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Representatives**

to the United Nations Environment Programme

Seventh meeting

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Online meeting

1.00 pm – 6.00 pm (GMT+3)

**Agenda Item 4: Consideration of a draft UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025
and Programme of Work 2022-2023**

This note, entitled “UNEP’s ‘Discovery’ Sessions for Major Groups and Stakeholders and the Private Sector,” serves as one of four supporting documents for agenda item 4, “Consideration of a draft UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025 and Programme of Work 2022-2023.”

It provides a summary report of the ‘Discovery’ sessions that took place between August and September 2020 and was organized by the Secretariat with Major Groups and Stakeholders, Children and Youth, Faith-Based Organizations and the private sector to seek their views and inputs for the development of the MTS.

The note serves as background information to the consideration of the draft Medium Term Strategy at the 7th meeting of the annual subcommittee.

UNEP's 'Discovery' Sessions for Major Groups and Stakeholders and the Private Sector

Summary Report

A. Background and summary of key messages

Between August and September 2020, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) organized a series of 'discovery' sessions with Major Groups and Stakeholders, including Youth and Faith Based Organizations and the Private Sector, to outline UNEP's emerging vision for its next Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2022-2025 and discuss the broad societal, transformational changes that must happen to contribute to healthier, greener and more resilient economies that are centered on human and planetary wellbeing. The aim of the discovery sessions was to gather thoughts and reflections from UNEP's non-government constituents that would inform the drafting of UNEP's next MTS, as appropriate.

This report includes a synthesis of participants' views in ten take-home messages in Box 1, prepared by UNEP. These are not consensus views but rather contributions around key themes that will inform the development of the MTS 2022-2025, as appropriate. This report does not claim to be representative of the view of all Major Groups accredited to UNEP. Part B summarizes the key points of the four discovery sessions. Annex I provides a snapshot of statistical data regarding the participation.

Box 1: Ten take-home messages from the 'discovery' sessions

1. In order to contribute to reaching the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda, UNEP should be a bold leader in the environment space and beyond, driving forward science-based decision making at the global, regional and national levels and inspiring political choices that put the environment at the center of economic and social discourses.
2. Major Groups and Stakeholders, including Youth and Faith Based Organizations and the Private Sector, have a critical role to play in working with UNEP towards achieving the aspirations of the sustainable development goals and Agenda 2030, while contributing to empowering vulnerable segments of society and fighting social inequalities, and UNEP should facilitate their enabling role.
3. Addressing human rights and other cross-cutting issues, such as human dignity and equity, climate justice, gender and the role of women, indigenous communities' rights, voices from the south and engagement of people of color, is a key supporting factor for reaching the required transformational societal shifts towards sustainability.
4. Major Groups and Stakeholders and their networks can support UNEP in identifying gaps and opportunities to enhance societal awareness and understanding of the importance of the environmental agenda and the relationship between humanity and nature, while contributing to spreading the importance of this message across the entire UN system.
5. Economic development should not occur at the expense of nature and an unsustainable use of our planet's resources. Restoring a positive relationship between humans and nature is crucial to tackle the environmental challenges we face.
6. Increasing investors' access to environmental data and information can spur investments and financial shifts towards sustainable transformations of business models and accelerate awareness of the economic and market benefits of adopting sustainable production processes.

7. UNEP should harness the potential of the global youth movement to amplify its advocacy and outreach, maximize the impact of its work in a way that reaches all segments of society and bring about more youth inclusivity in global decision making.
8. Faith-Based Organizations and faith communities around the world can catalyze action towards the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda, contributing to bridging the gap between science and theology and renewing the sense of the Earth's sacredness as a way to preserve and sustainably manage our planetary resources.
9. In order to greatly benefit the work of Major Groups and Stakeholders, including Youth and Faith Based Organizations, and the choices of the Private Sector, UNEP's scientific work and resources should be tailored to the needs of its non-governmental constituents, so as to improve accessibility, understanding and uptake.
10. Addressing the digital divide can drive sustainable development forward, guiding stakeholders' decisions towards adopting technologies, solutions and innovations that benefit all while contributing to tackling the environmental challenges we face.

