

Private Sector Engagement for the 2017 UN Environment Assembly

Introduction

The UN Environment Assembly, the United Nations' highest-level decision-making body on the environment, provides a unique global platform for convening stakeholders from government, civil society and the private sector to collectively determine the path that will address the shared and unprecedented environmental challenges the world is facing and deliver on the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

UN Environment took a first step in this direction by hosting the *Sustainable Innovation Expo* in the second session of the Environment Assembly in May 2016. The *Expo* brought together about 300 experts from both public and private sectors to address some of the most critical and prevalent global environmental issues, such as: air pollution, sustainable energy, healthy oceans, natural capital, rapid urbanization and waste management.

The third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, under the overarching theme of pollution, will continue to provide a platform for the private sector to engage with Ministers of the Environment, other senior policy-makers, and relevant stakeholders through (a) the *Leadership Dialogues* and (b) the *2017 World Innovation and Technology Hub*. These Dialogues and the Hub will create possibilities for partnerships for collectively addressing the world's environmental challenges, while protecting the ecological boundaries of the planet for future generations.

As a follow up to the *Expo*, UN Environment held a number of important meetings which will contribute to defining how the private sector could benefit from engaging with UN Environment and the Environment Assembly. They include the UN Environment Finance Initiative Global Roundtable in Dubai (25-27 October 2016) which brought together nearly 400 participants from all parts of the financial system to discuss sustainable finance. On 18 November 2016, the International Resource Panel High-level Dialogue in Paris brought together some 150 participants from both public and private sectors to look at opportunities for collaboration on natural resource management and the economic potential of resource efficiency improvements across different sectors.

On 24 November 2016, UN Environment organized the *Consultative Roundtable and Dinner-in-Conversation* in Copenhagen on engaging the private sector in the Nordic countries. Funded by the Danish government, the *Roundtable* helped to define the platform on engaging the private sector in partnerships for achieving environmental sustainability through the Environment Assembly.

Most recently, UN Environment organized a *Leaders Breakfast* on the margins of the Second Ministerial Conference of the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) in Berlin. The Breakfast on 28 March 2017 brought together leading policymakers and private sector representatives in an interactive discussion on creating the policies and partnerships that will

ensure that sustainability thrives, that the Sustainable Development Goals are achieved and that the elements for promoting inclusive and sustainable economies are in place. More specifically it focused on partnering to tackle the most pervasive forms of pollution as the theme of the 2017 Environment Assembly (4-6 December 2017).

Additional meetings are planned in the run-up to the Assembly, which will bring together Ministers and senior Government officials with private sector leaders. The purpose of these meetings is to foster a dialogue between the various stakeholders on the theme of pollution. Each meeting will focus on a specific aspect of pollution with the aim of encouraging commitments and pledges from all stakeholders in order to tackle pollution.

Leadership Dialogues

The proposed activity for the engagement of private sector during the 2017 UN Environment Assembly is the organization of five *Leadership Dialogues* which will take place over three days and will bring together ministers of environment, other senior policy-makers, leaders of business and civil society for collective attention to the Assembly's multifaceted theme of pollution. Each *Leadership Dialogue* could focus on one of the pervasive forms of pollution as defined as a priority by Member States (air pollution, water pollution, marine pollution, chemical and waste pollution and land pollution).

The *Dialogues*, which will be professionally moderated, will consist of ministers of environment and leaders from the private sector, including Danish and Nordic businesses. They aim to generate powerful discussions that build on the dynamic and interactive format of other leading fora, such as the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The *Dialogues* will be thought-provoking and will inform participants on scaling-up solutions and incentivize them to give commitments/pledges that will contribute to a healthy planet.

These *Dialogues* will also generate critical discussions among top environment and business leaders as well as members of the global community who have already made major commitments to tackle pollution and could inspire others to do the same. As leaders in development and sustainability policies, they can especially help to drive these commitments for a healthier planet.

Objectives:

1. **Raise awareness of pollution:** highlight the pollution challenges by demonstrating its impact on children, health, ecosystems, economies and livelihoods. Give the problem and its solutions a human face and rally positive actions towards a pollution-free planet.
2. **Support countries' actions:** highlight local, national and global success stories in tackling pollution and publicize voluntary commitments and pledges by Member States, private sector and civil society.
3. **Legacy:** the 2017 Environment Assembly will be remembered for the commitments and pledges to a pollution-free planet, which UN Environment keeps under review.

