

**Environment Assembly 2017 Preparatory Retreat  
Windsor Golf Hotel & Country Club in Nairobi  
27 – 28 October 2016**

**Discussion Paper for Session 2: Partnerships with stakeholders and engaging  
the private sector**

The second session of the UN Environment Assembly saw the participation of the private sector through the *Sustainable Innovation Expo 2016*, which attracted nearly 100 experts to nine thematic panel discussions that culminated in a *Business Dialogue for Environmental Sustainability*. However, some participants of the second session noted that there was little crossover between the *Sustainable Innovation Expo 2016* and the formal UN Environment Assembly sessions, and that greater interaction between governments, private sector participants, and civil society representatives would have been welcome. The private sector provides the jobs, innovation, and investment that drives sustainable development and wider participation by the private sector in the third session of the assembly should be encouraged. This has the potential to drive deeper and richer engagement by the private sector in UN Environment's work and its support for the 2030 Agenda.

The Bureau might wish to discuss the following questions.

- How might a higher level of private sector participation be encouraged? What changes, for example, might persuade Chief Executive Officers of leading companies to participate in the third session of the UN Environment Assembly?
- What opportunities exist for expanding dialogue between governments and the private sector at the third session of the UN Environment Assembly? Examples would include breakfast sessions or other side-meetings with ministers, presentations or panel discussions within the formal assembly sessions, or a specific session in the assembly's schedule devoted to hearing private sector perspectives.
- Could we take advantage of the visibility and convening power of the UN Environment Assembly to announce new partnerships and commitments by company's Chief Executive Officers in areas relevant to UN Environment's work? ?

## **Annex: UN Environment's Work with the Private Sector**

The value of the private sector's engagement with UN Environment was formally recognized at the 22<sup>nd</sup> session of UN Environment Governing Council (2003) in a decision entitled "Engaging business and industry." The UN Secretary-General has furthermore called for business support for sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development foresees active collaboration with the private sector.

### **I. Types of partners**

UN Environment's partners in the private sector have included:

- Individual companies, particularly champions in their business sector
- Groups of companies: either in a specific sector or spanning a value chain
- Small and Medium Enterprises, directly and through their value chains
- Industry associations
- Business intermediaries, service providers, and collaborating centres

UN Environment works by convening multi-stakeholder partnerships and often collaborates with other UN or UN-sponsored agencies in dealing with the private sector, including the UN Global Compact, UN Industrial Development Organization, Global Reporting Initiative, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, Natural Capital Coalition, and Business and Biodiversity Initiative of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Sectors include finance, oil and gas, water and waste treatment, food and beverages, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, power generation, transport, metals and mining, tourism, building and construction, chemicals, plastics, manufacturing, textile, information and communication technologies, and retail sales.

### **II. Benefits and opportunities from collaboration**

UN Environment and the private sector work together to increase environmental sustainability by developing new solutions and going beyond the reduction of impact, to generating a net positive value to society.

UN Environment and the private sector both realize benefits from our collaboration:

- A better global knowledge base in areas ranging from science, to policy, to market trends and developments
- Pooled experience and expertise that brings credibility and is helpful for capacity building and training, provision of technical advice, and faster spread of best practices globally
- Identification and dissemination of innovative and sustainable solutions to problems of environment and development, particularly those related to technology
- Impact in countries through measurable results and benefits

- Partnerships, networks, and platforms that aid dialogue and spur progress by bringing together groups with diverse interests and perspectives but who seek consensus on ways to move forward
- Communication and visibility that motivates people to take action
- Additional public and private funding for projects and initiatives
- Easier monitoring of commitments made as part of partnerships.

### **III. Moving forward**

Effective scaling-up of UN Environment's private sector engagement requires a strategic approach. Additional issues worth discussing are the following:

- What does the private sector value in working with UN Environment? How does this differ by sector or issue? How can different types of private sector partners help UN Environment deliver its Programme of Work? What elements of UN Environment's work are particularly relevant from a private sector perspective?
- What do governments and civil society groups value in working with the private sector? What are their expectations? Their concerns?
- How should UN Environment build on existing initiatives if the goal is to bring these to scale? Which initiatives are particularly valued and should be expanded? What modes for expansion might work well? What level of participation and contribution to the activities of UN Environment by the private sector is feasible?
- What precautions should UN Environment take to reduce any reputational risk arising from working with private sector entities? Should UN Environment accept cash or in-kind funding from private sources? If so, under what circumstances?
- How can UN Environment recognize contributions made by initial partners to joint efforts without giving them some sort of exclusive rights?
- How can UN Environment attract more support from the private sector yet avoid accusations of exclusively catering to specific interests?

*Drafted by the Economy Division*