



**United Nations Environment
Assembly of the United Nations
Environment Programme**

**142nd meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives
to the United Nations Environment Programme**
Nairobi, 10 May 2018
10:00 a.m to 1:00 p.m and 2:30 p.m to 5:30 p.m.
Conference Room 1

Draft concept note for the theme of the 4th United Nations Environment Assembly

This draft concept note has been prepared by the Secretariat in follow-up to the first joint preparatory retreat of the bureaux of the UN Environment Assembly and of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to support further deliberations by Member States on the agreed theme for the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly: “*Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production*”.

The note outlines a rationale for the theme and proposes a set of key objectives, which will inform the resolutions and general discussions amongst ministers at UNEA-4. Member States and stakeholders are invited to provide preliminary views on this note during the 142nd Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

The Secretariat looks forward to receiving any comments in writing before 20 May 2018 to unep.sgb@unep.org, copied to Ms. Brennan Van Dyke (brennan.vandyke@un.org) and Mr. Dirk Wagener (dirk.wagener@un.org).

On the basis of feedback received, the Secretariat will revise the concept note for further consideration and finalization.

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The Theme: Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges and Sustainable Consumption and Production

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Innovative solutions for environmental challenges, cover policies, financing, technologies, partnerships and multistakeholder processes, and are key both to solving many environmental challenges, as well as to accelerating sustainable development more generally. Innovative solutions are not limited to technologies, but can include best practices and local knowledge which, when openly exchanged between technical experts, can multiply our collective impact and

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[potential to address environmental challenges.](#) This recognition of the need of transformative change, already highlighted in at the 2nd and 3rd sessions of the UN Environment Assembly, directly underpins the choice of the overarching theme for the fourth session of the Environment Assembly by Member States in Nairobi in March 2019.

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The *Sixth Global Environment Outlook* and the *Global Assessment of Natural Resource Use and Management*, two assessments to be presented at the Fourth Assembly, both have as a key recommendation the need to foster urgent and sustained action using system-wide policy approaches that lead to transformational change.

The theme of the fourth session of the UN Environment Assembly also clearly relates to Agenda 2030, [particularly to goal 12 and provides the Assembly an opportunity to mainstream environment in all of the goals.](#)

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Because innovation is a broad concept, [and in order to establish priorities.](#) it will be important to clarify the focus and the boundaries within which the fourth environment assembly will explore innovative solutions. How can this Assembly approach the theme to ensure that the Assembly delivers concrete, pragmatic [outcomes?](#) In other words: *How can policy*

“Science, technology and innovation cannot be confined to the use of new technologies or software. Innovation is a mindset and an attitude. It means questioning assumptions, rethinking established systems and procedures and introducing new strategies.” Ban Ki Moon, Former Secretary General

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instruments, moral authority, public advocacy, and intellectual, financial, legal and technological resources, be most effectively organized, disseminated, deployed, and scaled up worldwide to promote the development and widespread uptake of innovative solutions to address environmental challenges and promote sustainable consumption and production?

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This question cuts across many focal areas and engages large segments of the Major Groups and Stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society. An exploration of how the public sector can catalyze and facilitate the development and deployment of innovative solutions will focus on the development of new and strengthening of existing partnerships between these stakeholders. Often the cooperation of complimentary actors will most effectively facilitate the design of innovative solutions and their application at scale.

A focus on innovative solutions can be organized to consider the drivers of, and most common barriers to, innovation for environmental challenges and how the various sets of actors influence these drivers and barriers, and how they can most effectively respond to them.

Proposed Note

The proposed note is elaborated with the view to:

- establishing clear conceptual boundaries that will help the Secretariat organize key components of the Assembly, such as the leadership dialogues; and
- supporting discussions amongst Member States and key stakeholders toward a set of pragmatic conclusions and outcomes.

The aim is to deliver a focused Assembly that explores how to [harness innovation](#) to meet environmental challenges, [including a shift more widely and at scale to sustainable consumption and production through innovation and broad partnerships.](#)

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[The note will also show how the fourth session of the Environment Assembly will help advance on action towards a pollution-free planet which underpinned the deliberations at the third session of the Assembly. By exploring innovative solutions being used to meet the third Environment Assembly voluntary commitments the fourth Assembly can increase our practical understanding of how to drive innovation that counters pollution.](#)

Commented [FBR2]: We do not agree that this framing is helpful. We do not recall a consensus from UNEA-2 that this framing is appropriate for addressing issues in an international context. Of the three Ds, only detoxify seems to relate to the environment-health nexus, and the reference to health issues seems to introduce yet another issue into an already crowded theme.