B. Key points from the 'Discovery' sessions

1. Major Groups and Stakeholders - 17 August 2020

a) Background

UNEP organized this discovery session with 36 participants of UNEP-accredited organizations under the eight Major Groups and Stakeholders, namely: Non-Governmental Organizations, Farmers, Indigenous Peoples and their Communities, Local Authorities, Women, Scientific and Technological Community, Business and Industry, and Workers and Trade Unions. (Note: the Children and Youth Major Group has their own discovery session on 19 August 2020).

b) Key messages

To achieve transformational societal shifts towards more sustainable outcomes, Major Groups and Stakeholders see the following systemic changes as necessary: 1) enhanced societal awareness of the importance of the environmental agenda, and the relationship between humanity and nature; 2) stronger, more effectful partnerships to further the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the outcomes of UNEA Resolutions; 3) finance systems that promote and are conducive to sustainable development; 4) political will, governance, and leadership; and 5) addressing the digital divide.

1. **Enhanced societal awareness and understanding of the importance of the environmental agenda and the relationship between humanity and nature.** An understanding that is effectively spread through the UN system as a whole, and through other organizations, governments and local governments, and other stakeholders, including civil society, facilitated by stronger communications. Major Groups and Stakeholders can support UNEP by identifying gaps and opportunities for these actions and facilitating an increased dialogue with different levels of society, including by promoting education practices that drive behavioral changes towards sustainability.
2. **Stronger, more effectful partnerships to further the 2030 Agenda, the environment-related sustainable development goals, and the outcomes of UNEA Resolutions.** UNEP should translate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the environment-related sustainable development goals

(SDGs) (6, 13, 14 15), especially SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production, as well as the outcomes of UNEA Resolutions into concrete action with the support of multi-stakeholder engagement, and supported by adequate resources. These concrete actions should 1) follow a clear vision of the desired future and clarity of the steps to get there, and 2) ensure a clear line of sight with a long term perspective and a global lens, whilst paying attention on short time local needs identified by grassroots movements, local communities, Faith Based Organizations, and the private sector. Joint pilot projects with partners such as various UN agencies, national and local government, and Major Groups and Stakeholders (including Non-Governmental Organizations) could collect and incorporate positive social and economic/livelihoods evidence.

3. **A finance system promoting sustainable development.** Advocate for a different approach to economic development through a finance system that promotes sustainable development and emphasizes connection and respect for nature, including human and environmental rights, e.g. 1) through the development of green Gross Domestic Product and other such indicators, 2) more regulation for a levelled playing field for businesses, 3) joint standards for footprints on biodiversity and pollution, and 4) clear value proposition on the SDG implementation that speaks to the finance and market world.
4. **Political will, effective governance, and leadership** are crucial to 1) transform food systems, 2) tackle emerging and contentious issues (e.g. biotechnology, technologies such as carbon removal etc.), 3) ensure good, functional and just environmental and ecological governance, and 4) inspire action within the pollution cluster.
5. **Addressing the digital divide is key to drive sustainable development in an innovative way.** Establishing a global technical assessment mechanism building on UNEP's technology foresight work to guide country decisions on the deployment of technological solutions to environmental challenges could be a useful step towards that goal.

UNEP can contribute to those shifts through 1) providing increased leadership and policy guidance towards planetary sustainability, 2) supporting governments in counterbalancing the marketization of sustainable development and directing consumption and production patterns towards sustainability, and 3) raising awareness of the positive systemic shifts that will drive sustainability.