Commitments and Pledges

Commitments and pledges are an important basis for the *Leadership Dialogues*. They reflect the growing interest of governments, private sector groups and multi-stakeholders to be part of a collective solution in tackling the global environmental challenges.

While resolutions at the Environment Assembly must be negotiated, the Assembly will introduce commitments/pledges to ensure a broader base of commitment to the outcomes of the Assembly.

While these commitments/pledges are not binding, they will be made in a public arena and will give ownership of the clean-up of the pollution agenda to Member States, the private sector groups and multi-stakeholders. Moreover, they will present a challenge for scaling up solutions to those who have yet to make similar commitments/pledges on their own.

Expected Outcomes

The 2017 Environment Assembly presents a unique opportunity for solving environmental problems, through constructive and measurable commitments from senior policy-makers and leaders of the private sector and civil society. Tangible commitments and pledges on how to tackle pollution from public and private sectors will be sought and could be announced before and during the 2017 Assembly.

2017 World Innovation and Technology Hub UN Environment Assembly's platform for engaging entrepreneurs and innovators

The third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (4-6 December 2017) will continue to provide a platform for the private sector to engage with Ministers of the Environment and all other relevant stakeholders through the World Innovation and Technology Hub. The Hub is the Environment Assembly's platform for sharing the latest on innovation and technology from both public and private sectors, on sourcing investment and on contributing to the solutions that address the world's environmental challenges while protecting the ecological boundaries of the planet for future generations.

Under the overarching theme, Towards a Pollution-Free Planet, the 2017 UN Environment Assembly aims to deliver a number of tangible commitments to end the pollution of our air, land, waterways, and oceans, and to safely manage our chemicals and waste. These will include the following:

- **A political declaration on pollution**, linked to the Sustainable Development Goals, to signal that humanity can work together to eliminate the threat of pollution and the destruction of our planet.

- **Resolutions and decisions** adopted by Member States to address specific dimensions of pollution.
- **Voluntary commitments** by Governments, private sector entities and civil society organizations to clean up the planet.
- **The Clean Planet Charter**, a collection of public commitments to end pollution in all its forms.
- **Technological and Innovative solutions** that address the planetary challenges of pollution.

In the run-up to the Assembly, UN Environment has already started to engage the private sector through a series of consultative dialogues on the margins of major global meetings, such as the Consultative Roundtable in Copenhagen and the Leaders' Breakfast in Berlin. These important discussions will contribute to fostering the champions of solutions, generating the commitments and partners in all sectors to support and scale up the work of the UN Environment Assembly and its pollution agenda.

This series of meetings with the private sector is also taking place with a number of partners, including the World Economic Forum, and the outcomes will feed into World Innovation and Technology Hub. The Hub is the Environment Assembly's marketplace for connecting the science to the solution. It will provide a unique opportunity for ministers of environment, heads of UN Agencies and leaders of the private sector and civil society organizations to find the innovation/technology, financial resources and partnerships for tackling pollution.

And while the Hub will showcase that science teaches problem solving, it will also encourage critical thinking in how important, though small, our world is. In addition to providing the science, innovation and technology, the Hub will also uniquely engage participants in the oldest science of all—astronomy. Through a simulated planetarium, that can show human-induced air pollution in the Cosmos, the Hub will remind participants that unless we work together as a species and find solutions, we risk destroying the only life we know exists in the universe.

Ultimately, understanding the problems and knowing the solutions will incentivize the global community to take concrete actions for creating the enabling conditions to scale up these solutions so critical for addressing the unprecedented challenges our planet faces.

More specifically, the Hub will:

1. Explain the challenges and inspire the solutions;
2. Convene the leading decision makers in all sectors in an interactive space where knowledge, innovation and technology can be showcased and shared for our global benefit;
3. Facilitate dialogue and cooperation through entrepreneurship, innovation and investment;
4. Inspire dialogue in the UN Environment Assembly on policies related to public-private cooperation and global partnerships; and

The Hub will take place on the margins of the Assembly and will complement the high-profile and interactive Leadership Dialogues, which will take place in parallel to the plenary sessions. The Dialogues will call attention to the Assembly's multifaceted theme of pollution and will involve thought-provoking discussions and interactive format and will feature Heads of State, Ministers and representatives from the private sector and civil society groups. Those who participate will learn new ways to scale up solutions and incentivize commitments for a healthy and pollution-free planet.