
Committee of Permanent Representatives
Subcommittee Meeting
Tuesday 17 March 2020
10:00 am - 12:00 pm
United Nations Office of Nairobi Conference
Room 4

Background Document for Agenda Item 2:

Contribution of the United Nations Environment Assembly to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Revised

This note serves as a background document for agenda item 2, “Contribution of the United Nations Environment Assembly to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.”

In accordance with the mandate provided in paragraph 3 of the UNEA resolution 3/3, the Secretariat has prepared a draft contribution of the UN Environment Assembly to the 2020 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, drafted by the UNEP Secretariat, which highlights how best to accelerate action and achieve transformative pathways so as to realize the decade of action for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is expected that a revised document will be submitted after the meeting for integration in the High Level Political Forum synthesis report to be developed by the Secretariat of the High Level Political Forum.

Member States are invited to consider the draft contribution of the UN Environment Assembly to the 2020 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

This revised version takes into account written comments provided by Brazil, the European Union and Montenegro as well as Cruelty Free International, Emirates Environmental Group (EEG), Global Ecovillage Network, Regions4 and World Animal Net.

Contributions of the UN Environment Assembly to the 2020 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: Responses to the questions raised by the President of the Economic and Social Council

This paper provides contributions of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), in response to the request made on 26 January 2020 by H.E. Ms Mona Juul, President of the Economic and Social Council and Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Norway to the UN in New York, to the President of the Environment Assembly and Minister for the Environment of Norway

The HLPF will take place from 7 to 16 July 2020, with a ministerial segment from 14 to 16 July 2020, under the theme “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”.

Summary of inputs

2020 will be a crucial year for the environment and sustainable development. The international community will have many opportunities to deliver solutions to climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. This is the year in which the international community need to match political will with science, ambition with action, action with momentum, and political will with science. This is the year in which ~~when~~ we must ensure that we back nature as the imperative for many of the challenges facing humanity. Accelerated and transformative actions are needed more than ever: January 2020 was the hottest month of January ever recorded, one million species may be pushed to extinction in the next few years and air pollution kills millions of people every year.. The UN Environment Assembly therefore advocates strong political will ~~to put the environment at the center~~ towards the implementation of internationally agreed environmental commitments and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, to ensure the full integration of the environmental dimension of sustainable development, bearing in mind that it is a people-centered agenda and acknowledging that a healthy planet is an essential requirement and key enabler for sustainable development including through integrated approaches in which economic, social and environmental objectives are addressed in a balanced manner. ~~Nature-based solutions, sustainable~~

Among others, the following integrated approaches would especially need to be scaled up:

- Sustainable consumption and production: The HLPF should call all sectors of sustainable development to develop enabling economic policies and incentives, to accelerate the transition to economies that are low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive, strengthening environment rule of law and good governance and its mainstreaming in sectoral laws are examples of such integrated approaches which need to be scaled up.
- Nature-based solutions/ecosystem-based approaches: The HLPF should call for strengthened action to protect and restore nature and promote nature-based solutions/ecosystem-based approaches to achieve the sustainable development goals in its three complementary dimensions (social, economic and environmental).
- Environmental rule of law and good governance: The HLPF should call for strengthened action to consolidate and reinforce environmental rule law and good governance, especially through their mainstreaming in sectoral laws.

- Sustainable infrastructure: the HLPF should promote integrated approach to sustainable infrastructure to meet development needs while ensuring the preservation of biodiversity and mitigating climate change

These measures will contribute to the delivery of the Decade of Action, including the ten points outlined in the political declaration adopted during the SDG Summit 2019.

1. Key policies and measures to ensure “accelerated action and transformative pathways” for realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development

The findings of relevant global environmental assessments are clear: despite the availability of solutions to the common environmental challenges, the planet is increasingly polluted, affected by the adverse effects of climate change, quickly losing its biodiversity, and experiencing widespread environmental degradation. ~~Overall, the~~ The world is not on track to achieve the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and internationally agreed environmental goals by 2050 and environmental crisis are likely to make the achievement of most social and economic goals similarly unattainable.

