

Leadership Dialogue 1: Reflecting on the urgent need for actions to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity of all

About the Leadership Dialogues

The international meeting at Stockholm+50 is a commemoration, and a time for bold action and engagement. It presents an opportunity to reflect, connect, accelerate and scale actions for a better future on a healthy planet with prosperity for all.

The 2030 Agenda and the continuing COVID-19 crisis have centre-staged again the relationship of human progress and prosperity to a healthy environment. A degraded planet poses limits to wellbeing and prosperity, creating obstacles to a better future. The thought piece “Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all – our responsibility, our opportunity” introduces this global challenge and the opportunities it presents for the upcoming meeting.

The aim of the Stockholm+50 leadership dialogues is to engage governments, Indigenous Peoples, business and the private sector, civil society and other relevant stakeholders to overcome barriers to implementation, connecting actions and creating the pathways that reach across generations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

This leadership dialogue will reflect on the urgent need for actions to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity of all, where aspirations and rights can be fulfilled. It will focus on the need to live in harmony with nature for development, gender, intra and intergenerational equity, and human wellbeing.

This background paper for Leadership Dialogue 1: Reflecting on the urgent need for actions to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity of all, provides context to the dialogue. It also offers a set of questions to explore pathways – of regeneration, recovery, rebalance, renewal and reimagine – transforming commitments to action. It will focus on the urgency of such actions to achieve a healthy planet for all – for health, for equity, for rights, for job opportunities, for development now and in the future, and for all life on earth.

The context

Recent global assessments showed that if we are to enhance the health of the planet and create resilience for current and future generations, large-scale changes will be required over the next 10 years, underpinned by unprecedented levels of collaboration and political will.

Stockholm+50 presents us with a chance at a global stock-take, to reflect on the need for transforming our relationship with nature. It presents an opportunity to recognize the urgency of actions, in an inclusive and fair way, to achieve socioeconomic systems that deliver a healthy planet, prosperity, and dignity for all.

The universality of the 2030 Agenda brings this responsibility and opportunity to all stakeholders. Achieving the sustainable development goals will require cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder actions within countries, each developing their own pathways. And this internationally shared agenda requires strengthened norms and institutions across countries to overcome persistent development challenges.

There are several key multilateral initiatives and other conferences or fora taking place this year – such as the UNEA and UNEP@50, the conferences of the parties to the UNCCD, the CBD and the UNFCCC and the 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference; as well as initiatives that have been announced from governments, organizations and the private sector that contribute to the protection of the environment, such as the Ocean Plastics Charter, the Global Ocean Alliance, and the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People.

It is intended not to duplicate these discussions or to revisit existing commitments, but to create the momentum and the alliances that will accelerate action at a scale and pace commensurate to the challenges we are facing.

If we are to enhance the biosphere's health and reduce our demands, large-scale changes will be required over the next 10 years, underpinned by unprecedented levels of fulfilment of commitments, ambition, coordinated actions and political will. We must recognize the intrinsic value of nature, create resilience and address inequalities, to achieve prosperity, rights and dignity for all – for this and future generations.

Possible issue areas for this leadership dialogue

1. Transforming our relationship with nature

Halting biodiversity loss and restoring ecosystems

Healthy ecosystems are essential for humanity. They provide the life support systems upon which our survival and well-being depend. There is also wide recognition that healthy ecosystems and nature present opportunities for climate change mitigation and adaptation and are essential to build resilience by protecting against climate-related risk as climate change will create additional stresses on land and coastal areas. The extent of current trends in biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation requires urgent action and a shift in our understanding of our dependencies and risks associated with the decline in the flow of nature's benefits to people and economies.

Mitigation and adaptation to fight climate change

The world is still heading for a temperature rise of near 3°C this century – far beyond the Paris Agreement goals of limiting global warming to well below 2°C and pursuing 1.5°C¹. The footprint of current consumption behaviour is highly unequal, with the top 10 per cent of income earners producing almost 50 per cent of total carbon emissions, while the bottom 50 per cent of income earners produce less than 7 per cent². Key challenges remain, such as fair and effective carbon pollution pricing, greater ambition and effectiveness of mitigation efforts, the deployment of environmentally sound and clean technologies, as well as support for adaptation and resilience.