1. **Increased leadership, partnerships and policy guidance towards planetary sustainability.** UNEP should continue to: 1) promote ecological literacy for youth as an integral component of outreach programmes, including through UN interagency systems and in collaboration with UNESCO, 2) address the gaps between decisions made at the UNEA and the reality at the national and local levels, 3) increase impact in member states, through active and strategic networks and partnerships with other UN agencies, MEAs and other relevant organizations, acting as facilitator and incubator of transformational change within these networks, 4) use these networks to reach out to local, national and regional realities and to share best practices and experiences, and 5) translate science-based information into usable value propositions; share lists of solutions, best practices and actions.
2. **Support governments' executive and legislative powers in counterbalancing the marketization of sustainable development and directing consumption and production patterns towards sustainability.** This would entail, *inter alia*, emphasize UNEP's work on law, regulations, sanctions and bans of illegal activities and enforcement of environmental laws; and increase efforts to raise the voice of civil society in the financial world.
3. **Raise awareness of the positive systemic shifts that will drive sustainability through:** 1) providing solutions, best practices and actions informed by the latest scientific data, including nature-based solutions; and translating this information into a value proposition that everyone can

understand, 2) addressing the possibilities offered by new and emerging environmental technologies, including from traditional and/or indigenous knowledge, 3) while maintaining a human rights approach that promotes the importance of environmental rights (e.g. through the Global Pact for the Environment).

Major Groups and Stakeholders can support UNEP in contributing to those shifts through: 1) participating in partnership, communication and advocacy initiatives; 2) sharing feedback and best practices to enhance evidence-based decision making, and 3) contributing to addressing the digital communication divide.

- 1. Participate in UNEP’s partnership and advocacy initiatives.** MGS can contribute with science-based research and networks. As an example, the Global Alliance on Health and Pollution (GAHP) encourages dialogue on connected issues (circular economy, health, air pollution).
- 2. Function as a hub for stakeholder involvement in decision-making.** MGS can share collective feedback and best practices - including from indigenous/traditional knowledge systems - to enhance science-driven, evidence-based decision making.
- 3. Address the digital communication divide.** MGS can participate in digital initiatives to extend communication outreach, including to the private sector, bridging gaps with civil society and facilitating broad multistakeholder knowledge exchanges.

2. Children and Youth Major Groups and Stakeholders - 19 August 2020

a) Background

UNEP organized this discovery session to collect ideas from UNEP-accredited organizations under the Children and Youth Major Group. 24 delegates from various groups participated.

b) Key messages

To achieve transformational societal shifts towards more sustainable outcomes, the Children and Youth Major Group sees the following systemic changes as necessary: 1) increased access to data, 2) more participation and engagement, 3) enhanced youth representation, 4) financial support and capacity building, and 5) maintaining an eco-centric approach to decision making at all levels.

- 1. Increased access to data.** Youth groups could benefit from more platforms that secure environmental data sharing and improve accessibility and use for youth organizations.
- 2. More participation and engagement of youth groups.** To be fully harnessed, the youth movement should participate in identifying ‘entry points’ to improve collaboration with organizations like UNEP that can deliver mutually beneficial impact and maximize scale.
- 3. Enhanced youth representation.** An inclusive youth engagement should be mainstreamed through securing enhanced representation in the development of UNEP’s programmatic work and participation in intergovernmental and interagency processes where UNEP plays a role.
- 4. Financial support and capacity building.** Youth groups would benefit from increased financial support and capacity building to amplify their voices and outreach and contribute to driving the required transformation changes called by science.
- 5. Eco-centric approach to decision making.** The youth group recognizes that increasing globalization amplifies risks, vulnerabilities and social inequalities. Maintaining an eco-centric

approach to decision-making at all levels is crucial to preserve our planet and foster a sustainable use of its resources.

UNEP can contribute to those shifts through: 1) enhancing its support to youth groups, 2) facilitating youth participation in intergovernmental processes as an enabling group that can drive change towards SDG implementation, 3) improving communications towards youth groups.

- 1. Enhance UNEP's support to the youth;** including through reorganizing UNEP's internal structure for youth support with a view to mainstreaming it more broadly across the organization and strengthening youth's involvement in UNEP's initiatives.
- 2. Facilitate consistent inclusive youth participation in environment-related intergovernmental processes** to ensure that they act as enablers for the SDG implementation and contribute to further empowering the global youth movement.
- 3. Improve its communications towards youth groups.** UNEP should ensure communications tailored to the needs of youth (e.g. more understandable science-based information and data) as a way to improve uptake and use within the wider youth network worldwide.

