

Annex 3 of the Report on Proceedings from the Third Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly

A. Key messages from the Leadership Dialogues

5 December 2017

Leadership Dialogue 1: Science, Evidence and Citizens' Awareness for Change

This session discussed the potential for harnessing science and technology to catalyze and drive forward a critical step-change toward policies and solutions. Distinguished speakers highlighted several existing and future opportunities that are gaining traction across their respective countries, contexts and constituencies. Several recurring and prominent themes emerged in the session including the need for knowledge integration; strengthened partnerships and collaboration with business sector, effective private enterprise and public policy/decision-making entities; the need to simplify and mainstream science, data and environmental information; the need for real-time data flows including monitoring systems; and the need to realize the critical link between health and environment.

The key messages from this session include:

- Science-based decision making remains the most effective approach for developing response options and mitigating problems; deployment of solutions has at its core technology and innovation which are enabling new ways for tackling complex problems (such as artificial intelligence systems).
- Growing awareness of the nexus between health and environment—in large part driven by advancements in science and technology – has revolutionized how decision-makers respond to complex environment pressures; there is for example improved understanding that the price of pollution is often paid in human lives, and that the health benefits generated by interventions can greatly offset their costs.
- Despite massive proliferation of (“big”) data and the advancements in data analytics and computing, attaining reliable and relevant information to our citizens and particularly those most vulnerable in an affordable and timely manner remains a key barrier.
- Technology, science and innovation contribute to improving early warning systems; this is of critical importance as our populations become increasingly concentrated and exposed to environmental threats (for example through urbanization).
- Mainstreaming science and making technological innovation both available and accessible is a critical next step; it is in particular important to think about new ways to engage with and

include youth and to bring together science and private industry, as they are important driving forces in leveraging technology and innovative solutions.

Leadership Dialogue 2: Regulatory Frameworks, Institutions and the Rule of Law to Address Pollution

This session explored why legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks are of such vital importance in effectively addressing pollution and how they can - and have been - used to empower governments, the private sector, civil society and individual citizens in the transition towards a pollution-free planet.

The key messages from this session include:

- Legal and regulatory frameworks are essential for tackling pollution, which does not respect borders and requires a cross-cutting response. A mix of legal instruments is needed for the achievement of political aspirations and to support policy. Legislation needs to be customized to suit national circumstances and provide adequate flexibility in order to achieve countries' defined targets. Robust institutions are a prerequisite for the implementation of the law.
- All stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society and citizens, should be engaged in addressing pollution. The rule of law empowers stakeholders to take action, which can be improved through greater transparency and access to information.
- Systemic challenges include long time frames required to enact new legislation, which is in contrast with the urgency of many environmental challenges. Once laws have been enacted, strong political will is required for effective implementation. Moreover, implementation requires enhanced financial resources, in particular in developing countries, and more can be done to effectively ensure punitive action for crimes relating to pollution.
- There is a need for greater international cooperation. Multilateral environmental agreements provide internationally-agreed ground rules on, among other things, tackling climate change, sound management of hazardous wastes and harmful chemicals, and the phase-out of ozone-depleting substances, all of which are designed to address pollution. At the regional level, various Conventions, notably in Europe, relating to waste, environmental impact assessment in a transboundary context, long-range transboundary air pollution, and access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters serve as good examples of cooperation at regional level. However, national legislation is absolutely necessary for their implementation. There is a need to learn from each agreement, and to share country experiences and best practices in the successful implementation of these agreements.
- The need for a comprehensive international legal instrument may be considered to assist in specifying environmental rights, tackling environmental damage, and provide a basis for a third generation of environmental law. UN Environment can play an important role to play to support such an initiative.

Leadership Dialogue 3: Practical Solutions Towards a Pollution Free Planet

This session discussed practical solutions on addressing pollution challenges and how those are supported by science, business, and innovation. Speakers were invited to share their experiences and lessons learnt, highlighting what they considered success factors. The discussions focused on air, land and soil, freshwater, marine and coastal, and waste.

The key messages from this session include:

- Partnerships comprises both public-private partnerships and multistakeholder partnerships across different levels – from federal to state, regional and local levels, including transboundary collaboration (such as the Global Soil Partnership).
- Data collection and analysis are of key importance for science-based decision-making and for establishing the economic and social costs of pollution.
- Effective communication, working from a common knowledge base, and making full use of scientific evidence is essential to promote practical solutions.
- Cheaper, more affordable and accessible new technologies can transform as well as adapt old and more polluting technologies; using new technologies such as the Internet, Global Positioning Systems and smartphones can for example promote public transportation, such as bike sharing.
- More involvement of the private sector is crucial, for example in finding options for de-risking through farming insurance and other financial instruments.
- In the context of land and soil pollution, proven practical solutions include rapid and cheap assessments to guide fertilizer use.
- Food should be produced without polluting our agriculture base, safeguarding the health and vitality of our land.
- Natural infrastructure can be used as an approach to pollution management, i.e. sustainable use of wetlands can be included as part of pollution and waste management strategies, to restore ecosystems, recycle and re-use wastewater. The use of bio-remediation was also discussed.
- Inclusive participation of all stakeholders is key to build a greater sense of ownership; for example, “electronic government” can minimize the need for travel to access public services.
- There is a need to use more holistic approaches – looking at regulation, pricing of freshwater, creating economic incentives for technologies development in an integrated manner –also to bring together responsible ministries (e.g. ministries of agriculture, energy, environment and finance).

- The innovative power of the private sector can be harnessed by using demonstration projects, provided it is kept under regulatory control.
- Regulation and economic incentives such as eco-taxes to support waste management is key to promote practical solutions, as is guidance for green public procurement.

Leadership Dialogue 4: Financing and Innovation to Combat Pollution

This session explored the importance of policy formulation in harnessing financing and innovation to combat pollution. Participants shared successful models of engaging with the private sector and financial institutions, of incentivising green investments, and of creating markets for more environmentally friendly and resource efficient goods and services.

The key messages from this session include:

- The scope of financing required to address the challenges of climate change, pollution and environmental degradation, while also promoting the transition to a green economy, requires significant efforts to optimize investment from the private sector.
- It is important to broaden efforts beyond 'climate finance' to leverage investments towards pollution abatements, resource efficiency and a green/circular economy.
- Providing platforms to gather relevant stakeholders and engage with the private sector and financial community has proved key to ensuring effective communication and collaboration and foster partnerships. This includes intra-governmental communication and cooperation. The convening power of international organisations is important in this respect.
- There is a range of policy instruments available to governments, including a) taxation, b) enabling regulation to modify behaviour, c) direct investment, d) leveraging the convening power, and d) leading the way for example through public procurement.
- Demonstrating the business opportunities has been key to engaging the private sector.
- There is a need for further training and skill development in sustainable finance and green sectors, in particular among youth.