



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



Innovation for Industrial Sustainability

- Our Responsibility and Commitment to a Green and Sustainable Future We Want

17 September 2023, 15:00-18:30, Westin Hotel, New York

CONCEPT PAPER

BACKGROUND

Although the rapid industrialization has resulted in advancements in social development and economic growth, it has also given rise to environmental issues such as air and water pollution, climate change, over-exploitation of natural resources, ocean warming and acidification, among others.

On September 25, 2015, General Assembly adopted the resolution (A/RES/70/1) – Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, setting out 17 ambitious goals with 169 targets to achieve sustainable development over the next 15 years. It provides us with a roadmap to realize a future with an inclusive and sustainable development path for all.

7 years in since the adoption of the Agenda 2030 and its 17 SDGs, the world has seen progress in poverty eradication, food security, renewable energy, access to education and healthcare, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Partnerships and coalitions on SDG implementation among governments, UN system and other stakeholders have been widely built and expanded, resulting in hundreds of thousands of voluntary commitments and pledges -completed and ongoing- contributing to different goals and targets of SDGs.

However, these achievements and progress have been halted or even reversed by the pandemic and the cascading crises facing the world. The implementation of SDGs is off track and remaining gaps are widening.



Significant disparities persist in the achievement of the SDGs across and within countries. Progress in many areas including income inequality, access to clean water and sanitation, ocean conservation and halting biodiversity loss, has been inadequate or stagnant. Unemployment rate is skyrocketing and fighting climate change remains the biggest and most complex challenge.

Innovation for industrial sustainability is essential to achieving the SDGs, which call for the collaboration between the public and private sectors. “The timely achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals is at serious risk. To reverse our course, a fundamental change of financing and investment is needed to place sustainability at the core of the global economic and financial system... Private sector leadership will be more important than ever.” said by the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres.

The public sector, including universities and research institutions financed by public funding, has responsibility to transfer advanced technology and knowledge to the private sector, as well as to setup platforms to encourage effective communications and cooperation between the public and the private sector.

The private sector, with their resources, expertise, and influence can help bridge the gap by leveraging their networks and partnerships to drive positive change and progress towards the SDGs. It has already become an indispensable player in advancing economic growth, industrial development and environmental sustainability. Businesses can contribute to ending poverty, promoting economic growth, reducing inequalities, mitigating climate change, and protecting the environment, while leaving no one behind. Through responsible business practices and investment, the business sector can create long-lasting and sustainable impact that benefits both society and the planet.

In reality, the business sector faces a choice between short-term return and long-term value, a balance between business growth and social responsibilities. How the business sector can take real action via innovative solutions including through public and private partnerships, to achieve long term economic growth while protecting the environment, is the primary objective of this event.



OBJECTIVES

This side event co-organized by Tsinghua University, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and UN Water supported by Sustainable Business Leaders platform, aims to lead a continuing discussion on green¹ and innovative business practices in achieving industrial sustainability, and contributing to the accomplishment of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with particular focus on SDG 12 - ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns and SDG 13 - take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, all of them are calling for a joint green transformation for a sustainable future.

The balance between economic growth and sustainability has been a long-standing challenge. This event is going to explore replicable practices to turn social responsibilities into business opportunities, by exchanging insights on technology innovations and corporate governance, sharing lessons learned from strategy making to daily operation, by voices from academia and industries including new energy, manufacturing, agriculture, digital economy, healthcare, etc. This event will also catalyze and encourage voluntary commitments from all parties, to pursue a green and sustainable development through concrete steps.

Every country, every sector and every business faces specific challenges. Only communication, mutual understanding and collaborative partnerships can bridge differences and form wide coalitions towards the common goal of sustainable development, for our shared planet, for humanity's shared future.

¹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/ifp_seed/documents/publication/wcms_555274.pdf (ILO's Green Business Booklet provides an account of what it means to be a 'green business')