks. The outcomes and key messages of the panel discussions fed into a three-hour high-profile *Business Dialogue for Environmental Sustainability*.

With strong financial support from UN Member States, such as Denmark, philanthropic foundations, such as the Zayed International Foundation for the Environment, and private sector entities such as the Henley Media Group, the *2016 Expo* built on UN Environment's existing strategic partnerships in the private sector and created new ones.

### **2017 UN ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY AND ENGAGING THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

Under the overarching theme, *Towards a Pollution-Free Planet*, the 2017 UN Environment Assembly aims to deliver a number of tangible commitments to end the pollution of our air,

land, waterways, and oceans, and to safely manage our chemicals and waste. These will include the following:

- **Resolutions and decisions** adopted by Member States to address specific dimensions of pollution.
- **Voluntary commitments** by Governments, private sector entities and civil society organizations to clean up the planet.
- **The Clean Planet Pledge**, a collection of public commitments to end pollution in all its forms.
- **Technological and Innovative solutions** that address the planetary challenges of pollution.

In the run-up to the Assembly, UN Environment has already started to engage the private sector through a series of consultative dialogues on the margins of major global meetings. These important discussions will contribute to fostering the champions of solutions, generating the commitments and partners in all sectors to support and scale up the work of the UN Environment Assembly and its pollution agenda.

To date, relevant global meetings which have taken place include the *Consultative Roundtable* and *Dinner-in-Conversation* in Copenhagen on engaging the private sector in the Nordic countries. Funded by the Danish Government, *the Roundtable*, which was held in November 2016, helped to build the platform for engaging the private sector through partnerships and the UN Environment Assembly.

Building on this *Roundtable* discussion, UN Environment organized a *Leaders' Breakfast* in March 2017 on the margins of the Second Ministerial Conference of the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) in Berlin. The *Breakfast* brought together leading policymakers and private sector representatives in an interactive discussion on creating the policies and partnerships that will ensure that sustainability thrives; that the Sustainable Development Goals are achieved; and that the elements for promoting inclusive and sustainable economies are in place. More specifically, it focused on partnering to tackle the most pervasive forms of pollution which will be addressed in the 2017 Assembly.

Some upcoming meetings include, among others, a *Leaders Breakfast/Lunch* at the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Forum and UN General Assembly in September; and at the High-Level Panel of the tenth Conference of Parties of the Convention on Migratory Species in October.

This series of meetings with the private sector is also taking place with a number of partners, including the World Economic Forum, and the outcomes will feed into the 2017 *Sustainable Innovation Expo*.

## 2017 SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION EXPO

The *Expo*, located again in the Fountain Area, is the Environment Assembly's marketplace for connecting the science to the solution. It will provide a unique opportunity for ministers of environment, heads of UN Agencies and leaders of the private sector and civil society organizations to experience through a journey of virtual reality the challenges of pollution,

moving to a space with the latest innovation and technology that can tackle these challenges and end up in a networking zone where partnerships for tackling pollution can be made and realized. Companies that cannot come to the *Expo* will have the opportunity to participate in an electronic brochure.

And while the *Expo* will showcase that science teaches problem solving, it will also encourage critical thinking in how important, though small, our world is. In addition to providing the science, innovation and technology, the *Expo* will also uniquely engage participants in the oldest science of all—astronomy. Through a simulated planetarium, that can show human-induced air pollution in the Cosmos, the *Expo* will remind participants that unless we work together as humans and find solutions, we risk destroying the only life we know exists in the universe.

Ultimately, understanding the problems and knowing the solutions will incentivize the global community to take concrete actions for creating the enabling conditions to scale up these solutions so critical for addressing the unprecedented challenges our planet faces.

More specifically, the *Expo* will:

1. Explain the challenges and inspire the solutions through a virtual reality experience. Part of this experience will be based on the module used for the Oceans Conference in New York in June 2017.
2. Convene the leading decision makers in all sectors in an interactive virtual reality space where knowledge, innovation and technology can be showcased and shared for our global benefit;
3. Facilitate dialogue and inspire partnerships with entrepreneurs, innovators and investors.

The *Expo* will take place on the margins of the Assembly and will complement the high-profile and interactive *Leadership Dialogues*, which will take place in parallel to the plenary sessions. The *Dialogues* will call attention to the Assembly's multifaceted theme of pollution.

## LEADERSHIP DIALOGUES

Four Leadership Dialogues will take place during the high-level segment and will bring together ministers of environment, other senior policy-makers, leaders of business and civil society for collective attention to the Assembly's multifaceted theme of pollution. The Dialogues will be professionally moderated. Each of the four Dialogues will focus on one of the following themes:

- Science, evidence and citizens' awareness for change;
- Regulatory frameworks, institutions and the rule of law to address pollution;
- Practical solutions towards a pollution-free planet; and

- Financing and innovation to combat pollution

These Dialogues will also generate critical discussions among top environment and business leaders, as well as members of the global community who have already made major commitments to tackle pollution and could inspire others to do the same. As leaders in development and sustainability policies, they can especially help to drive these commitments for a healthier planet.

### ***Objectives of the Leadership Dialogues***

1. Raise awareness of pollution: highlight the pollution challenges by demonstrating its impact on people, health, ecosystems, economies and livelihoods. Give the problem and its solutions a human face and rally positive actions towards a pollution-free planet.
2. Support countries' actions: highlight local, national and global success stories in tackling pollution and publicize voluntary commitments and pledges by Member States, private sector and civil society.
3. Legacy: the 2017 Environment Assembly will be remembered for the commitments and pledges to a pollution-free planet, which UN Environment keeps under review.

### ***Commitments and Pledges***

Commitments and pledges are an important basis for the Leadership Dialogues. They reflect the growing interest of governments, private sector groups and other stakeholders to be part of a collective solution in tackling the global environmental challenges.

While resolutions at the Environment Assembly must be negotiated, the Assembly will introduce commitments/pledges to ensure a broader base of support to the outcomes of the Assembly.

While these commitments/pledges are not binding, they will be made in a public arena and will give ownership of the pollution agenda to Member States, the private sector groups and other stakeholders. Moreover, they will present a challenge for scaling up solutions to those who have yet to make similar commitments/pledges on their own at

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