

Second Joint Preparatory Retreat of the Bureaux  
of the UN Environment Assembly and  
the Committee of Permanent Representatives  
9 – 10 June 2017  
Hotel Villa Caletas (Pacífico Central)  
Puntarenas, Costa Rica  
Agenda item 7

**Note by the Secretariat on the High-level Political Forum on  
Sustainable Development**

The Secretariat submits a note on the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which shall take place from 10 to 19 July in New York under the theme “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”. It will support discussions under Agenda item 7: Political Visibility of the Assembly, at the Second Joint Preparatory Retreat of the Bureaux of the UN Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to be held on 9 – 10 June 2017.

As an annex to the note, the Secretariat has included the following document:

- Note on the draft key messages for the Statement of H.E. Edgar Gutiérrez Espeleta, President of the United Nations Environment Assembly, to the 2017 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

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## Update on the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

1. The 2017 session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (the Forum) is taking place from 10 to 19 July in New York (with a 3-day ministerial meeting from 17 to 19 July) under the theme “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”.<sup>1</sup>
2. The UN Environment plans to engage actively in the Political Forum with a view to: 1) assessing the extent to which Member States are effectively integrating the environmental dimension of sustainable development in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and identify opportunities for the UN Environment to help Member States in bridging any gap in implementation; 2) exploring ways to strengthen the contributions of the UN Environment Assembly to the Forum, including to its outcomes and to the monitoring of the progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals; and, 3) supporting the President of the UN Environment Assembly in his engagement with the Forum.
3. At the request of the President of the Economic and Social Council to the President of the UN Environment Assembly, the UN Environment has submitted the inputs of the UN Environment Assembly to the Forum in consultation with Member States (attached). Among others, the inputs stressed the importance of effective governance for tackling major environmental challenge such as illegal trade in wildlife and marine pollution, which are also addressed through respective resolutions adopted at the second session of the Environment Assembly. The inputs further shed light on emerging issues of environmental concern, including zoonoses – diseases that can be passed on between animals and humans – and toxic accumulation in crops due to climate change, as presented in the 2016 UN Environment Frontiers Report.
4. In the margins of the Forum, the UN Environment plans to organize various side events. In response to the call made by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Secretariat has submitted 4 side event proposals on the following topics. The selection of proposals is expected to be communicated by mid-June.
  - Resource smart food systems: from science to policy action
  - Are resilience and poverty eradication mutually reinforcing?
  - Advancing the human rights and environment nexus: putting the Sustainable Development Goals in the context of the right to a healthy environment
  - Five years from Rio+20: how has environmental governance evolved to sustain the 2030 Agenda?

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<sup>1</sup> In particular, the 2017 session will focus on:

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

**Draft key messages for the Statement of H.E. Edgar Gutiérrez Espeleta, President of the United Nations Environment Assembly, to the 2017 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, under the theme "*Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world*"**

- As President of the United Nations Environment Assembly, I am honoured to transmit the high-level political messages and policy recommendations, on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ways to accelerate progress. I present the Forum with these messages considering the UN General Assembly's resolution 71/231 and the UN Environment Assembly's resolution 2/5.
- The United Nations Environment Assembly represents the world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment and addresses the critical environmental challenges facing the world today, including the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. It has a well-defined role of serving as the world's authoritative voice on environmental matters across the UN System. With this overarching mandate and its universal membership, it is uniquely placed to interact with the Forum at the institutional, political and substantive levels, contributing to the effective implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in an integrated manner.
- The integration of the political outcomes of the Environment Assembly is essential for the realization of the comprehensive implementation, monitoring and review of global sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda.
- The United Nations Environment Assembly emphasized that UNEP, within its mandate, has an important role in the follow up and review of the progress in implementing the environmental dimension of sustainable development, including the provision of policy relevant information, through assessment processes. The work of the UN Environment Assembly should support the overall follow up and review by this Forum, including through the continuation of UNEP's work on indicators to monitor the delivery of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda.
- Approximately 70 per cent of the world's poor depend on natural resources for their livelihoods. Ecosystem services and other non-market goods make up between 50 and 90 per cent of the total source of livelihoods among poor rural and forest-dwelling households worldwide.
- The world continues to face serious environmental challenges, such as climate change, ecosystem degradation, biodiversity loss, water scarcity and ocean pollution and acidification, which are compounded by growing demographic pressures and unsustainable patterns of consumption and production in some areas.
- While evidence clearly outlines the interrelationships between poverty and environment, limited country-level capacity and governance mechanisms to mainstream interlinked objectives into decision-making processes, inhibit sustainable development. Adequate normative and policy foundations are essential.

