



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

25 April 2018

Excellency,

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/225 of 20 December 2017, recalling its decision of 71/219 of 21 December 2016 to convene a High-level interactive dialogue on sand and dust storms during its 72nd session. In this context, I have the honour to inform you that the high-level interactive dialogue will held on 16 July 2018 at 15.00-18.00 in the ECOSOC Chamber. Please find attached the concept note for the event.

The high-level interactive dialogue aims to address action-oriented recommendations and challenges faced by those affected countries, including ways to improve policy coordination at the global level to addressing those challenges in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is my hope that this high-level interactive dialogue will attract the highest possible level of participation from your Government.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Lajčák', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Miroslav Lajčák

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

Concept Note

High-level Interactive Dialogue on Sand and Dust Storms

Monday 16 July 2018

3:00-6:00 pm

Economic and Social Council Chambers (ECOSOC), UNHQ

Background

Sand and Dust Storms (SDS) has become a serious global concern particularly in the last decades, due to its devastating impacts on environmental, health, socio-economic well-being, livelihoods, agriculture, biodiversity and the ecosystems at large. The SDS phenomenon caused by natural biogeochemical cycle of the Earth and human-induced factors including climate change, unsustainable land management and water use, in turn, contributes to climate change and air pollution. The impacts of SDS are being felt in all regions of the world, both in developing and developed countries. Given the limited technological and financial capacities of developing countries who are adversely affected by this phenomenon are often the most vulnerable and cannot afford to cope with its adverse impacts on health, air quality, livelihoods and socio-economic ecosystems. That said, SDS poses severe challenges to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in affected developing countries. There is an urgent need to find solutions for mitigating SDS in developing countries with the support of the United Nations and the international community.

According to the “Global Assessment of Sand and Dust Storms” undertaken jointly by UNEP, WMO and UNCCD in 2016, every year, an estimated 2,000 million tons of dust is emitted into the atmosphere. The SDS problem has been figuring prominently on the United Nations agenda, particularly during the last several years. UN Environment, WMO, UN Office for Outer Space and the UN General Assembly as well as UN Regional Commissions such as ESCAP have adopted several resolutions to respond to requests by Member States who asked for increased attention and support of the UN system to their efforts in mitigating this growing problem. UN General Assembly has thus far adopted three resolutions on SDS entitled: “Combating SDS” during its 70th, 71st and 72nd sessions as follows: A/RES/70/195; A/RES/71/219; A/RES/72/225.

Mandate and objectives of the Dialogue

Pursuant to its Resolution A/RES/72/225, the General Assembly recalled its decision of A/RES/71/219, to convene a high-level interactive dialogue during its seventy-second session, to address action-oriented recommendations to address the economic, social and environmental challenges of the affected countries, including ways to improve policy coordination at the global level to address those challenges in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, and invites Members States, entities of the United Nations, including regional commissions, and other relevant stakeholders to participate actively in the high-level interactive dialogue.

Furthermore, this event is convened at an appropriate time as Sustainable Development Goal 15: “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss” and Sustainable Development Goal 6: “Ensure access to water and sanitation for all” will be reviewed at this year’s High-Level Political Forum.

Event Format and Participation

The high-level interactive dialogue will be opened by the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Miroslav Lajčák, followed by a panel discussion that shall be informal, open-ended and interactive dialogue with the participation of Member States, representatives of the UN system and other relevant stakeholders.

Guiding questions

The following questions aim to facilitate interactive Dialogue for the event.

- Based on the recommendations of the International Conference on Sand and Dust Storms, what, if any, are the challenges we continue to face and what progress has been made on this phenomenon?
- What measures have affected countries taken to address the causes of SDS in the context of SDG implementation?
- How can the international community enhance and further promote multi-stakeholder cooperation and partnerships at all levels to addressing SDS?