

29 June 2018

Your Excellency,

On behalf of the UN Environment Programme, I would like to thank you for your *Note Verbale* dated 30 April 2018, and acknowledge receipt of the questions on the Greening the Belt and Road Initiative. We confirm our eagerness to communicate further with the United States and other Member States on this Initiative.

In the note attached, UN Environment Programme would like to clarify its overall position and engagement regarding the effort to green the Belt and Road Initiative.

UN Environment avails itself of the opportunity to renew to the Permanent Mission of United States the assurances of its highest consideration.



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UN Environment Programme response to U.S. queries on the Greening the Belt and Road Initiative

UN Environment Programme believes that its engagement with China's Belt and Road Initiative will serve the sustainable development interests of our Member States. By taking an active part in contributing to greening this unprecedented effort, our intention is not to promote the initiative itself, but rather to work within the boundaries of the existing context to ensure, insofar as we are able, that the outcomes of the initiative are as sustainable as possible. Our engagement will be guided by transparency and international best practices, standards and guidelines – such as in the areas of governance, impact assessment, public participation, decent work, gender equality, and information and data sharing.

1. Foundational documents and initial programme funding for the Belt and Road Initiative

General Assembly resolution [2997 \(XXVII\)](#) of 15 December 1972 directs the UN Environment Programme “to provide, at the request of all parties concerned, advisory services for the promotion of international co-operation in the field of the environment”.¹ This includes providing guidance and advice on how investment and business practices can be made more sustainable. We also do this in support of the overall directive, given by our Secretary-General in May 2017 at the opening of the Belt and Road Forum, to support strengthening the links between the (Belt and Road) Initiative and the Sustainable Development Goals.²

Our engagement with China has arisen in response to a formal request dated 8 December 2016. On this basis, UN Environment entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Environmental Protection (now Ministry of Ecology and Environment) of the People's Republic of China in which the two parties agreed to work together to promote international cooperation to green the Belt and Road Initiative. I provide a copy of this Memorandum of Understanding as an Annex to this letter.

Although the MOU is signed with China only, through our work under the Initiative, we will be serving the needs of a number of Member States based on their expressed requests. Our work with all relevant partners – including governments, NGOs, research institutions, businesses, civil society groups, and financial institutions in China and other participating countries – is to contribute to policy environments and sustainable management practices including economic, social, and environmental safeguards, green procurement, and green investment and financing frameworks.

One of the avenues for this cooperation is the fostering of an international Coalition for Greening the Belt and Road Initiative. This Coalition, which we hope to launch in the fourth quarter of 2018, will become one focus area for our work thereafter. It will also serve the primary platform for

¹ General Assembly resolution [2997 \(XXVII\)](#) of 15 December 1972, operative paragraph 2e. Also see: UNEA resolution 2/5 “Delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

² <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2017-05-14/secretary-general%E2%80%99s-remarks-opening-belt-and-road-forum-delivered>.

engaging with Chinese stakeholders, and for facilitating dialogue between Chinese stakeholders and those from other countries through which the Belt and Road Initiative will pass. As we noted at the Committee of Permanent Representatives' meeting on 19 April, the Coalition is an open, inclusive partnership and welcomes all interested countries to join.

The implementation of the MOU will be fully funded by the Chinese Trust Fund. We are currently setting up the internal mechanisms to support the implementation of the MOU.

2. Alignment with the Programme of Work of UN Environment Programme, and modalities for managing the greening of the Belt and Road Initiative

The greening of the Belt and Road Initiative directly contributes to our Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work, and cuts across several Sub-Programmes – most crucially, the Resource Efficiency Sub-Programme, with direct input into the following expected accomplishments:

- “Science-based approaches that support the transition to sustainable development through multiple pathways, including inclusive green economy and sustainable trade, and the adoption of sustainable consumption and production patterns at all levels”; and
- “Public, private and financial sectors increasingly adopt and implement sustainable management frameworks and practices”.

Our work through the Coalition, in particular, is also closely linked to the Climate Change, Healthy and Productive Ecosystems, Environmental Governance, and Environment Under Review Sub-Programmes.

For example, the Greening the Belt and Road Initiative aims to strengthen national legal frameworks in participating countries. This will help to ensure that social and environmental safeguards are effective and that best practices in participatory processes and stakeholder engagement are in place. This will, in turn, contribute directly to the Environmental Governance Sub-Programme's Expected Accomplishment (b) “Institutional capacities and policy and/or legal frameworks enhanced to achieve internationally agreed environmental goals, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.”

All projects related to our greening of the Belt and Road Initiative will follow standard, approved UN Environment project management procedures and will report to Member States through the required quarterly and annual reporting.

3. Process for engaging and updating member states on the progress of the Greening the Belt and Road Initiative

UN Environment's effort to green the Belt and Road Initiative aims to be as transparent and open as possible to all our Member States. We have already provided a dedicated briefing to Member States on 19 April. We are at the disposal of our Member States to hold more such sessions, especially in the forum of the Committee of Permanent Representatives in Nairobi, or elsewhere, as the circumstances require. We welcome suggestions from our Member States on this matter, and look forward to providing whatever information is required.