Urgent action is therefore needed to reverse those trends and restore both environmental and human health and well-being to the planet¹. The United Nations Environment Assembly has reaffirmed that poverty eradication, changing unsustainable and promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production, and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are the overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development, and recognised that innovative approaches and solutions are necessary to move our world closer to the vision set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 6th edition of the Global Environment Outlook underscores that a healthy planet is a pre-requisite for healthy people and that is in turn the foundation for any healthy economy. Effective action in any of the sustainable development goals requires acknowledging and addressing the links among them – the close ties between climate change and human health, for instance, or the ways in which biodiversity loss and deterioration of ecosystem services exacerbate inequalities. To have a full implementation of Agenda 2030, we therefore need a strong and efficient environmental pillar.

Ministers of Environment express their determination to ambitiously scale up our efforts to overcome common environmental challenges, including health-related challenges, in a balanced and integrated manner through identifying and developing innovative solutions by fostering sustainable and efficient resource management; promoting the use and sharing of environmental data; and engaging civil society, citizens, indigenous peoples and local communities, local and subnational authorities, the private sector, academia and all other relevant stakeholders as appropriate.

The following key policies and measures can be identified to ensure “accelerated action and for realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development:

a) Enabling and increasing coordination and mainstreaming: The coordination between ministries, agencies and organizations for cross-sector and cross-SDG action, at the local, subnational, national and regional level as well as sharing and leveraging of national and regional research initiatives to address

¹ https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27652/GEO6SPM_EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

knowledge gaps, strengthening regional research networks and harmonization could be considered some of the critical gaps in implementing the 2030 Agenda. As underlined by the GSDR, decision makers need to act based on current knowledge and understanding of the linked human social-environmental systems at all levels. That knowledge also needs to be more widely available to all countries and actors, motivating innovative coalitions and partnerships for success. The full mainstreaming of integrated approaches such as marine Spatial Planning, **nature-based solutions**, ~~Blue and green economy plan enable /~~ **ecosystem-based approaches**, “One Health” approach and encourage cross-sectoral communication and collaboration between ministries, member States, agencies as well as private and public sector and academia e.g. through inter-ministerial SDG coordination groups, as reflected in SDG 17.

Examples of integrated policies for achieving sustainability goals include:

- **Nature Based Solutions/Ecosystem-based approaches:** ~~Nature-based Solutions are/ Ecosystem-based approaches involves~~ **Nature-based Solutions are/ Ecosystem-based approaches** involves actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address ~~societal sustainable development~~ **societal sustainable development** challenges effectively and adaptively, ~~including~~ **including** ~~and~~ **and** ~~enhancing~~ **enhancing** ~~ecosystem resilience and~~ **ecosystem resilience and** ~~contributing to sustainable development~~ **contributing to sustainable development**. ~~Integrated~~ **Integrated** ~~solutions/ecosystem-based approach~~ **solutions/ecosystem-based approach** at scale can ~~lift~~ **lift** ~~contribute to lifting~~ **contribute to lifting** a billion people out of poverty, creating 80 million jobs and adding an additional US\$2.3 trillion in productive growth to the global economy. At the same time, ~~nature-based solutions they can provide co-benefits by enhancing biodiversity and supporting vital biodiversity and ecosystem services including access to fresh water, and improved livelihoods and healthy diets from sustainable food- systems, as well as boost and restore soil health and agricultural productivity, re-establish large and small scale natural water cycles, and contribute to addressing climate change. They also offer innovative solutions in delivering climate resilient infrastructure.~~ **nature-based solutions they can provide co-benefits by enhancing biodiversity and supporting vital biodiversity and ecosystem services including access to fresh water, and improved livelihoods and healthy diets from sustainable food- systems, as well as boost and restore soil health and agricultural productivity, re-establish large and small scale natural water cycles, and contribute to addressing climate change. They also offer innovative solutions in delivering climate resilient infrastructure.**
- **Sustainable Production and Consumption:** SDG12 on sustainable consumption and production is key to the attainment of other goals. Yet, it remains the SDG with the least data availability, least funding (Dalberg 2017) and appears to be awarded low priority from Member States in their voluntary national reviews and SDG prioritization process. Efforts towards **implementing national and local plans** for the achievement of the targets on sustainable consumption and production should therefore be upscaled at all ~~level from the transition towards a green economy to the promotion of sustainable lifestyles-levels.~~ **level from the transition towards a green economy to the promotion of sustainable lifestyles-levels.** Sustainable consumption and production, including ~~but not limited to resource efficiency and~~ **but not limited to resource efficiency and** circular economy, can play a fundamental role in the implementation of the SDG by designing products, processes and services to optimize the use of resources, so that when something reaches the end of its useful life, they are re-used, repaired, or remanufactured for another use. It presents the opportunity to fundamentally address how value is created in the global economy and minimize the liabilities that they create, hallmarks of a green and inclusive economy. ~~It needs International support is needed to assist developing countries to achieve these goals. But all countries face challenges regarding sustainable consumption and production, demonstrating that~~ **International support is needed to assist developing countries to achieve these goals. But all countries face challenges regarding sustainable consumption and production, demonstrating that** the cooperation and collaboration from all ~~is needed:~~ **is needed:** consumers, urban communities, businesses, finance, government, **local authorities**, scientific and technological communities, etc. ~~This also includes the promotion of inclusive education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities.~~ **This also includes the promotion of inclusive education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities.**
- **Enabling economic policies and incentives:** Economic incentives can play a major role in correcting misaligned prices and mobilizing resources to meet investment needs. By reflecting externalities in prices, generating revenues, creating fiscal space for ~~green sustainable~~ **green sustainable** investment and broader fiscal reform, ~~green~~ **green** fiscal policies can support the implementation of the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) and countries' commitments under the [United Nations Framework on Climate Change and the Paris Climate Agreement](#). For example, in climate change, fiscal policies such as carbon pricing and fossil fuel subsidy reform can mobilize revenues for climate finance and provide a cost-effective approach to reducing GHG emissions. These revenues can be used for different purposes, for example supporting broader fiscal reform by reducing taxes on labour or capital, thus creating incentives for employment (SDG 8); supporting green investments in sustainable energy, clean technologies and adaptation capacities (SDG 13); or supporting investments in other priority areas such as health (SDG 3) and education (SDG 4). The role of such instruments in supporting climate action is increasingly recognized and over 90 countries included some form of fiscal policies in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

- **Sustainable infrastructure:** Infrastructure is central to ensuring 'accelerated action and transformable pathways' and achieving the 2030 Agenda as it underpins the socio-economic goals and has impacts on the environmental goals by having a direct influence on more than 80% of the 169 individual SDG targets. Diverse forms of infrastructure make up the basic physical and organizational structures essential for development: systems for energy, transport, buildings, food, water and sanitation, waste management, industrial facilities, and telecommunications, as well as 'natural infrastructure'. Hence an average of US\$6.9 trillion of infrastructure investment is required per year until 2030 to achieve the SDGs. Addressing this gap will unleash widespread transformation as developed sustainably, infrastructure can be a central vehicle for accelerated action in achieving the 2030 Agenda. Developing countries should continue to be supported to develop sustainable, accessible and resilient quality infrastructure as the long lifespan of newly built assets means that today's decisions will have long-lasting impacts on our planet and future generations. Integrated approach to sustainable infrastructures, by considering the interconnections among infrastructure systems, sectors, levels of governance, spatial scales, and the environmental, social, and economic aspects of sustainability across the entire life-cycle of infrastructure systems (i.e. early planning to decommissioning) can be a central vehicle for accelerated action in achieving the 2030 Agenda.
- **Sustainable Finance and Business Practices:** Mobilizing financial resources for sustainable development is necessary to resolve environmental problems and ensure environmental protection, especially in developing countries. Sustainability-related considerations and SDGs are increasingly factored into investment decision-making and product development in a growing number of financial institutions including pension funds, banks and insurance companies. Related products, such as green bonds and other sustainability linked investment products and tools are growing at a rapid rate. However, the lack of common definitions, standards, and impact measurements, as well as the fact that reported sustainable investments do not necessarily represent investing in real assets but also in financial assets, mean that such numbers should be treated with care. There is a need to transform the financial system by addressing the barriers that constrain channeling finance towards sustainable development including by aligning global economic policies and financial systems with the 2030 Agenda, enhancing sustainable financing strategies and investments at regional and country levels and seizing the potential of financial innovations, new technologies and digitalization to provide equitable access to finance. Through the development of collective initiatives such as the Sustainable Banking Network (SBN) and the UNEP Finance initiative (UNEP FI), private and public finance institutions have worked to integrate environmental and social risks and opportunities into their business lines and approaches. At the Climate Action Summit, 130 banks signed up to the Principles of Responsible Banking, which UNEP created with leading banks. These

