

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 well-being 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, connect actions and create the pathways that reach across generations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Leadership Dialogue 1 - “Reflecting on the urgent need for actions to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity of all”, will consider 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 equality, intra- and inter-generational equity, and human wellbeing.

This background paper for Leadership Dialogue 1, provides context to the dialogue. The background paper highlights the urgency for key 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. It also offers a set of questions to explore pathways of regeneration, recovery, rebalance, renewal and reimagining – all of which will help to transform commitments to action.

The context

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. Additionally, there are many new initiatives, which have been announced by governments, organisations and the private sector, to 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. Stockholm+50 is not intended to duplicate these discussions nor to revisit existing commitments, but to create the momentum and the alliances that will accelerate action at a scale to deliver on the commitments.

During the Informal Working Group (IWG) meeting for LD 1 held on 10 March 2022¹, the **urgency to act** was clearly expressed. We must work urgently to tackle the climate and biodiversity crisis, while avoiding accelerating pollution and unsustainable behaviours. Right now, key habitats and ecosystems such as forests and grasslands are being converted at very high rates for natural resource extraction. By destroying nature, we are destroying the web of life that supports our existence on Earth. We must stop undermining our own future.

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 current and future generations.

Possible issue areas for Leadership Dialogue 1

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. They 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.

It is key that we ensure that Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) are actively involved in the design and implementation of land use decisions, and that their free, prior, informed consent (FPIC) rights are fully respected. This is essential to achieving global climate, biodiversity and sustainable development goals. Since at least 36% of key biodiversity areas fall within IPLC lands, IPLCs are fundamental stakeholders for biodiversity protection and restoration. It is critical to recognise their roles and their rights – including their intellectual property rights – and responsibilities in relation to biodiversity and ensure that where appropriate they can benefit from its sustainable use.

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°C.² The footprint of current consumption behaviour is highly unequal, with the top 10 percent of income earners producing almost 50 percent of total carbon emissions, while the bottom 50 percent of income earners produce less than 7 per cent.³ 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

¹ See Annex I for key messages.

² United Nations Environment Programme (2021). *Emissions Gap Report 2021: The Heat Is On – A World of Climate Promises Not Yet Delivered*. Nairobi

³ United Nations Environment Programme (2020). *Emissions Gap Report 2020*. Nairobi

well as scaled-up financial, technology transfer and capacity-building support for adaptation and resilience.

Existing international climate regimes focus on GHG emissions. However, there is no mention of oil, gas and coal in the Paris Agreement. As UNEP's Production Gap report shows, countries are projected to produce more fossil fuels than what is compatible with their NDCs. The challenge of fossil fuels usage as accessible energy in the context of emission reduction targets and policies addressed under the UNFCCC seems intractable. This undermines the achievement of all 17 SDGs. Furthermore, while the Glasgow Climate Pact raises ambitions for climate adaptation, it is insufficient to close the adaptation gap. Ambitions must link to concrete actions to build resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate change.

New measures of progress toward sustainable development

Governments and international institutions can pursue new measures of progress that incentivise market, economic and financial practices towards sustainable development. Adopting approaches such as comprehensive biodiversity accounting, with biodiversity and its ecosystem services valued as capital, and integrated into GDP accounts are proving to be effective. Similarly, carbon accounts could help to establish innovative measures including incentives. 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. Measures of multidimensional vulnerabilities can be considered for all countries.

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, and making trade a force for good, 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.

Sustainable food systems

Food systems are one of the key drivers of biodiversity loss and changes in land- and water use, and they are also impacted by biodiversity degradation and climate change. Interventions in food production and consumption can bring simultaneous multiple benefits to human and planetary health as well as to jobs and livelihoods. Governments, businesses and consumers can do better on what we grow, how we grow it, how we distribute it, and how we tackle food loss and waste. These steps could all ensure greater resilience of food supply chains. At the same time, IPLC issues, including the fulfilment of their rights, land tenure and the respect and protection of their traditional knowledge must be understood and applied.

3. Justice, inclusion and intergenerational equity

Environmental and social justice, gender equality and accountability

Acting synergistically on the key issues of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and justice 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. The recently adopted Human Rights Council resolution 48/13⁴, which recognizes the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment can serve as a catalyst to allow governments, legislators, courts, and citizen groups around the globe to take action to respect, protect and fulfill the right to a healthy environment for all.

The fulfilment of human rights, including the right to meaningful and informed participation, and achievement of gender equality gives agency to individuals and peoples in vulnerable situations and is essential for designing fair, inclusive and effective actions to use, conserve and restore nature. International human rights law and international environmental law also establish a clear accountability framework for environmental and human rights violations.

The justice system and anti-corruption measures in relation to environmental crimes are an essential part of the integrated solutions to protecting biodiversity. Universal implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which articulate human rights obligations and responsibilities of States and businesses respectively, are a key component of this framework. Their effective implementation, including through human rights due diligence, would protect the environment and those who depend on it and ensure access to justice and effective remedies when harms do occur.

A just transition to sustainable socio-economic systems

The transformation to sustainable socioeconomic systems will be disruptive and hence safety nets for workers will be needed to solve social tension and avoid rejection or the postponement of urgent actions. It is critical to address the key issues of diversity, equity and inclusion – so that we eliminate poverty, ensure equality and empower women. For example, funding for ecosystem-based approaches and nature-based solutions and adaptation, should include labour conditions and create decent jobs. Rethinking our economic models and institutions should advance a just transition, supporting the phase-out of harmful industries and promoting global collaboration.

Intergenerational equity

The actions of the current generation are often the result of inherited systems and can themselves echo across generations creating patterns and pathways for the future. This generation's demographic, equity and equality patterns will impact humanity's relationship with nature in the future and the rights of future generations. Intergenerational equity lies at the heart of sustainable development ensuring that every generation holds the Earth in common with members of the present generation and with other generations, past and future.

Science, education and culture to build solidarity and collaboration

The diverse values of nature, including how we interact and relate to nature can be better reflected in policy and action. This could include building solidarity and collective action between different stakeholder groups. Science, education and culture, including enhancing lifelong learning, skills on environmental issues and stewardship directed to all, including women and girls, Indigenous Peoples and

⁴ A/HRC/RES/48/13

local communities, all provide a long-term route to the transformation of how we interact with nature while ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, recognized by some cultures as Mother Earth.

Key questions for 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 percent 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?