The Children and Youth Major Group can support UNEP in contributing to those shifts through: 1) harnessing the power of the wider global youth movement, 2) engaging in peer-to-peer collective work for stronger impact, and 3) supporting monitoring and evaluation of the global environmental performance.

- 1. Harnessing the potential of the wider youth movement worldwide,** including indigenous youth, to close knowledge gaps and improve outreach and impact of UNEP's work.
- 2. Engaging in peer to peer collective work** within Non-Governmental Organizations for stronger impact, including through facilitating the participation of green organizations in the African Continental Free Trade Area.
- 3. Using the youth network to support monitoring and evaluation of global environmental performance,** including with regard to country progress on MEAs implementation, and feed the results of this analysis into UNEP's work.

3. Faith for Earth – Faith-Based Organizations - 27 August 2020

a) Background

UNEP organized this discovery session to collect ideas from UNEP-accredited Faith Based Organizations and Faith Communities across different Major Groups and Stakeholders. 148 delegates from various groups participated.

b) Key messages

To achieve transformational societal shifts towards more sustainable outcomes, Faith-Based Organizations see the following systemic changes as necessary: 1) addressing human rights and other cross-cutting issues, 2) focusing on the implementation of the sustainable development goals, 3) raising awareness and media coverage of environmental issues, 4) promoting common values that underpin behavioral transformations, 5) promoting financial and economic transformations towards sustainability, 6) underscoring the importance of 'sciences' in plural.

1. **Address human rights and other cross-cutting issues**, including human dignity and equity, climate justice, gender and the role of women, indigenous communities' rights, voices from the south, engagement of people of color.
2. **Use the SDGs as the focus for prioritizing action**, including for all the Faith Based Organizations strategy plans, while securing that socio- economic- and geographical differences are transcended to leave no one behind.
3. **Raise awareness and media coverage of environmental issues** - with tailored language that speaks to different stakeholders - on the required transformations of human behaviors that will improve our relationship with the environment, respecting its sacred nature while emphasizing the need for urgent, multistakeholder and cross-sectoral action address the planetary crises we face.
4. **Promote common values and spiritualities that underpin the necessary behavioral transformations**. Based on UNEP's scientific evidence, Faith Based Organizations contribution can present a multidimensional approach that includes emotional and spiritual dimensions such as focus on purpose, self-discipline, love and peace, harmony with the divine, sacrifice, and persistence.
5. **Promote financial and economic policies that support and enable sustainable and dignified living conditions**. This entails deep-seated transformations in how we produce, consume, distribute, and invest.
6. **Continue to underscore the importance of 'sciences' in plural**. Environmental sciences need to adequately include the contributions of political, behavioral, economic science and vice-versa to drive the require catalytic changes.

UNEP can contribute to those shifts through: 1) providing catalytic leadership on the environment, 2) catalyzing a unified Faith effort for sustainable and regenerative development to achieve the SDGs, 3) strengthening communication and awareness on environmental issues amongst Faith communities, 4) facilitating Faith Based Organizations collaboration with other stakeholders.

1. **Provide overall leadership on the environment**, engaging Member States and other non-government stakeholders in transformational, catalytic shifts for the environment.
2. **Catalyze a unified Faith effort for sustainable and regenerative development** to achieve the SDGs (for example, through initiatives such as the Global UNEP 'Faith for Nature' Conference¹).
3. **Strengthen communication and awareness on environmental issues amongst Faith communities**, sharing knowledge and expertise, serving as sounding board, exchanging good practices, building capacity and lifting role models of effective action (for instance, through strengthening and encouraging Faith Based Organizations in taking action towards a global Faith for Earth coalition), sharing a common scientific language that can be understood broadly by all Faith Based Organizations.
4. **Facilitate Faith Based Organizations collaboration with other stakeholders**, including governments, think tanks, local level actors, indigenous communities, vulnerable people, and the financial - and economic decision makers; a collaboration built on genuine and key partnerships that prioritize vulnerable communities and lift grassroots voices, while supporting the needs and aspirations of grassroots movements and local communities.

