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Preparatory process

Session: Protecting the planet and building resilience

Pursuing policies, investments and innovation to address disaster risk reduction and protect the planet from degradation

Inputs provided by ESCAP (weinbergerk@un.org)

Introduction

The 2030 Agenda is rooted in the idea that human development and wellbeing cannot be achieved without simultaneously safeguarding and investing in nature and managing disaster risk in a systemic manner—otherwise development gains will be short lived and unequally distributed. Biodiversity loss, land and forest degradation, climate change, and disasters are threatening progress toward sustainable development. Actions to advance economic and social development need to address these threats and build resilience including through nature-based solutions, sustainable consumption and production practices and accounting for the true value of nature.

The past decade—in particular the COVID-19 crisis—has revealed the systemic nature of risk and the cascading impact of disasters across all three dimensions of sustainable development. The natural environment is humanity's first line of defense against many hazards, and nature-based solutions must be scaled up to manage disaster risks, build resilience and leave no one behind. These issues are addressed directly in SDGs 12, 13, 14, and 15, but they are foundational to the entire 2030 Agenda, including poverty eradication, health, food security and inclusive economic growth and sustainable livelihoods. The current session will highlight opportunities and innovations that can build resilience and manage risk while securing livelihoods and safeguarding the planet.

Guiding questions

Please consider the 4 questions below and submit written responses totaling **2000 words or less.** (Though the average should be 500 words per question, it is fine to use more words on one question and fewer on another, to total 2000.) Please draw from your field of expertise and experience and be as concrete and tangible as possible. Please provide your responses in a Word document by **12 May** to rambler@un.org.

1. ***Systems transformation***
   What are the fundamental systems transformations needed to halt nature degradation, reverse loss and manage risk, while eradicating poverty, ensuring food security for a growing population, securing livelihoods and promoting resilience?

- Transformative change is needed, based on a paradigm change that puts nature and people at the center of economic development, using the framework of the SDGs and a systems approach to

ensure policy coherence and that synergies and trade-offs between different sectors and scales are taken into account.

- First, it is imperative to move away from pure economic growth development model based on GDP measurements that often promote environmental degradation and are not people centered, therefore engender growing inequalities and leaving people behind.
- By transitioning towards a circular economy aimed at eliminating waste and safeguarding environmental resources the system can be transformed. System transformation to protect the environment as well as human livelihoods requires a shift in consumer behavior and greater corporate responsibility. Outreach and education of consumption and production are important to create transparency and knowledge for consumers. This can improve labor standards, promote fair trade and minimize environmental impacts.
- The globalization paradigm has seen large conglomerates monopolies over small and medium sized enterprises and local production. This system has created economic disparities. Support for small and medium size enterprises and localization of production and consumption can even the playing field and reverse the wealth inequity that has been created.
- Timing is opportune to green the economy and incentivize renewable energy sources whilst simultaneously imposing carbon pricing mechanisms and reducing fossil fuels subsidies.
- At the forefront of systems transformation is also the promotion of nature-based solutions that support the protection of nature as well a climate change mitigation and adaptation and therefore climate associated risks, and focus on all the custodians of nature.
- Agriculture and food production is an example of a sector that could benefit from a shift from industrial agriculture to diversified agroecological approaches, organic farming practices and conservation agriculture. This transition will reduce the use of agrochemical, enhance carbon sequestration and protect farmland biodiversity, both supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation. Food sales at local markets and support of small and medium- sized food enterprises should be prioritized with benefits of greater food security and higher quality production.

2. Specific actions to drive transformation

Please describe 2-3 specific, promising actions at different levels that can drive these systems transformations. These actions could relate for instance to scaling up the use of nature-based solutions, sustainable consumption and production, or other approaches. How have these actions helped (or how *could* they help) break down siloes, support the systemic management of risk, and trigger positive changes in society? How can co-benefits between actions be maximized and the risk in trade-offs stemming from these actions (i.e. negative impacts on other aspects of the 2030 Agenda) managed?

Specific actions for transformations:

- **Natural capital and human well-being approaches need to be adopted at all levels,** as well as circular economy and adequate social protection measures, to ensure that economic growth is decoupled from environmental damage and supports all people.

