



High-level Thematic Debate of the General Assembly

Moment for Nature

Tuesday, 19 July 2022, 10am – 1pm; 3pm – 6pm
General Assembly Hall, United Nations Headquarters, New York

Concept Note

Interconnected threats relating to climate change, biodiversity loss, land and ocean degradation, pollution and unsustainable consumption and production are putting the health of our blue planet – our only home, and our economies and our well-being at risk.

While climate change is creating vicious cycles of rising temperatures and more severe weather patterns, including droughts, floods, and wildfires, the interlinked environmental crises are also increasing water stress and food insecurity. In the last 20 years, the rate of disasters has increased from an average of 90 to 100 per year, to about 350 to 500 per year. Economic losses from disasters have more than doubled over the past three decades. Furthermore, climate change, disasters, and environmental degradation are profoundly reshaping contemporary migration patterns, with 30.7 million new displacements triggered in 2020 by disasters, such as flooding and extreme weather events, in 145 countries and territories. Some projections indicate that millions more people could be on the move because of climate change, with an estimated 143 million internal climate migrants by 2050 in the absence of urgent global and national climate action.¹

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges. It reminded us that destroying and degrading the web of life increases the threat to human health. The pandemic erased decades of development gains, and weakened capacities of national governments across the world to address these environmental challenges. Furthermore, the slow and uneven recovery, coupled with unprecedented levels of debt vulnerability among the developing countries, and the mounting food and fuel crises, will further constrain States' capabilities and willingness to address sustainable development priorities in a balanced manner.

Environmental threats are crosscutting, multidimensional, and threat multipliers. Given that the drivers and impacts of environmental degradation are interlinked, **there is a clear need for a coordinated and integrated global response to these challenges.**

¹ [World Migration Report 2022: Chapter 9 - Migration and slow-onset impacts of climate change: taking stock and taking action](#) | IOM Publications Platform

“A super-session for nature”

The seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly has coincided with a high number of conferences, high-level meetings and processes relating to the environment. This includes the three Conferences of Parties on Climate, Biodiversity and Land; the Second UN Ocean Conference; the Food Systems Summit; the Sustainable Transportation Conference; the High-Level Dialogue on Energy; the High-Level Meeting on the New Urban Agenda; UNEA / UNEP @50; and Stockholm+50.

While multiple global commitments have been made by Member States during these conferences, several cross-cutting challenges have been identified across the various environmental tracks that are limiting action. For instance, while there has been no dearth of ambition in the commitments made, there is **an urgent need for large scale action to bridge the gap between commitment and action.**

A related challenge has been the **absence of a system-wide response to tackle the environmental crises.** A holistic approach is necessary to address the challenges we face, in order to limit the unintended consequences, address joint drivers and maximise synergies. And in order to do so, mainstreaming environmental objectives in the public, private, and multilateral settings, at the global, national and local levels is needed. In the economic domain, for instance, this calls for transformation in the current economic systems by harnessing sustainable production and consumption practices through policy intervention and incentivizing finance flows and investments to support transition in industry, and alignment with global commitments on the environment.

Any effort at this scale requires the participation and efforts of **a wide range of stakeholders** including young people, women, local communities, indigenous people, civil society organizations and the private sector. This also calls for incentivising behavioural change, including through increasing public awareness on challenges and actions using clear messaging and educational efforts. And finally, **strengthening the science-policy interface** to enhance decision making is also necessary.

Humanity is at a moment of reckoning, which requires us to work in synergy, and unite all efforts in a moment for nature, to maintain hope in our shared future on our blue planet. And to do so, these bottlenecks that hinder action across all environmental tracks need to be addressed.

Objective

The High-Level Thematic Debate entitled a ‘Moment for Nature’ aims at achieving the level of cohesion needed among the global environmental work streams to keep the 1.5 degrees target alive, and rapidly accelerate the implementation of the SDGs for sustainable and resilient COVID-19 recoveries. Focusing on the interlinkages and synergies between the different strands of the environmental action tracks, and with reference to the common challenges faced, the event will:

1. Present solutions to common bottlenecks affecting the entire environmental agenda;

2. Highlight best practices and transformative partnerships that break the siloes and build the required cross-cutting technical, skilling and financial capacities that could accelerate implementation on all fronts to the level needed; and,
3. Reinforce the views of a range of stakeholders, including young people.

While many of the environmental work streams are governed by their respective international, intergovernmental forums, the UN General Assembly has a critical role in raising awareness, fostering political consensus, galvanizing momentum and giving strategic direction to the UN system and forging multi-sectoral partnerships among the broader global community for the scale and breadth of ambition needed to secure resilient COVID-19 recoveries that secure humanity's future and future generations' wellbeing.

Outcomes

The Moment for Nature's results-oriented discussions will be captured through a summary of the President of the General Assembly, that aims to:

1. Inform future action and policies by the General Assembly and implementation bodies at international, regional, and local levels, as well as inform relevant policies and actions by Member States and stakeholders; and,
2. Inform engagement of Member States at other related high-level meetings and processes.

Provisional Programme

10:00 a.m.	Opening Segment Stage setting remarks; Moment for reflection
10:25 a.m.	Segment 1: Including Young People for Intergenerational Coalitions Whole of society responses, involving all stakeholders, are urgently needed to scale up action. A key priority in addressing environmental threats is recognition of our responsibilities towards current and future generations - young people in particular. This segment will feature leading regional networks working to empower youth and reflect their priorities, to share their experiences on urgently accelerating integrated approaches to secure humanity's future, and to make calls for urgent action, solidarity and partnership.
11:00 a.m.	Segment 2: Cultivating coherent system-wide responses to tackle interlinked planetary crises Greater synergy and coherence across all the environmental work streams and at all policy planning and implementation levels is needed to keep the 1.5 degrees target alive. This segment's panels will explore how to support integrated environmental action at various levels and offer reflections on lessons learned regarding how the work streams can further support each other in order to inform future action. The panels will be followed by interventions from the floor.

1:00 p.m.	Lunch Break
3:00 p.m.	<p>Segment 3: Facilitating urgent, large scale action to bridge the gap between commitments and action</p> <p>Wide gaps between commitments made and actions taken are not only preventing the achievement of agreed goals, but are making it more difficult for countries to reach them due to escalating environmental pressures. The challenge is therefore not the lack of ambitious global targets, but the lack of implementation, including to re-orient financial flows and investments, and to strengthen capacities for science-based decision making to effectively tackle complex existing and emerging environmental crises.</p> <p>This segment's panels will address the need for urgent solidarity for sustainable recovery pathways; highlight innovations that can create opportunities for all; and showcase efforts to strengthen the science-policy-action approach on data, digital solutions including addressing capacity gaps, and early warning for adaptation and risk mitigation.</p> <p>The panels will be followed by interventions from the floor.</p>
5:00 p.m.	<p>Segment 4: Engaging and Empowering All Relevant Stakeholders: Simplifying Messages for Greater Partnerships</p> <p>Accelerating the expansion and creation of multi-stakeholder partnerships to overcome cross-cutting capacity gaps will be critical to keeping the 1.5 degrees target alive. Achieving this will require further simplifying and disseminating key messages on integrated approaches at unprecedented scale, through engaging various forms of traditional and new media.</p> <p>This segment will explore additional efforts the international community can undertake to generate narratives that can spur whole-of-society responses and energize disengaged sectors.</p>
5:45 p.m.	Closing Segment