Faith Based Organizations can support UNEP in contributing to those shifts through: 1) jointly addressing the intersectionality of environmental injustice, economic injustice and racial

¹ The concept and objectives of this conference will be in support of the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly to be held in February 2021 in Nairobi with the overall theme "*Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*".

injustice, 2) devoting more worship towards addressing the climate crisis, 3) engaging in joint research and capacity building programmes that can bridge science with faith, 4) promoting an ethical use of digital technologies, 5) supporting the implementation of the SDGs, 6) bringing equity to the core of sustainable decision making, and 7) renewing the sense of the Earth's sacredness.

- 1. Denominational leaders² and members of the clergy should urgently jointly address the intersectionality of environmental injustice, economic injustice and racial injustice and strive towards influencing decision makers to take the same into account.**
- 2. Local clergy should devote 10-25 % of their time addressing the climate crisis,** including through dedicating weekly worship to inspire worshipers to engage in sustainable living practices.
- 3. Engage in joint research and capacity-building programmes at local and regional levels** that can help bridge science with faith and contribute to realigning social, economic and environmental sustainability; the results of this work could be shared in the next UNEAs.
- 4. Promote the use of digital technologies to spread an ethical use of them,** while gathering, importing, and using religious environmental data.
- 5. Support the implementation of the SDGs,** including through translating the SDGs in communal theological principles, contribute to preventing the erosion of multilateralism and lifting up the voices of the most vulnerable in decision-making processes.
- 6. Bring human dignity, human rights, indigenous rights, and gender equality to the core of sustainable decision making.** Indigenous peoples have a deep and longstanding traditional knowledge of the environments that are their ancestral homelands.
- 7. Plant trees across religions,** renewing the sense of the Earth's sacredness to preserve the green environment.

4. Private Sector – 10 September 2020

a) Background

UNEP organized this first online discovery session with the private sector to get feedback and input on UNEP's next MTS 2022-2025. Over 50 participants from the private sector joined the meeting and came from across all regions of the world and sectors extending from agriculture, finance, food processing, tourism, plastics, chemicals, energy to fashion, mining and waste management.

b) Key messages

The top challenges that businesses face to adopt low-carbon and environmentally sustainable business models that support the Sustainable Development Goals are: 1) lack of knowledge about existing and emerging international/intergovernmental initiatives to tackle the environmental challenges we face, 2) absence of a holistic method to approach and measure the progress of sustainability in the private sector world, 3) endorsing a change in the business culture and – model towards sustainability, and 4) increase awareness of the public and the consumer on the benefits of green products.

² Heads of Communion and Bishop level leaders

1. **Lack of knowledge about existing and emerging international/intergovernmental initiatives to tackle the environmental challenges we face, including UNEP initiatives.** Improved knowledge of these initiatives would allow private sector actors to mobilize support towards them and maximize their impact.
2. **Currently there exists no holistic method to approach and measure the progress of sustainability in the private sector world.** The tools for measuring data are not universal. Moreover, there is limited (and costly) access to data (especially on climate change related to finance), and getting access to sustainable finance, as well as related technology means, is very challenging, especially after the outbreak of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.
3. **Endorse change in business culture and models.** Changing business-as-usual requires a change in value proposition. However, the value proposition of sustainability is not always clear to Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), hence the risk perceptions of the required changes for sustainable finance strategies are too high. There is a need for 1) strong leadership, ambition, and interest in the sustainability agenda; 2) stronger policy regulations; and 3) a clear strategy to engage business in the transformative shifts that can target the drivers of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution; 4) building enabling environments to help business with better branding and better communications; 5) building a stronger science-based team within companies to make sustainability part of their strategies.
4. **Increase awareness of the public and the consumer on the benefits of green products.** Reshaping consumption and production patterns requires necessary actions from the private sector, as well as increased awareness of the consumer. It also requires acknowledging that regional contexts have diverse customization of sustainability standards.