As a starting point, it is clear that new [strategies for growth](#) are urgently needed to help move towards a stronger, more inclusive and sustainable economic development. Innovation [plays a critical role: providing](#) the foundation for new businesses, new jobs and new solutions to environmental challenges and is thus an important driver of sustainable development and poverty reduction. Innovation, [whether referring to the highly technological advances of the “fourth industrial revolution” or to indigenous solutions,](#) is indispensable to addressing pressing global environmental and social challenges, including demographic shifts, increasing resource scarcity and the changing climate. Moreover, innovation can also help address these challenges at lower cost, or even negative cost (i.e., delivering a profitable return on investment).

Deleted: <object>The proposed note will build on discussions that took place at the second session of the Environment Assembly in 2016, and use the framework of integrated lines of action then recommended to address the nexus of environment and health, namely the three D's and E: *de-carbonize, de-toxify, decouple resource use and change lifestyles, and enhance ecosystem resilience and protection of the planet's natural systems.* The second Assembly recognized that directly tackling the interlinkages between the environment and human health through those four lines of action can provide a common platform and multiplier effect to address environmental challenges. This will advance many of the Sustainable Development Goals and deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in accordance with its role and mandate within the UN system. ¶

Innovative economies are more productive, more resilient, and more adaptable to change.

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Harnessing innovation requires policies that reflect the realities of innovation. Innovation goes beyond science and technology and involves investments in a wide range of knowledge-based assets. Social and organizational innovations, including new business models, are increasingly important to the development and implementation of new solutions. Innovation also involves a wide and expanding range of actors, including [industry, private sector](#) firms, entrepreneurs, foundations and non-profit organisations, universities, scientific institutes, public sector agencies, citizens, and consumers, often working in close collaboration. Innovation also has a strong and ever-expanding basis in the digital economy, facilitated by the growth of mobile telecommunications, the convergence of voice, video and data to the internet, and the rapid uptake of data and sensors (the internet of things).

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A focus on innovative solutions can be organized to consider the drivers of, and most common barriers to, innovation for environmental sustainability and how the various sets of actors influence these drivers and barriers, and are influenced by them. It would not be efficient, however, to examine the drivers of innovation and the ideal roles of the different actors during each stage in the abstract. Consequently, the focal area priorities of Member States [provide the lens through which](#) the Environment Assembly [will](#) address innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production.

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The fourth session can thus (i) deepen the discussion on key actions and responses to environmental challenges to address all forms of global and local pollution, [e.g.](#) through improved resource efficiency as well as regulatory frameworks, innovative policies, financing approaches and [incentives to promote](#) sustained lifestyle [choices](#); (ii) increase our understanding of how to drive innovation and address barriers and challenges to scale up actions, and (iii) directly contribute to

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taking forward outcomes from previous sessions of the Environment Assembly and Agenda 2030 in this context.

Possible **Organization of Agenda for UNEA-4:**

1. Define the key environmental challenges based on the Sixth Global Environmental Outlook Report, the Global Assessment of Natural Resource Use (International Resource Panel) and the Global Chemicals Outlook, among other major UN assessments, [along with the WHO Ambient Air Pollution City Database](#).
2. Focus on barriers, challenges and opportunities for, by identifying [examples of innovative solutions](#) to enable actions/scale up actions to meet environmental challenges.
3. [Member state discussion of implementation on actions described in the](#) the Ministerial Declaration of the third session of the Assembly and [in support of](#) the Plan of Implementation requested at the Assembly;
4. Provide [examples of opportunities for strengthening a culture of innovation](#) within UN Environment Programme.
5. Identify [possible mechanisms](#) for scaling up the use of innovative solutions for meeting the voluntary commitments to contribute to [reducing pollution](#).
6. Enhance partnerships (including with the private sector and civil society) to accelerate and scale up innovations to activate new financing opportunities
7. Identify and develop mechanisms for scaling up the implementation of and financing innovation of the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production.
8. ↓↓