~~banks, collectively holding 47 trillion US dollars in assets, are promising to align their businesses with the Paris Agreement and the SDGs. Institutional investors also promised to transition their portfolios – worth 2 trillion US dollars – to net-zero emissions by 2050, under the Net Zero Asset Owner Alliance².~~

b) Address the lack of environmental data: Only 23% of the 93 environment-related SDG indicators are on track to meet the target if current trends continue. For 68%, there is not enough data to assess progress and for 9% there is not progress toward achieving the target. More than 30 per cent of the environment related SDGs indicators still do not have an agreed methodology. Achieving the 2030 Agenda requires an integrated approach that considers linkage across different environmental and non-environmental components, building upon disaggregated and localized data generation and incorporating traditional knowledge and citizen science. Accurate information on the environment, including geospatial data, is crucial to build public awareness, help policy makers to make evidence-based decisions and develop and monitor integrated policies. Harmonized monitoring methodologies and indicators for data comparability, fragmented and at times duplicative reporting on the regional and global level are some of the crucial elements that should be improved and that will in turn increase the understanding and monitoring of effective performance of area-based management plans. Mapping existing national and regional data, sources, methodologies and responsible entities (e.g. national statistics offices, local and subnational authorities) and developing of overarching national inventories or accounting systems to access existing data and address gaps would contribute to the above. Civil society can also play an important role in gathering environmental data and information and should be supported in doing so.

c) Address the lack of adequate resources, enforcement, implementation & compliance of environmental law: Ecosystem deterioration, natural resource deprivation, environmental catastrophes and attendant displacement of populations not only reverse years of development gain, but also ~~endanger the maintenance of~~present an additional challenge to peace and security at national, regional and global levels. Core elements that hamper progress, particularly toward SDG 16– such as pervasive corruption, unaccountable institutions, lack of transparency and situations of conflict and instability – greatly impair inclusive and effective environmental governance, which in turn can instigate a downward spiral into illicit exploitation of resources and unaddressed pollution, with a stronger impact on the most vulnerable communities. Since the adoption of the 1972 Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment, environmental laws and institutions have expanded dramatically across the globe. In many instances, these laws and institutions have helped to slow or reverse environmental degradation. Since the 1970s, 88 countries have adopted a constitutional right to a healthy environment and 62 countries enshrined environmental protection in their constitutions in some form. All 193 UN member States are also a party to at least one of over 1,300 multilateral environmental agreements and 2,200 bilateral environmental agreements in existence today. This progress is accompanied, however, by a considerable implementation gap– in developed and developing countries alike – between the requirements of environmental laws and their implementation and enforcement. Too often ~~environmental laws exist mostly on paper because~~