To be incentivized to accelerate sustainable patterns of consumption and production with a view to supporting a circular economy, business would benefit from 1) more flexible, circularity-related policies, 2) more actionable environmental data and information, and 3) participating in global alliances that can drive multistakeholder action and aspiration.

1. **Policies should better fit circularity, whilst being flexible enough to change in relation to newly developed technologies.** Government policies should be used to incentivize companies to insert the SDGs in business decisions that aim to accelerate sustainable patterns of consumption and production and support a circular economy.
2. **More actionable environmental data.** The business community would benefit from more granular and actionable environmental data that can support a comparative analysis of “good performance” and drive investment in new environmentally friendly technologies.
3. **Global, multistakeholder alliances.** Participation in multistakeholder alliances, at the global but also national and regional levels (for instance the Global Reporting Initiative – GRI), can enable the private sector to synergize efforts with others to scale up the adoption of sustainable solutions at the pace required, and contribute to directing financial flows towards the same.

To accelerate the alignment of financing with sustainability objectives to support systemic transformations for a nature positive economy, business would benefit from: 1) increased access of sustainability information from investors, 2) green finance mainstreaming across all sectors, 3) the development of common language of sustainability that speaks to the whole business community.

1. **Increased access to sustainability information from investors,** to spur investments in sustainable transformations of business models and accelerate awareness of the economic and market benefits of adopting sustainable production processes.

2. **“Green finance” mainstreaming across all sectors.** All finance must become “green finance” to spur governance and accounting standards to take into account environmental risks, while accelerating investment into environmentally friendly innovations. The momentum gained by environmental and human rights issues should be capitalized on to drive such changes.
3. **A common language of sustainability that is flexible enough to work across manufacturing and service industries,** across large companies and small and medium enterprises; and across both mature and innovative sectors and enterprises.

UNEP has role to play towards these transformational shifts, including through: 1) being a leader in the environment space and beyond, 2) enhancing public awareness of the benefits of green products and transformational shifts towards sustainability, and 3) translating UNEP’s scientific resources into consumable items that speak to the business world.

1. **UNEP should be a leader in the environment space and beyond.** UNEP’s role is drive forward science-based decision-making at the global, regional and national levels, scaling up existing multistakeholder partnerships, inspiring political decisions to enable environmentally positive action, capitalizing on its convening power to support the development of business policies and decisions informed by science that drive new incentives towards the required transformational shifts towards a sustainable future.
2. **Enhance public awareness of the benefits of green products and the required transformational shifts towards sustainability.** UNEP’s focus should include purpose-led consumption behavior and the organization should play an active role in changing the high-risk perceptions of the required changes for sustainable finance strategies and advise the business world on what benefits transforming production sectors would entail. Sustainability needs to be built upon the business process and not be an end goal.
3. **Translate UNEP’s scientific resources into consumable items** that speak to the business world and inform their decisions.

Annex I – Statistical overview of participants

Group	Date	Number Participants	Geographic Region		Gender %	
					F	M
Private Sector	10/09/20	68	Africa	19 %	53 %	47 %
			Asia Pacific	9 %		
			Europe	41 %		
			Global	3 %		
			Latin America and the Caribbean	15 %		
			North America	10 %		
			West Asia	3 %		
Faith Based Organizations	27/08/20	133	Africa	23 %	41 %	59 %
			Asia and the Pacific	14 %		
			Europe	30 %		
			Latin America and the Caribbean	2 %		
			North America:	31 %		
Youth	19/08/20	33	Africa	30 %	58 %	42 %
			Asia Pacific	30 %		
			Europe	18 %		
			Latin America and the Caribbean	9 %		
			North America	6 %		
			West Asia	6 %		
Major Groups and Stakeholders	17/08/20	49	Africa	24 %	38 %	60 %
			Asia Pacific	20 %		
			Europe	35 %		
			North America	18 %		
			West Asia	2 %		