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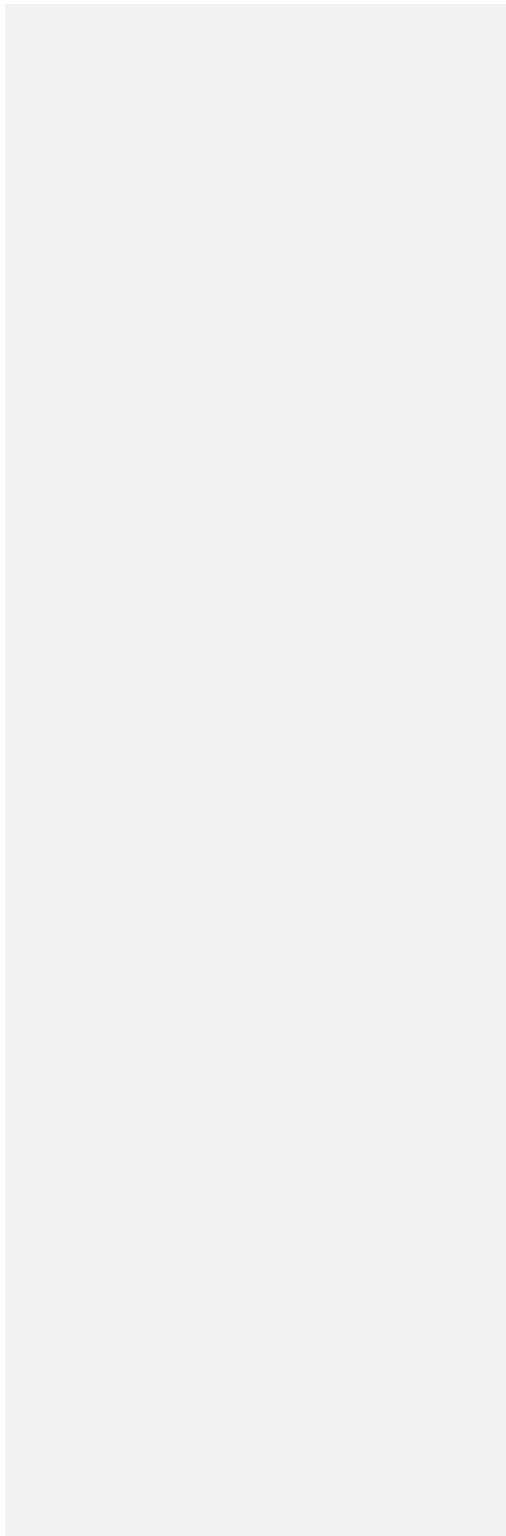
Commented [FBR3]: This sounds like a significant undertaking and would need to be proposed, approved, and directed by member states. It’s not clear this would be the most effective way to identify solutions.

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Tentative roadmap

The Secretariat proposes the following roadmap for further consideration by Member States:

- 19 April: Initial discussion at the subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives
- 10 May: Presentation of a draft concept note/outline to the meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives
- Mid/end of May: Second discussion at a subcommittee meeting
- Mid-June: Discussion and endorsement of the draft concept note by the Bureau of the Environment Assembly
- June/July: Final concept note posted on the website for guidance to Member States and stakeholders
- July-October: development of the Executive Director’s report, building on the concept note



Addendum to Comments from the United States

May 10, 2018 Draft Concept Note on 4th United Nations Environment Assembly theme

The United States appreciates the opportunity to provide input on the Draft Concept Note for the UNEA-4 theme. The Draft Note will serve the critical purpose of focusing Member States and Stakeholders on particular aspects of a broad theme. Toward that end, we have the following suggestions:

- The common denominator between the two parts of the theme could be seen as the growing need to find innovative approaches to address sustainability and improve resource efficiency while offering opportunities for growth, cost reduction, and prosperity. If the “business as usual” approach continues, we will not effectively address the urgent environmental challenges we confront.
- Innovative solutions are not restricted to technology and invention, but instead encompass creation of enabling environments for creative approaches in policy, financing, partnerships, processes, and the use of data to understand environmental issues and improve sustainability. For example, when a Moroccan landfill added a sorting center to its operations, former waste pickers created a worker’s cooperative, became sorters, and developed processes that have improved working conditions and compensation.
- Innovation is also key to reduce public health risks from pollution through encouraging reduced public exposure to pollutant releases to air, water and land, and promoting development of safer/non-toxic alternatives in products and production processes. For example, using satellites to complement on-ground air quality monitoring systems to better understand pollution exposure.
- Innovation also includes support for widespread use of existing efficiencies, such as the Caribbean and Latin American countries transitioning to LED lights with support from UNEP and the Global Environmental Facility, an effort that could reduce greenhouse emissions by 750 tons in the Dominican Republic alone.
- We can use information and data to deepen understanding of environmental challenges, and employ innovative solutions to improve efficiency and reduce waste. In Rwanda, for example, UNEP has assisted farmers by investing in automatic weather forecasting stations and delivering information so that farmers can improve planting and harvests. NASA and USAID’s joint initiative to provide Earth observing satellite information in more than 45 developing countries (SERVIR) increases understanding of water resources and assists in prediction and planning for crises such as droughts. As an example, snow pack data helps Himalayan countries manage water supplies.

- As the Draft Note states, addressing environmental challenges through innovation requires partnerships among public and private sector stakeholders. It would be helpful to identify specific areas in which innovative can be applied, such as:
 - Food insecurity, loss and waste
 - Energy efficiency
 - Loss of biodiversity
 - Unmanaged waste
 - Anti-microbial resistance
 - Environmental degradation and displacement

- Innovations in financing can be a significant part of solving environmental challenges, as UNEP's Finance Initiative demonstrates. New and more flexible financial streams and the expansion of initiatives such as the Partnership for Action on Green Economy will ensure that financing supports environmental and social safeguards and sustainability.