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United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme

142nd meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme

Nairobi, 10 May 2018

10:00 a.m to 1:00 p.m and 2:30 p.m to 5:30 p.m.

Conference Room 1

Draft concept note for the theme of the 4th United Nations Environment Assembly

This draft concept note has been prepared by the Secretariat in follow-up to the first joint preparatory retreat of the bureaux of the UN Environment Assembly and of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to support further deliberations by Member States on the agreed theme for the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly: “*Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production*”.

The note outlines a rationale for the theme and proposes a set of key objectives and potential outcomes associated with the theme. Member States and stakeholders are invited to provide preliminary views on this note during the 142nd Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

The Secretariat looks forward to receiving any comments in writing before 20 May 2018 to unep.sgb@unep.org, copied to Ms. Brennan Van Dyke (brennan.vandyke@un.org) and Mr. Dirk Wagener (dirk.wagener@un.org).

On the basis of feedback received, the Secretariat will revise the concept note for further consideration and finalization.

The Theme

Innovative solutions, covering policies, financing, technologies, partnerships and multi-stakeholder processes – are key both to solving many environmental challenges, as well as to accelerating sustainable development more generally. This recognition of the need of transformative change to support Agenda 2030, already highlighted in at the 2nd and 3rd sessions of the UN Environment Assembly, directly underpins the choice of the overarching theme for the fourth session of the Environment Assembly by Member States in Nairobi in March 2019.

The *Sixth Global Environment Outlook* and the *Global Assessment of Natural Resource Use and Management*, two assessments to be presented at the Fourth Assembly, both have as a key recommendation the need to foster urgent and sustained action using system-wide policy approaches that lead to transformational change.

The theme of the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly also clearly relates to Agenda 2030, particularly to Goal 12 on “ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns” and provides the Assembly an opportunity to mainstream this Goal in the delivery of other Goals.

Because innovation is a broad concept, it will be important to clarify the focus and the boundaries within which the fourth environment assembly will explore innovative solutions. How can this Assembly approach the theme to ensure that the Assembly delivers concrete, pragmatic progress and impact in terms of Agenda

“Science, technology and innovation cannot be confined to the use of new technologies or software. Innovation is a mindset and an attitude. It means questioning assumptions, rethinking established systems and procedures and introducing new strategies.” Ban Ki Moon, Former Secretary General

2030 and key environmental challenges? In other words: *How can policy instruments, moral authority, public advocacy, and intellectual, financial, legal and technological resources, be most effectively organized, disseminated, deployed, and scaled up worldwide to promote the development and widespread uptake of innovative solutions to address environmental challenges and promote sustainable consumption and production?*

This question cuts across many focal areas and engages large segments of the Major Groups and Stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society. An exploration of how the public sector can catalyze and facilitate the development and deployment of innovative solutions will focus on the development of new and strengthening of existing partnerships between these stakeholders. Often the cooperation of complimentary actors will most effectively facilitate the design of innovative solutions and their application at scale.

A focus on innovative solutions can be organized to consider the drivers of, and most common barriers to, innovation for environmental challenges and how the various sets of actors influence these drivers and barriers, and how they can most effectively respond to them.

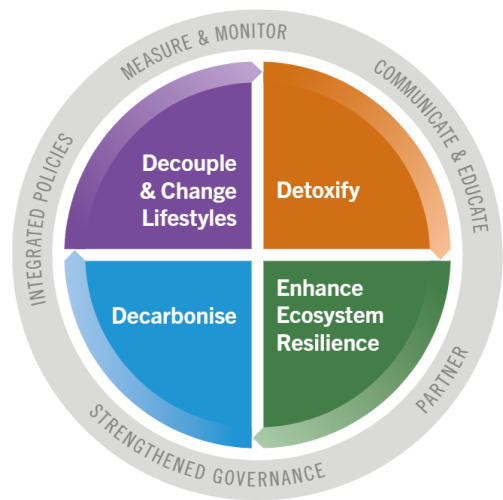
Proposed Note

The proposed note is elaborated with the view to:

- establishing clear conceptual boundaries that will help the Secretariat organize key components of the Assembly, such as the leadership dialogues; and
- supporting discussions amongst Member States and key stakeholders toward a set of pragmatic conclusions and outcomes.

The aim is to deliver a focused Assembly that explores how to meet environmental challenges and shift more widely and at scale to sustainable consumption and production through innovation and broad partnerships.

