

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*

CONCEPT NOTE

The President of the United Nations General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, is convening a briefing with scientists and academics on Tuesday, 7 February, from 10.00am to 6.00pm EST in the Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations Headquarters, New York, with the aim of focusing on science-based evidence in support of sustainable solutions on the topics of the Economics of Water; Climate, Conflict and Cooperation; as well as Early Warning for Pandemic Preparedness.

The informal briefing will offer scientific decision support for Member States to contribute to the UN 2023 Water Conference on 22-24 March 2022, the negotiations for the outcome document for the high-level meeting on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, and preparations for the SDG Summit in September 2023.

In addition, members of the Independent Group of Scientists - a group of 15 eminent scientists appointed by the UN Secretary-General - will share an update on the 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report.

Aligning with the President's motto of "Solutions through Solidarity, Sustainability and Science", the event will support the thirteen negotiating processes currently underway in the General Assembly related to transformation towards sustainable development pathways.

OUTLINE:

The in-person briefing will be held in three consecutive sessions of 90 minutes: 30 minutes of presentation and 15 minutes of reactions by first respondents, that will be followed by an interactive discussion with Member States for 45 minutes. Observers of the General Assembly and ECOSOC accredited NGOs.

Event Outline

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

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

Moderator – Dr. Johannes Cullman, Chief Scientific Advisor to the President of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly

10:05 am – 10:35 am (Main Speakers):

- 1) H. E. Mr. Tharman Shanmugaratnam, *Co-chair of Global Commission on the Economics of Water; Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for Social Policies, Singapore*
- 2) H. E. Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa, *Commissioner of Global Commission on the Economics of Water; President of the 73rd session of the UNGA*
- 3) Mr. Aromar Revi, *Commissioner of Global Commission on the Economics of Water; Director of the Indian Institute for Human Settlements; Co-Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)*

10:35 am – 10:50 am, (Respondents):

- 1) Mr. Henk Ovink, *Special Envoy for International Water Affairs for the Kingdom of the Netherlands*
- 2) Dr. Upmanu Lall, *Director of the Columbia Water Center and the Alan and Carol Silberstein Professor of Engineering; Senior Research Scientist, International Research Institute for Climate & Society*

10:50 am – 11:30 am: Reactions from the floor

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

Moderator – Dr. Johannes Cullman, Chief Scientific Advisor to the President of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly

11:30 am – 12:00 pm (Main Speakers):

- 1) Prof. Dr. Aaron Wolf, *Professor of Geography in the College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences, Oregon State University*
- 2) Dr. Dinara Ziganshina, *Director, Scientific Information Center of Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia*
- 3) Prof. Dr. Charles J. Vörösmarty, *Founding Director of the Environmental Sciences Initiative at the CUNY Advanced Science Research Center*

12:00 pm – 12:15 pm (Respondents):

- 1) Prog. Dr. Susanne Schmeier, *Head of Water Governance Department/Associate Professor of Water Law and Diplomacy at IHE Delft*
- 2) Prof. Makane Moïse Mbengue, *Professor of International Law and Director of the Department of Public International Law and International Organization, University of Geneva and Sciences Po Paris*

12:15 pm – 1:00 pm: Reactions from the floor

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

Moderator – Dr. Johannes Cullman, Chief Scientific Advisor to the President of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly

3:00 pm – 3:30 pm (Main Speakers):

- 1) Dr. Jim Golden, *Chief Data Officer of Pandemic Prevention Initiative, Rockefeller Foundation*
- 2) Dr. Niamh O'Hara, *CEO and co-founder Biotia*
- 3) Dr. Rafael Maciel-de-Freitas, *Researcher in public health at Instituto Oswaldo Cruz, Fiocruz (Brazil) and Institute for Tropical Medicine (Germany)*

3:30 pm – 3:45 pm (Respondents):

- 1) Dr. Soojin Jang, *Head of Antibacterial Resistance Lab, Institut Pasteur Korea*
- 2) Dr. Maria Almiron, *Unit Chief of Health Emergency Information and Risk Assessment, WHO Regional Office for the Americas*

3:45 pm – 4:30 pm: Reactions from the floor

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

Moderator – Dr. Astra Bonini, Senior Sustainable Development Officer at United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

4:30 pm – 5:00 pm (Main Speakers):

- 1) Dr. Nancy Shackell, *Research Scientist, Bedford Institute of Oceanography, Canada*
- 2) Dr. Asa Persson, *Research Director and Deputy Director, Stockholm Environment Institute, Sweden*

5:00 pm – 5:15 pm (Respondent):

- 1) H.E. Mr. Fergal Tomas Mythen, *Permanent Representative of Ireland*

5:15 pm – 5:50 pm: Reactions from the floor

5:50 pm – 6:00 pm: Closing remarks by H.E. Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, President of the General Assembly

EXPECTED KEY MESSAGES:

Panel 1 on The Economics of Water

Putting water resources management on a stable and equitable footing is a joint responsibility and endeavor, in the collective interest of the international community. The Global Commission on the Economics of Water, established in May 2022, will submit its first report at the UN 2023 Water Conference to propose broad transformations in the way water is being valued and managed to achieve goals and objectives enshrined in the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Climate Agreement, and the Convention for Global Biodiversity - incorporating a central role for science.

This session will discuss the criticality of the Water Action Agenda:

- Water connects all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As much as a global water crisis would imperil the achievement of the integrity of the 2030 Agenda, it is water security that can accelerate the achievement of all its goals and targets.
- Human action and current economic models have pushed the global water cycle out of balance, which is coupled by widespread and more frequent local water crises. Water crisis is closely linked to the climate and biodiversity crises, with each one reinforcing the other. They are tied to how we produce and consume, how we govern and finance them, and what we really value.
- To address it collectively, through local to global actions, in the shared interest of all nations, the global water cycle should be considered as a Global Common Good.
- A sustainable, just and equitable water future requires higher levels of collective ambition on valuing water; reshaping the interaction of the public, private and community sectors; developing, sharing and using technologies widely; building the right capacities; and mobilizing resources, including financing.
- Improved and strengthened governance should ensure a holistic and integrated approach to water and accelerate SDG implementation from local to the global level.

Panel 2 on Climate, Conflict and Cooperation

To ensure that needs of the people and ecosystems that rely on water as a 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 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 on Early Warning for Pandemic Preparedness.

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 why a global early warning system is needed, leveraging community-based models and data to enhance our collective capacity to respond to infectious disease threats:

- Overcoming previous, more siloed and single issue-focused efforts;
- Building on improvements in computational technology, access to growing numbers of digital data resources;

- Outlining the components of a cross-sector, multi-modal global early warning system framed around data philanthropy and modern data logistics.

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 UN 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 in due course.

The briefing will be broadcast live and on-demand by UN WebTV.

The 10am-1pm session can be followed live at <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k10/k10cv0ir1f>

The 3pm-6pm session can be followed live at <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1p/k1p7keefgv>

Short summaries of the briefings will be made available in the weeks after the briefing.

Press releases on each of the panels will be made available within 24 hours of the briefing.