- Expanding poverty-environment mainstreaming in policies, plans and budgets to include the promotion of quality investments creates the potential to simultaneously improve livelihoods, health and the resilience of poor men and women and to sustainably manage the environment and address climate change.
- At the second session of the UN Environment Assembly in May 2016, 174 countries convened to discuss and take action on major environmental issues that constrain the prospect for achieving sustainable development. Ranging from the environment-health nexus to massive food waste and sand and dust storms, these issues on the agenda of the UN Environment Assembly already have a visible impact at local, regional and global levels.
- The resolutions and decisions adopted will have a profound impact on the delivery of 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. It also recognises the importance of strengthening the science-policy interface to address pressing environmental challenges and enhancing actions that could eliminate global poverty while deepening the relationship between health and environment.
- Member States recognise that authentic sustainable development outcomes cannot be achieved if development action remains within traditional social, economic and environmental silos. Instead, a more holistic or “integrated” approach is necessary. The sustainable use of the environment and natural resources is a prerequisite to “end poverty in all its forms everywhere.” Efforts to eradicate poverty and ensure durable growth are directly linked to improving management of the environment and natural resources, and vice versa.
- The resolutions adopted at the second session aim to raise political awareness and catalyse policy action on these and other specific environmental challenges, based on the sound science being brought by UN Environment to policy makers and to provide the early warning that allows the international community to act.
- Through regular reviews and assessments, including the periodic Global Environment Outlook, UN Environment continues to ensure that everyone, in particular marginalized and vulnerable groups, including women, benefits from mainstreaming environmental considerations into development planning.
- In order to ensure that the voices of stakeholders are adequately heard at the highest level, the UN Environment Assembly is mandated to initiate new multi-stakeholder partnerships, and strengthen existing ones, to contribute to delivering the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The work of UN Environment demonstrates that sustained poverty eradication and prosperity are possible only if integrated and balanced approaches are taken to sustainable development in partnership with multiple stakeholders. Emphasis was placed on promoting cooperation with financial institutions and the private sector, which is at the forefront of science, technology and innovation. While leveraging the capital and expertise of the private sector to protect and restore the environment, UN Environment cooperates directly with industries and enterprises to reduce adverse environmental impacts
- This forum should allow us to discuss how to apply an integrated approach in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, breaking down silos for delivery, building understanding,

capacity and skills for changing the “business as usual” model as well as developing creative strategic partnerships across stakeholders.

- The UN Environment Assembly advocates a healthy environment as the basis for long-term prosperity and takes integrated approaches to sustainable development which demonstrate that improving the environment brings social and economic benefits, including contribution to the eradication of poverty and creating opportunities for sustainable development and growth. A healthy environment is a condition for prosperity.
- With this in mind and considering that in 2012, 56 million people died worldwide and of those, nine million died from pollution related deaths, Member States have decided to have Pollution as the central theme of the third session of the UN Environment Assembly. Pollution is the single global problem that can be managed and eliminated in our lifetime.
- The United Nations Environment Assembly will continue contributing to this important platform sharing experiences regarding the effective integration of the environmental dimension in implementing, monitoring and reporting on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.