² As an example, at the Climate Action Summit, 130 banks signed up to the Principles of Responsible Banking, which UNEP created with leading banks. These banks, collectively holding 47 trillion US dollars in assets, are promising to align their businesses with the Paris Agreement and the SDGs. Institutional investors also promised to transition their portfolios – worth 2 trillion US dollars – to net-zero emissions by 2050, under the Net-Zero Asset Owner Alliance.

government their implementation and enforcement remain irregular, incomplete and ineffective. Weak implementation and enforcement of law are as manifested in unfettered spikes in environmental crimes. Many environmental crimes – from illegal logging and poaching and trafficking of animals to illegal mining and dumping of toxic waste – which in some cases have become part of a larger global network of transnational organized crimes.³ Rising environmental crimes stemming from weak environmental rule of law provide a conduit through which violence against environmental defenders is perpetrated, particularly in marginalized communities. Each week, 4 people environmental defenders are killed on average defending the environment and empowering local populations; and for every one person killed, 20 to 100 others are harassed, sued or arrested. Environmental rule of law – which describes the state context in which laws are to be widely understood, respected, and enforced, with the benefits of environmental protection enjoyed by people and the planet – is key to addressing this implementation gap and need to be strengthened.

2. Contribution of the intergovernmental body to accelerated action and transformative pathways and realizing the decade of action and delivery for achieving the 2030 Agenda within its area of responsibility (including its cooperation with ECOSOC and other intergovernmental bodies)

The United Nations Environment Assembly contributes to the effective implementation of the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in an integrated manner, through setting the global environmental agenda, providing overarching policy guidance and defining policy responses to address emerging environmental challenges, undertaking policy review, dialogue and exchange of experiences, and fostering partnerships for achieving environmental goals and resource mobilization⁴.

The fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly took place in Nairobi from 11 to 15 March 2019 under the theme “Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production”. 173 Member States were represented, as well as a significant number of bodies, entities and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, secretariats of various environmental conventions, international and regional organizations, civil society, major groups, academia, and the business and scientific communities.

The UN Environment Assembly adopted twenty-three resolutions⁵ calling for accelerated action and transformative pathways on key areas, such as: ~~marine litter and microplastics~~; innovative pathways to achieve sustainable consumption and production, ~~marine litter and microplastics~~, food loss and waste, sustainable mobility, addressing single-use plastic product pollution, promoting gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of women and girls in environmental governance, the poverty-environment nexus, an implementation plan to address pollution, etc. UNEA also adopted the fifth Montevideo

³ In 2016, the monetary value of environmental crimes was estimated to be around 91-258 billion USD annually (up 26% from the 2014 estimate), with illegal trade in wildlife estimated at 7-23 billion USD per year. The value makes environmental crimes the fourth largest crime in the world after drug trafficking (344 billion USD), counterfeit crimes (288 billion USD) and human trafficking (157 billion USD).

⁴ http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/11180/K1607143_UNEPEA2_RESSE.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

⁵ <https://web.unep.org/environmentassembly/proceedings-report-ministerial-declaration-resolutions-anddecisions>

Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme V), which supports countries to develop and implement environmental rule of law, strengthen related capacities in countries, and contribute to the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. UNEA resolutions provide guidance to the implementation of UNEP's programme of work.

The UN Environment Assembly further adopted a Ministerial Declaration⁶ entitled “Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production”, through which Member States expressed their determination “to ambitiously scale up efforts to overcome common environmental challenges” by taking several actions relevant to accelerated action and transformative pathways and realizing the decade of action and delivery for achieving the 2030 Agenda, including:

- To undertake measures to invest in integrated, innovative and coherent approaches in policy development and implementation;
- To ambitiously scale up efforts to overcome common environmental challenges in a balanced and integrated manner through the identification and development of innovative solutions by fostering sustainable and efficient resource management;
- To advance sustainable consumption and production patterns;
- To promote sustainable food systems by encouraging the implementation of sustainable and resilient agricultural practices, improving value generation, and significantly reducing waste and energy use along the food supply chain to help ensure food security and ecosystem functions and services.
- To implement sustainable ecosystems restoration, conservation and landscape management measures to combat biodiversity loss, land degradation, droughts, soil erosion and pollution, desertification, and sand and dust storms
- To undertake action to restore and protect marine and coastal ecosystems;
- To work towards comparable international environmental data and to support UNEP in developing a global environmental data strategy by 2025 in cooperation with other relevant United Nations bodies;
- To promote the use of data analysis models to develop environment foresight reports, support evidence-based decision-making, and improve national and local preparedness and responses to mitigate environmental degradation and risks from disasters and conflicts in line with the 2030 Agenda;
- To address the damage to ecosystems caused by the unsustainable use and disposal of plastic products, including by significantly reducing the manufacture and use of single-use plastic products by 2030;
- To encourage the disclosure of appropriate product information to consumers, and promote the development of measures to increase transparency in product chains
- To invest in environmental research, education and awareness-raising in the framework of sustainable development, with a strong focus on women and youth, and to promote wider use of innovative approaches, such as inclusive citizen science.

The fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly will take place in February 2021 in Nairobi, Kenya under the theme “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”.

⁶ <http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28463/K1901029.pdf?sequence=6&isAllowed=y>

3. Selected recommendations for accelerating progress and moving on transformative pathways for realizing the decade of action, for possible use in drafting the HLPF declaration.

Moving on transformative pathways for realizing the decade of action will require actions at all level.

2020 provides the chance for a more joined-up response where the post-2020 frameworks for biodiversity as well as chemicals and waste will be negotiated and adopted, while nations will strengthen their nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement. All these efforts work towards linked goals, under the wider umbrella of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, at the same time. The HLPF should call for ambition in these decisive negotiations which success will be crucial for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

The following recommendations will contribute to the ten areas of accelerated action identified in Political Declaration adopted at the SDG Summit in September 2019.

The HLPF should recognize the role of regional level coordination—should also be emphasized as key to address transboundary issues and facilitate regionally coherent approaches e.g. by establishing collaborative frameworks or enhancing existing frameworks (e.g. the Regional Seas Programme). Regional organizations play an essential role in guiding regionally coherent national action for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems. Building on existing regional mechanisms and frameworks can address SDG interlinkages and accelerate implementation. Focus on identifying and addressing barriers to progress (e.g. failure to achieve targets in 2020), identifying accelerators for action that leverage SDG interlinkages, strengthening national and regional capacity for data collection and application for global level follow up and reporting.

Setting the word on a transformative pathway for realizing the decade of action, will also require prioritizing policies that can have multiplier effects and allow progress in not one but several SDGs, if not all. The following transformative policies ~~can~~should be highlighted by the HLPF:

Strengthening environment and consolidating the environmental rule of law and good governance and its as well as mainstreaming them in sectoral laws: Environmental rule of law and good governance provide a powerful pathway to achieving a broad spectrum of the SDGs. Through the Montevideo Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environment Law, UNEP supports member States and relevant stakeholders strengthen environmental laws and their implementation and enforcement, including in the fight against environmental crimes and the protection of environmental defenders across the globe. In particular, the fight against illegal trade in wildlife requires active engagement of indigenous peoples and local communities. ~~Community-based approaches~~The HLPF should call for strengthened action to consolidate and reinforce environmental rule law and good governance, especially through their mainstreaming in sectoral laws. The importance of community-based approaches should also be especially be highlighted as they are frequently written off as ineffective, even before the necessary effort has been made to put in place the conditions that will make them effective. Building robust opportunities for indigenous peoples and local communities to be heard and to exercise their rights at all levels is critical in promoting effective wildlife conservation strategies and ensuring environmental rule of law.