The proposed note will build on discussions that took place at the second session of the Environment Assembly in 2016, and use the framework of integrated lines of action then recommended to address the nexus of environment and health, namely the three D's and E: *de-carbonize, de-toxify, decouple resource use and change lifestyles, and enhance ecosystem resilience and protection of the planet's natural systems*. The second Assembly recognized that directly tackling the interlinkages between the environment and human health through those four lines of action can provide a common platform and multiplier effect to address environmental challenges. This will advance many of the Sustainable Development Goals and deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in accordance with its role and mandate within the UN system.



The note will also show how the fourth session of the Environment Assembly will help advance on action towards a pollution-free planet which underpinned the deliberations at the third session of the Assembly. By exploring innovative solutions being used to meet the third Environment Assembly voluntary commitments the fourth Assembly can increase our practical understanding of how to drive innovation that counters pollution.

As a starting point, it is clear that new sources of growth are urgently needed to help move towards a stronger, more inclusive and sustainable economic development. Innovation is a critical part of how to achieve this. While not being a goal in itself, innovation provides the foundation for new businesses, new jobs and new solutions to environmental challenges and is thus an important driver of sustainable development and poverty reduction. Innovation is indispensable to addressing pressing global environmental and social challenges, including demographic shifts, increasing resource scarcity and the changing climate. Moreover, innovation can also help address these challenges at lower cost, or even negative cost (i.e., delivering a profitable return on investment). Innovative economies are more productive, more resilient, and more adaptable to change.

Harnessing innovation requires policies that reflect the realities of innovation. Innovation goes beyond science and technology and involves investments in a wide range of knowledge-based assets. Social and organizational innovations, including new business models, are increasingly important to the development and implementation of new solutions. Innovation also involves a wide and expanding range of actors, including firms, entrepreneurs, foundations and non-profit organisations, universities, scientific institutes, public sector agencies, citizens, and consumers, often working in close collaboration. Innovation also has a strong and ever-expanding basis in the digital economy, facilitated by the growth of mobile telecommunications, the convergence of voice, video and data to the internet, and the rapid uptake of data and sensors (the internet of things).

A focus on innovative solutions can be organized to consider the drivers of, and most common barriers to, innovation for environmental sustainability and how the various sets of actors influence these drivers and barriers, and are influenced by them. It would not be efficient, however, to examine the drivers of innovation and the ideal roles of the different actors during each stage in the abstract. Consequently, the focal area priorities of Member States will also factor into how the Environment Assembly is organized to address innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production.

The fourth session can thus (i) deepen the discussion on key actions and responses to environmental challenges to address all forms of global and local pollution through improved resource efficiency as well as regulatory frameworks, innovative policies, financing approaches and sustained lifestyle changes,; (ii) increase our understanding of how to drive innovation and address barriers and challenges to scale up actions, and (iii) directly contribute to taking forward outcomes from previous sessions of the Environment Assembly and Agenda 2030 in this context.

Possible Outline:

1. Define the key environmental challenges based on the Sixth Global Environmental Outlook Report, the Global Assessment of Natural Resource Use (International Resource Panel) and the Global Chemicals Outlook, among other major UN assessments.
2. Build on the integrated framework of actions: “3 D’s and E” (de-carbonize, de-toxify, decouple resource use and change lifestyles, and enhance ecosystem resilience and protection of the planet’s natural systems);
3. Focus on barriers, challenges and opportunities for, by identifying innovative solutions to enable actions/scale up actions to meet environmental challenges.
4. Scale up implementation on actions set out in paragraph 8 (a-n) of the Ministerial Declaration of the third session of the Assembly and support the Plan of Implementation requested at the Assembly;
5. Provide a basis for improvements within UN Environment Programme to develop a more effective culture of innovation
6. Identify and develop mechanisms for scaling up the use of innovative solutions for meeting the voluntary commitments to contribute to a pollution free planet.

7. Enhance partnerships (including with the private sector and civil society) to accelerate and scale up innovations to activate new financing opportunities
8. Identify and develop mechanisms for scaling up the implementation of and financing innovation of the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production.
9. Develop a “World We Want” dashboard to collect innovative solutions from every corner of the world that would build explicitly on the 3D’s and E framework and the voluntary pollution commitments.

Tentative roadmap

The Secretariat proposes the following roadmap for further consideration by Member States:

- 19 April: Initial discussion at the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives
- 10 May: Presentation of a draft concept note/outline to the meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives
- Mid/end of May: Second discussion at a subcommittee meeting
- Mid-June: Discussion and endorsement of the draft concept note by the Bureau of the Environment Assembly
- June/July: Final concept note posted on the website for guidance to Member States and stakeholders
- July-October: development of the Executive Director’s report, building on the concept note