Information Note
Briefing of the General Assembly on Science-based Evidence in support of Sustainable Solutions

7 February 2023. 10.00 a.m.
Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations Headquarters

Information Note

Catalyzing solution-oriented consultations with the scientific community, the President of the General Assembly is convening an informal plenary meeting to hear briefings from eminent scientists and academics.

Thirteen negotiation processes underway during the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly are related to transformation. These processes could all benefit from science-based evidence to support Member State decision making. The informal briefing will offer scientific decision support for the Members to contribute to the UN 2023 Water Conference, the pandemic preparedness negotiations as well as the SDG Summit.

The briefings, open to Members States, Observers of the General Assembly and ECOSOC accredited NGOs, will focus on science-based evidence in support of sustainable solutions on the **Economics of Water**; **Climate, Conflict and Cooperation**; and **Early Warning for Pandemic Preparedness**. The briefings will be held in three separate sessions on the same day. Each session will be followed by an interactive discussion. The briefing will also include an update on the **Global Sustainable Development Report 2023** by members of the Independent Group of Scientists.

Short summaries of the briefings and the contributions and recommendations by Member States expressed during the interactive discussions will be made available to support Member States in the preparation of the above-mentioned events.

Event Outline:

10:00 – 10:05 am: Opening by H.E. Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, President of the General Assembly

10:05 - 11:30 am: Panel 1 - Economics of Water

11:30am - 1:00 pm: Panel 2 - Climate, Conflict and Cooperation

3:00 pm – 4:30pm: Panel 3 - Early Warning for Pandemic Preparedness.

4:30 pm – 6:00 pm: Briefing on the Global Sustainable Development Report

Panel 1 - Economics of Water

The world faces a growing drama of water. Four billion people experience water scarcity for at least one month in a year. At the same time, floods, droughts, heatwaves, and wildfires are inflicting unprecedented damage in virtually every region of the world.

Science shows how communities and nations are hydrologically intertwined – not just by rivers and the surface water that we see, but also through atmospheric moisture flows. Practices in any one region impact rainfall in others.

Unchecked, the crisis of global water will endanger all the SDGs, making them virtually impossible to achieve. It will imperil global food and health security, peace within and between nations, and the welfare of hundreds of millions of women whose lives revolve around water. The water crisis is also inextricably linked to climate change and the loss of biodiversity, with each reinforcing the other. No person, place or ecosystem will be unaffected.

Putting global water on a stable and equitable footing must therefore be a collective responsibility and endeavor, in our collective interests.

The Global Commission on the Economics of Water (GCEW)**,** established in May 2022, will submit its first report at the UN 2023 Water Conference. It will propose broad transformations in the way we value and manage water to achieve collective goals, incorporating a central role for science, and in line with Agenda 2030, the Paris Climate Agreement, and the Convention for Global Biodiversity.

In this session, the GCEW will discuss the criticality of the Water Action Agenda; highlight the need for the global water cycle to be managed as a global common good and safeguarded through effective multilateralism; and illustrate the shifts in governance that will open up major new opportunities for innovation and investment in more efficient, just and sustainable use of water – from the local to the global. The GCEW will also seek guidance on how to develop its work in line with the priorities of the UNGA, particularly in view of the SDG Summit in 2023, and the Summit of the Future in 2024.

Panel 2: Shared Waters: Climate, Conflict, and Cooperation

Climate *is* water and wise management of water *is* conflict management. To ensure that needs of the people and ecosystems that rely on this critical resource are met effectively, a comprehensive understanding of *both* water science and water diplomacy is required; especially as climate change, population growth, and regional tensions threaten fragile social-ecological systems. Water that

crosses boundaries – economic, legal or political jurisdictions, cultural divides, and domestic or international borders – sets the stage for disputes between users trying to safeguard access to a vital resource. Yet these very challenges provide powerful incentives for stakeholders across divides to come together for purposes of water diplomacy, evidence-based capacity-building, and environmental peacebuilding, which are necessary to ensure sustainable management of this precious resource.

In this session, the panelists will present scientific interlinkages between water diplomacy and environmental peacebuilding, based on quantitative geophysical mapping, including recent science-informed policies and creative solutions from hotspots across the globe.

Panel 3: The Challenges and Opportunities in Creating an Early Warning System for Global Pandemics

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed that global health, social, and economic systems are exceedingly fragile in an increasingly interconnected world. Without adequate foresight, biological risks will continue to translate into global shocks in the post-pandemic world. Climate and environmental stressors will intensify these shocks and make them more likely, while globalization will make them universal. Research shows that more than half of all infectious diseases could be made worse by climate change. The factors that drive pandemics are a complex mix of genetics, climate and environment, social dynamics, health care infrastructure, the technical capacity of the bioresearch, and efficient adoption of science-based responses. Despite this complexity, the factors are largely predictable.

The session will focus on the design of early warning systems that leverage modern logistics of data, democratization of AI tools, and creation of data-driven policies informed by science, which can capitalize on new technological developments and create a platform for better management of future disease outbreaks.

Briefing on the Global Sustainable Development Report

The 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR), which is being prepared by a group of independent scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, provides decision-makers with the latest input of science in support of the preparations for and the political declaration of the SDG Summit. It focuses on implementing the transformations we need to achieve the SDGs. An advanced, unedited version of the GSDR will be released in March 2023 but this briefing will provide Member States with an opportunity to comment on the first version of the report that will be circulated to Member States at the end of January.