New measures of progress toward sustainable development

Governments and international institutions can pursue new measures of progress that incentivizes markets, economic and financial practices towards sustainable development. Such measures can make the ecological foundation of economies central to development and fiscal planning, which could be supported by strengthened regulations to restore natural capital.

¹ United Nations Environment Programme (2021). *Emissions Gap Report 2021: The Heat Is On – A World of Climate Promises Not Yet Delivered*. Nairobi

² United Nations Environment Programme (2020). *Emissions Gap Report 2020*. Nairobi

2. Producing and consuming sustainably and fighting pollution

Achieving sustainable consumption and production

Unsustainable patterns of consumption and production are fuelling climate change and biodiversity loss, as well as pollution and waste, with an unequal distribution of costs and benefits. The regenerative and restorative dimensions of sustainable consumption and production have often been overlooked in national policy frameworks and business practices, and yet they have a key role to play in reducing pressures and increasing positive impacts on ecosystems. Accelerating efforts towards sustainable consumption and production, sustainable energy and -resource extraction and -use are urgent actions.

Fighting plastic and chemical pollution

Plastics and chemicals are integral to almost all sectors of society, bringing important benefits in areas from medicine and agriculture to consumer goods, clean technologies and poverty alleviation. Their sound management is essential to avoiding risks to human health and ecosystems and substantial costs to national economies. Strengthening legal frameworks and institutional capacity – including the implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata Conventions – while providing incentives for innovation and collaboration are key elements of this transition.

3. Social justice and intergenerational equity

Social justice and sustainability

Acting on the key issues of climate change and biodiversity loss, pollution and social justice synergistically will require transformative change that ensures a fundamental, system-wide re-organization across technological, economic and social factors, including values and paradigms, goals and principles. Resolutions like the one taken at the Human Rights Council serve as a catalyst and allow governments, legislators, courts, and citizen groups around the globe to take further actions to establish responsibility and accountability for a healthy environment. The fulfilment of human rights gives agency to individuals and peoples in vulnerable situations and is essential for designing fair and effective actions to use, conserve and restore nature. While human rights law and international environmental law clearly dictate that those responsible for environmental degradation are the ones who should be accountable for restoring the environment and remedying harms. Broad implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights accelerates the use of rights-based approaches by governments and the private sector.

Intergenerational equity

The actions of the current generation create outcomes that are both the result of inherited systems, but also creates patterns and pathways for the future. This generation's demographic, equity and equality patterns will impact on our relationship with nature in the future. The foundation of sustainable development and intergenerational equity ensures that every generation holds the Earth in common with members of the present generation and with other generations, past and future.

Culture, education and science to build solidarity and collaboration

How we value, interact and relate to nature can be better reflected in policy and action, including those building solidarity and collective action between different stakeholders and Indigenous peoples.

Science and education, including enhancing lifelong learning, skills on environmental issues and stewardship, provides a long-term route to transform how we interact with nature, while ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, recognized by some cultures as Mother Earth.

Key questions for the Informal Working Group

Member states and stakeholders are invited to consider the following questions for the Informal Working Group of Leadership Dialogue 1:

1. Transforming our relationship with nature and restoring ecosystems

- a. What are some urgent actions for state and non-state actors to transform our relationship with, and restore nature, such as a goal to conserve 30 per cent of lands and oceans by 2030?
- b. How can the deployment of environmentally sound and clean technologies and further support on adaptation and resilience be accelerated?
- c. What types of measures should be considered to track progress on sustainable development and accurately account for changes in nature?
- d. How can we promote nature-based solutions and ecosystem approaches, including the vital work of Indigenous peoples, to achieve a nature-positive, carbon-neutral, pollution-free future?

2. Producing and consuming sustainably and fighting pollution

- a. What are some urgent actions state and non-state actors can take to incentivize sustainable production and consumption and trade?
- b. What policies are required in the next five years to reduce the material footprint?
- c. Which economic institutions should incentivize sustainable consumption and production, including pathways to achieve circular economies?
- d. What actions on pollution issues, including plastics, chemicals and waste, are needed to raise global ambition commensurate with climate change and biodiversity?

3. Social justice and intergenerational equity

- a. What are the institutional and capacity gaps to enforcing environmental law and human rights? How can we better implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights?
- b. How can intergenerational equity be fostered in public policy?
- c. What is the role of education and science in reconnecting people with nature?