

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

12 April 2023, 10.00 a.m.
Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations Headquarters

The President of the United Nations General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, will convene a briefing with scientists and academics on Wednesday, 12 April 2023, from 10.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. 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 Beyond GDP, Food Security and Sustainability Transformation, and Scientific Support System at the UN.

The informal briefing will offer scientific decision support for Member States to contribute to the Financing for Development process, the High-Level Political Forum, and preparations for the SDG Summit in September 2023.

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

Programme

The briefing is open to Members States, Observers of the General Assembly and ECOSOC accredited NGOs. The in-person briefing will be held in three consecutive sessions of 90 minutes: 30 minutes of presentations followed by a moderated interactive discussion for 60 minutes.

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 - Beyond GDP: How we measure matters

Moderator: Stefan Schweinfest, Director, UN Statistics Division

Panelists:

1. **Deborah Sills**, *Global Public Sector Consulting Leader, Deloitte*
2. **Dr Bibek Debroy**, *Chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, Government of India*
3. **Anu Peltola**, *Acting Director, Statistics Division, UNCTAD*
4. **Dr Rutger Hoekstra**, *Institute of Environmental Sciences, Leiden University*
5. **Thierry Watrin**, *Green Economy and Climate Change Advisor, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning of Rwanda*

11:30 am - 1:00 pm: Panel 2 – Food Security and Sustainability Transformation

Moderator: Ambassador Ferrero y de Loma-Osorio, UN Committee on World Food Security

Panelists:

1. **Olav Kjørven**, *Senior Director for Strategy, EAT Foundation*
2. **Rikin Gandhi**, *CEO and Co-founder, Digital Green*
3. **Dr Inbal Becker-Reshef**, *Program Director, NASA Harvest*

4. **Dr Ravi Kanbur**, *Co-Chair, Food Systems Economics Commission*
5. **Corinna Hawkes**, *Director, Food Systems and Food Safety, FAO*

3:00 pm – 4:30 pm: Panel 3 – Scientific Support System at the UN: A new science-based ‘normal’?

Moderator: Dr. Johannes Cullman, Chief Scientific Advisor to the President of the seventy-seventh session of the UN General Assembly

Panelists:

1. **Dr Claire Melamed**, *CEO, Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data*
2. **Dr Riko Oki**, *Deputy Director, Earth Observation Research Center, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency*
3. **Felix Ankomah Asante**, *Vice-Chancellor for Research, Innovation and Development, University of Ghana*
4. **Dr Samira Asma**, *Assistant Director-General, Data, Analytics and Delivery for Impact, World Health*
5. **Dr Salvatore Arico**, *CEO International Science Council*

4:30 pm – 5:00 pm: Wrap up and closing remarks by H.E. Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, President of the General Assembly

Background

Panel 1 - Beyond GDP: How we measure matters

The world is changing in unprecedented ways. Addressing the global policy crises requires transformative policies and actions in the best interest of people, planet, peace and prosperity. It also requires development of a rigorous and holistic framework to make effective use of all the assets that underline human well-being: natural, human, social, produced and financial capital.

Going forward, it is necessary to expand the traditional GDP framework. The objective is not to replace GDP, but rather complement it with indicators which allow the measurement of progress across the three pillars of sustainable development in both the global north and south. Doing so is key to unlocking the financing needed for the SDGs and achieving the 2030 Agenda.

It is critically important to harmonize existing “beyond GDP” initiatives, make progress towards institutionalizing a “beyond GDP” metric, and translate it into practical action.

Guiding questions:

- How do international governing bodies choose and agree on the indices and measurement framework, and what are the benefits to engage in an additional performance assessment system?
- How can Member States and the United Nations system better support the establishment and gaining acceptance for a new measurement system at national and international levels?
- How can governance, coordination and cooperation, from local to international level, be enhanced in order to promote GDP plus disclosure?

Panel 2 - Food Security and Sustainability Transformation

The world population is projected to reach 8.5 billion in 2030, and to increase further to 9.7 billion in 2050. With this demographic projection in mind, the use of freshwater for human consumption, agriculture, industry and other uses has increased sixfold whilst the amount of water and arable land available remains the same. Human health costs associated with diet-related non-communicable diseases are also proliferating—and were a major driver of vulnerability to COVID-19.

The latest State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) Report by FAO and its partners estimates that up to 828 million people faced chronic undernourishment in 2021 - 46 million more than in 2020 and 150 million more than in 2019, before COVID-19. The World Economic Forum Global Risk Report (2023) places food supply among the top risks for 2023 with the greatest potential impact on a global scale. Against this backdrop, the increased competition for water, and improved attention to environmental issues, water for food remains a core issue that can no longer be tackled through a narrow sectoral approach. It must be addressed in an integrated manner. Two years after the Food Systems Summit, the UN food systems stock taking moment aims to provide opportunities for countries to report on progress made at the national level and their contributions to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda – despite the current global context that has substantially changed.

This panel will offer the opportunity for member states to engage with scientists, academia and practitioners collectively working towards sustainable solutions by drawing upon the science and knowledge to tackle challenges within food systems in the run up to the global food systems stock take in Rome, Italy in July and other UN intergovernmental processes such as the SDG Summit.

Guiding Questions:

- How can we address the losses in water and energy that are currently occurring in our food systems? What are the alternatives?
- How can we secure biodiversity that provides a resilient system that can withstand environmental shocks and changing climates while still producing high-quality food?
- How can we improve regional and global cooperation on food security?

Panel 3 - Scientific Support System at the UN: A new science-based ‘normal’?

The Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by all Member States in 2015, are “a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet”. 230 indicators were established to measure progress to achieve these goals. Yet halfway to 2030, we are way off track to achieve most SDGs, and the interrelated nature of many SDG indicators makes efficient and effective policy development, operational management and financing difficult.

There are various concepts used to describe how sustainable human behavior is in the mid-to-long term, e.g., the concept of planetary boundaries. Interpreting the 230 indicators of the Sustainable Development Framework by means of a few basic descriptors that measure sustainability of policy

making and/or investments could be a practical tool to support deliberations at the UN when further developed.

This panel will give a background to discussions on scientific decision support for General Assembly deliberations and policy development processes. It presents new possibilities of evaluating data and supporting political processes.

Guiding Questions:

- How can we grasp changes that occur on a global scale?
- What is the best way to transform scientific data into actionable information and knowledge that supports decision making processes at the UN?
- What is required to integrate various processes and methodologies into a consistent framework for scientific evaluation of sustainability transformation?
- How do we integrate local/indigenous data and knowledge for improving the accuracy of information?

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/k1v/k1vzgefvyv>

The 3pm-5pm session can be followed live at <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k12/k12ndn2tzo>

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.