



## **Key Messages from Canadian Major Groups and Stakeholders Regional Consultation on Delivering on the Environmental Dimension of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda**

*March 23<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
55 Metcalfe Street, Suite 560,  
Ottawa, Ontario*

### ***Draft for review by participants***

*This document is intended to reflect areas of general consensus that emerged from the consultation, but should not be read as an official position or endorsement by the individuals and organizations in attendance.*

The United Nations Environment Programme's Regional Office for North America (UNEP RONA) convened a half-day round-table consultation in Ottawa, Ontario on March 23rd, 2016, with Canadian-based Major Groups and Stakeholder representatives, civil society, and government officials. The objective of the meeting was to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to provide input into the upcoming United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEPA 2) to be held in Nairobi, Kenya from 23 – 27 May, 2016. The consultation focused on two issues that will be central to the UNEPA agenda: *Delivering the Environmental Dimension of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda* and *Healthy Environment – Healthy People*.

The first session of the meeting on the topic of delivering the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda was facilitated by Scott Vaughan, President and CEO of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), an independent, non-profit and non-governmental research organization founded in Canada in 1990. The second session on "Healthy Environment-Healthy People" was facilitated by Kate White, President and CEO of the United Nations Association of Canada.

Patricia Beneke, Regional Director for UNEP's Regional Office for North America, delivered the opening presentation, which provided an introduction to UNEP's global work and its regional priorities. Ms. Beneke also described how the 2030 Agenda integrates the economic, social, and environmental pillars that underpin sustainable development and noted that the SDGs are universally applicable.

John Cooper, Acting Director General, Safe Environments Program, Health Canada, provided remarks focused on the direct and indirect linkages between health and environment, and the work of the federal government in air, water, chemical management, climate and food issues.

He emphasized the importance of collaboration, goals and commitments in addressing health and the environment and to identify solutions.

Participants engaged in a lively roundtable discussion focused on the topics described above. Key messages that emerged from the dialogue on opportunities and challenges in implementing the environmental dimensions of the sustainable development goals in Canada include:

- Canada has new opportunities to think broadly about sustainable development and is committed to implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.
- Canada is in the process of finalizing the *Federal Sustainable Development Strategy 2016-2019*, which provides a prospect to integrate aspects of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs with the national strategy.
- A more robust presence and leadership of the federal government is needed to facilitate the implementation of the SDGs across sectors as well as at the provincial level.
- There needs to be a set baseline for metrics and indicators to allow monitoring and tracking progress in the implementation and reporting of the SDGs. However, this should not distract from achieving the commitments.
- Innovation in both partnerships and financing will play a key role in implementing the environmental dimensions of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.
- Sharing best practices in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and the relevance to the North American region can be beneficial to both the US and Canada, and other similar countries.
- Stronger language should be used in UNEA's resolutions to address critical issues such as illegal trade in wildlife, which is a complex issue that goes beyond elephants and rhinos to challenging regulated competitive markets such as paper sourced illegally. Increased cooperation with countries in East Asia and engaging in demand reduction for such products in those regions is vital. Raising public awareness in North America is also critical, as it is a destination for illegal wildlife and illegal wildlife products.
- A key challenge in Canada is how to ensure that local communities and indigenous people benefit from the sustainable use of wildlife domestically.
- While the universality and the integrated nature of the goals were recalled, emphasis was placed on a number of goals – namely:
  - Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture
  - Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
  - Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
  - Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

- Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

On the subject of how we achieve improved environmental quality and enhanced human well-being, participants remarked:

- Science and research is a key priority for the new Canadian Government.
- It is important to continually research the impacts of environmental quality on health, and share the outcomes with the general public including medical professionals as well as underprivileged communities that are prone to the negative health impacts.
- North America has the capability of providing technical assistance and experience on environmental problems impacting health through bilateral opportunities for knowledge transfer.
- Cost-benefit analyses should take into account the costs of addressing environmental issues and the resulting health impacts when considering policies to address issues such as air pollution.
- Local communities, practitioners, and organizations should be empowered to use existing knowledge to find locally appropriate practical solutions to environmental health issues.
- Connecting climate change and its impacts on health can make the issue more immediate and personal, helping to drive actions to combat climate change.
- Traceability in supply and value chain of fisheries is important. Existing mechanisms should be leveraged to meet traceability requirements for small-scale fisheries and fishing operations.
- Other key questions that were raised include: Are we coming up with solutions fast enough that take into account customer behavior? How do we bring the costs to health and ecological footprint (externalities) into the costs of products and goods? Can eco-labeling play a role? Do environmental aspects of trade policies have health impacts?

Participants also discussed the role of UNEP in encouraging the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and called for:

- Continued engagement with civil society and greater transparency.
- Widely distribute the Global Environmental Outlook North American Regional Assessment.

- Help identify linkages between stakeholders in Canada and other UN agencies working on issues of relevance to UNEP.

## Participant List

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Meg	Beckel	<i>Canadian Museum of Nature</i>
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