
Guidance note: Leadership Dialogues at fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly

A key feature of the high/level segment of the 2019 UN Environment Assembly will be a series of high-level, interactive Leadership Dialogues, as well as a Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue. These Dialogues are designed to provide ministers and leaders from civil society, business community, and international organizations with the opportunity to engage in an interactive exchange of views on priorities, best practices, challenges and actions relating to the overall theme of the Assembly: **Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production.**

During the Dialogues, high level participants will have the opportunity to address key issues relating to the theme of the Assembly and to the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, to create a political momentum and direction towards addressing key policy and action gaps at the global, regional, national and local levels. Participants are invited to share “real-life” narratives, best practices and innovative ideas for overcoming challenges and scaling up solutions. The Dialogues will be guided by the report of the Executive Director for the high-level segment and informed by the negotiations on the draft Ministerial Outcome Document and relevant resolutions to be adopted by the Assembly.

In line with the guidance provided by the Bureaux of the UN Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives, as well as informal consultations with interested member States and Stakeholders, the themes of the Dialogues will be as follows¹:

- Leadership Dialogue 1 (4 to 5.30 pm, 14 March 2019): **“Environmental challenges related to poverty and natural resources management, including sustainable food systems, food security and halting biodiversity loss”**;
- Leadership Dialogue 2 (10 to 11.30 am, 15 March 2019): **“Life-cycle approaches to resource efficiency, energy, chemicals and waste management”**;
- Leadership Dialogue 3 (11.30 to 1 pm, 15 March 2019): **“Innovative sustainable business development at a time of rapid technological change”**.

The sessions will be open to high level representatives from Member States, non-Member States, UN specialized agencies and bodies, other intergovernmental organizations and accredited major groups and stakeholders. Each dialogue will be led by a qualified moderator with prior experience in the field, and the participants will be invited to target their interventions to answer the following cross-cutting questions:

*Document revised on 12 February 2019

¹ The Focus Areas are identical with those identified in the Secretariat Concept Note on the theme of the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly, available here:

<http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25994/English.pdf?sequence=15&isAllowed=y>

- *How do political commitments in the Ministerial Declaration to be adopted by the Fourth Session of the UN Environment Assembly contribute to finding solutions within the Focus Area?*
- *How does the Focus Area relate to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals?*
- *How can the global community promote science-based decision making in this Focus Area, building on the findings in the sixth Global Environment Outlook?*

Structure of the Leadership Dialogues

The meeting of the Bureaux of the UN Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives on 6 February 2019 approved the following modality for the 3 Leadership Dialogues featured at the high-level segment of the 2019 UN Environment Assembly.

A moderator for each Dialogue will provide background information and set the scene on the topic. This would be followed by interventions from expert invited speakers who will support through a diversity of views a holistic understanding that will enrich the Dialogue.

Additionally, the meeting of the Bureaux approved the modality of pre-registering Contributing Ministers (Minister and/or Head of Delegation), who will be welcomed to provide interventions on the topic of the Dialogue, to maximize the interactions by countries. In this sense, it was suggested that each Dialogue would welcome the interventions by up to 20 Contributing Ministers. If time permits, more Contributing Ministers will be welcomed to provide their contributions.

Inscription on the list of Contributing Ministers on a first-come, first-served basis, for the Leadership Dialogues is now open. Delegations wishing to inscribe their Minister and/or Head of Delegation on the list of Contributing Ministers are kindly requested to do so by sending an email to Ms. Amanda Cabrejo le Roux (Amanda.cabrejo@un.org) indicating their preference of Leadership Dialogue, preferably before the Friday 1st March 2019. An email of acknowledgement will be sent after the submission of the request for inscription. International Organization and UN entities wishing to participate are also invited to communicate their preferences.

The Dialogues will be webcast on the Internet, and a summary of the outcome of each of the Dialogues prepared by the Secretariat will be made available as part of the Report of the Assembly. The moderators of each dialogues will share key insights during the wrap-up plenary of the Assembly on 15 March 2019.

The main background document for the three leadership dialogues is the Report of the Executive Director entitled “Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production” UNEP/EA.4/17 available in all official languages at <http://web.unep.org/environmentassembly/theme-fourth-session-un-environment-assembly>

The list of participants for each dialogues will be posted in the Environment Assembly website on the 4th of March at the following link <http://web.unep.org/environmentassembly/theme-fourth-session-un-environment-assembly>

Leadership Dialogue 1: *Environmental challenges related to poverty and natural resources management, including sustainable food systems, food security and halting biodiversity loss*

Time: 3.00 – 4.30 pm, 14 March 2019

Venue: Conference Room 1 (interpretation into all official UN languages)

Key messages from the Executive Director's report to the fourth UN Environment Assembly:

- Poverty eradication, changing unsustainable and promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production, protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development, are the overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development.
 - “Innovation” is meant in the broadest sense of the word, not limited to technology, but rather a mind-set or an enabling culture accessible to all countries and organizations alike, which includes streamlining and simplifying processes and removing barriers to act as an enabler of innovation – “doing different things and doing things differently”.
 - Governance instruments can help create a cultural framework in which innovation thrives. Getting the right mix of governance instruments to stimulate innovative solutions is crucial. Policy frameworks and governance instruments, driven by leaders who are committed to change, can provide powerful drivers for innovation in the environmental sphere.
 - Investing widely in environmental education within the framework of sustainable development, with a strong gender focus, can foster a generation that innovates and adapts more rapidly to innovations that address global environmental challenges.
 - To drive investments in circular, green and low-carbon growth and align global financing and investments with the 2030 Agenda, Governments and regulators must pay increased attention to the “rules of the game” governing financial and capital markets.
 - Climate change is a threat multiplier. Increases in atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations have put the world on an extended warming trajectory that, without rapid decarbonization, are projected to lead to sea-level rise, ocean warming and acidification and increases in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events such as severe flooding and wildfires and the spread of zoonoses and infectious diseases. Climate change can also amplify existing risks, especially in States that lack the institutional capacity to plan and sustainably manage natural resources.
 - Food systems are putting increasing pressure on our environment.
 - Maximizing sustainable agricultural productivity is critical to eradicating poverty, creating income opportunities, enhancing inclusive socio-economic growth and reducing vulnerabilities across the globe.
 - Long-term global food security depends largely on a shift towards sustainable food systems.
 - Embracing at all levels a holistic approach to food security and nutrition will help to eradicate poverty and achieve multiple Sustainable Development Goals.
 - We can create the momentum to reduce food losses and halve waste among consumers and promote more sustainable and healthier diets.
 - We need to invest in resilient, climate-smart agriculture and sustainable value chains.
 - Individual actions can go a long way to achieve sustainable food-systems.
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Leadership Dialogue 2: *Life-cycle approaches to resource efficiency, energy, chemicals and waste management*

Time: 10.00 – 11.30 am, 15 March 2019

Venue: Conference Room 1 (interpretation into all official UN languages)

Key messages from the Executive Director's report to the fourth UN Environment Assembly:

- Life-cycle approaches and strategies are essential tools to decoupling economic activity and human well-being from resource use and negative environmental impacts.
 - Regulations can be used to set environmental targets, or to mandate or prohibit specific practices.
 - Public procurement policies can stimulate demand for sustainable products.
 - New governance approaches and partnerships are required to support the transition to sustainable consumption and production.
 - Achieving sustainable patterns of consumption and production requires cooperation across a wider range of government agencies, strategic macro-level planning of the necessary supporting infrastructure and more successful, larger-scale public-private partnerships than have generally been seen to date.
 - We must support governments and other stakeholders to act on the ground.
 - At the global level, the One Planet Network is a key global multi-stakeholder partnership anchored in the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns and its six thematic programmes adopted at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. A global commitment to implementing the network's strategy is required to support innovation and the development of more sustainable value chains in developing countries.
 - Research and innovation are key to strengthening life-cycle management and resource efficiency.
 - Transparency can unlock practical, affordable and innovative environmental solutions and open opportunities for sustainable investments
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Leadership Dialogue 3: *Innovative sustainable business development at a time of rapid technological change*

Time: 11.30 am – 1.00 pm, 15 March 2019

Venue: Conference Room 1 (interpretation into all official UN languages);

Key messages from the Executive Director's report to the fourth UN Environment Assembly:

- Rapid technological change, if managed properly, can help unlock a vast set of opportunities to widen prosperity and generate long-term sustainable value from innovative solutions that encourage natural systems to flourish and entrepreneurship to grow.
- Businesses that adopt sustainable innovative business models create significant value for themselves and for society.¹⁰ Such new approaches appeal to businesses because they allow them to: reach new markets and customers, including low-income consumers; access untapped demand by providing a solution that exists nowhere else in the market; and enjoy resource efficiency benefits that multiply across their entire supply chain.
- We need to harness the power of businesses and citizens as active co-creators and problem solvers.

- We must invest in data sharing and participatory science.
- Governments, companies and citizens should consider how a digital ecosystem for planetary data will be built, financed and governed to benefit the environment.
- We urgently need system-wide transformations based on innovation, circularity and sustainable consumption and production, as well as green investments to reduce waste and pollution. Delivering impact often involves system-wide, multi-benefit policymaking that ensures implementation and protects the very poor and vulnerable. The steps proposed by the International Resource Panel constitute a useful guide for member States in this context.