- **Accelerate the transition to economies that are low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive:** This transition entails decoupling of economic activity from unsustainable resource use and negative environmental impacts while improving human well-being. A systemic change is

necessary to evolve from the dominant linear “take-make-dispose” economic model based on fueling consumer demand and unsustainable resource use. While the current model has increased incomes in many countries and helped to reduce global poverty, it still leaves too many behind and can erode natural and overall wealth, exposing current and future generations to severe risks and impacts such as climate change, degrading of ecosystems, natural resource depletion and widespread pollution. Resource Sustainable consumption and production, including but not limited to resource efficiency and circular economy promotes ~~linear~~ circular economic models, where the value of products and materials is maintained for as long as possible, waste and resource use are minimized and resources are kept within the economy when a product has reached the end of its life, to be used again and again to create further value. Ultimately, a green economy is founded on resource efficiency (decoupling) that reduces wastage, pollution (detoxification) and carbon emissions (decarbonization). -The HLPF should call all sectors of sustainable development to develop enabling economic policies and incentives to accelerate the transition to economies that are low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive.

- **Placing nature at the heart of Stressing the importance of nature/biodiversity as an essential requirement and key enabler for sustainable development:** The WEF’s Nature Risk Rising Report says that about US\$ 44 trillion dollars, over half the world’s GDP, depends on nature and its services. Nature-based solutions – such as large-scale afforestation – can deliver one-third of the cuts needed to meet the 1.5 degree C target of the Paris Agreement⁷. They can restore biodiversity, boost livelihoods and health, and create climate resilience. To give just one example, restoring 350 million hectares of degraded landscapes by 2030 could generate 9 trillion US dollars in ecosystem services, and put significant amounts of carbon back in the ground. 2021 will launch the UN Decade on ecosystem restoration with the aim of supporting and scaling up efforts to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide and raise awareness of the importance of successful ecosystem restoration. The HLPF should call for strengthened action to protect and restore nature and the nature-based solutions/ecosystem-based approaches to achieve the sustainable development goals in its three complementary dimensions (social, economic and environmental).
- **Promoting sustainable infrastructure to meet development needs while ensuring the preservation of biodiversity and mitigating climate change:** In order to maximize the contribution of sustainable infrastructure for realizing the decade of Action, ~~it will be important to support~~ the HLPF should call for the development and communication of internationally recognized good practice guidance on sustainable infrastructure, promote capacity building and the sharing of related knowledge and technology and to increase financial support and technical cooperation between the development partners in applying sustainable approaches to infrastructure development, focusing on integration across all of the 17 SDGs.
- **Access to information and engagement of all relevant stakeholders, as set out in the principle 10 of the Rio Declaration, is also a key condition for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the promotion of integrated approaches.** Significant effort has been made to ensure that citizens, civil society, local and subnational governments and the private sector are consulted but further efforts are needed. Recent successful negotiations such as the adoption of the Escazu Agreement on the “Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental

⁷ <https://www.pnas.org/content/114/44/11645>

Matters in the Latin and American Countries” are inspiring. The HLPF should recognize their success and stress the need to be up-scaled, up-scale and replicated, replicate them.

- **Strengthen environmental monitoring systems and technologies, and the development of environmental data management capacities.** The world needs openly accessible data, information, analysis, knowledge and science to better inform and guide what needs to be done to achieve sustainability across all environmental dimensions. Achieving the 2030 Agenda requires an integrated approach that considers linkage across different environmental and nonenvironmental components, building upon disaggregated data generation and incorporating traditional knowledge and citizen science. Advances in collecting official statistics and other evidence that feed into geographic information systems for environmental monitoring and accounting have expanded knowledge, while highlighting data gaps in every environmental domain. Disaggregated data that captures information by gender, ethnicity, race, income, age and geographic region identify critical differences and promote effective policy design. In addition to filling knowledge gaps with new data, enormous gains can be made from consolidating, curating, harmonizing and increasing open access to existing data which are widely dispersed and cannot be easily combined or compared. The Fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly asked the UNEP Executive Director to develop a global environmental data strategy by 2025. The HLPF could acknowledge this work and ask other United Nations entities to contribute and support UNEP in the development of the strategy.