- **Biodiversity needs to be maintained and ecosystems protected and sustainably managed to provide resilience to current and future risks** (climatic and others). This includes the protection and plantation of mangroves to protect coastal zones from tsunamis, ensuring enough biodiversity is maintained in the agricultural sector (seed banks and no restrictions on the use of local seeds) to ensure resilience of the agricultural ecosystems to drought, floods and to water and land changes), protecting natural forests and replanting degraded forests to ensure resilience against climate change, protecting the environment in watershed to ensure the continuity of their services in terms of water management, etc. This needs to be done at the local to the global scale, depending on the ecosystems and the type of services they provide. For the global environmental commons, such as the ocean and climate, they need to be managed through a concerted global approach. This requires collaboration amongst all concerned sectors of government (environment, all production sectors, planning, finance, etc.) and at all relevant scales. Promoting these approaches in a participatory manner and taking into account all the vulnerable groups, especially those who depend the most on nature (such as women and girls, farmers, fishermen, indigenous and local people) will allow to find synergies on the environmental-related SDGs, the social and the economic SDGs, as all human and economic activities depend on nature.

- **Economic shift to a circular and greener economy**. Additional funding for the waste management sector to make use of recycling plants and reuse resources as much as possible and support for the informal waste management sector. Science, technology and innovation to support production that minimizes water use and optimizes resource efficiency. Facilitate innovative business models including (i) circular supply chains, (ii) sharing platforms to optimize the use of goods between users, resource efficiency and recovery, and (iii) product life extension and right to repair. For a greener economy a shift from non-renewable to renewable energy sources should be supported through reducing subsidies for fossil fuels, introducing greater carbon pricing mechanisms and incentivizing renewable power supplies. Tax incentives and smart de-risking of investments should support climate and environmental friendly areas. Recovery plans should facilitate public investment in decarbonising the economy and prioritize the most effective environmentally sustainable activities and projects.

3. ***Means of implementation and the global partnership for development (SDG 17):***
   Achieving the 2030 Agenda relies on a combination of means of implementation to catalyse action and engagement, harness synergies and reduce tradeoffs. Please discuss the means of implementation, including finance, partnerships, and capacity building, needed to make the necessary transformations. How can science, technology and innovation (STI), including social innovation and local and indigenous knowledge, be mobilized to advance these transformations?

- Green **finance** instruments should be further operationalized to ensure their effectiveness. A best practice example of Green Finance is Indonesia Green Sukuk Bond which has been used in combination with Climate Budget Tagging. For the developing world there should be priority to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) into key sectors for the achievement of the SDGs. This could be done in combination with the adoption of progressive income and wealth taxes to increase national green budgets.

- **Access to data and monitoring technology** has facilitated formal assessment of the majority of SDG indicators. Without which, baseline levels from which progress could be measured are unable to be developed. Efforts are however needed to bring together traditional and new data sources for better and faster data.

- **Technology** has revolutionized food safety and security through food storage, preservation, transport and distribution technologies and infrastructure that reduce food and nutrient losses as well as waste and seasonal food insecurity.

- **Periodic scientific assessments**, for instance on transboundary climate risks, or on slow on-set disasters, will help policymakers to understand and diagnose their complexity and to identify potential risk hotspots. Science helps to unpack complex land-system dynamics and their governance and supports transformations to sustainability especially where it includes local, lay and indigenous knowledge, such as the Global Land Programme of Future Earth Finally, experimentation and innovation leads to technological developments that support sustainability, for instance in fishing, agriculture (agro-ecology) and manufacturing (green construction materials, sustainable textiles, etc.).

- **Rapid technological changes**, widespread connectivity and pressure to move away from non-renewables have caused a global "energy transition". The energy transition implies a series of shifts in technologies and paradigms for energy production and use. These are being manifested in areas such as the expanding use of low-cost renewables, advanced energy efficiency, decentralized energy, electrification of end-uses, energy storage and electric mobility.

- **Community Engagement, Education and Outreach**. People centered approach to conservation and inclusive policies for landless farmers, indigenous people, women and girls, people with disabilities should be promoted and developed in partnership with relevant stakeholders. Education systems and awareness campaigns should be strengthened to build public knowledge on the role of biodiversity and ecosystems for societies, and on the co-benefits of action on biodiversity, ecosystems, disaster risk reduction and climate change. A key strategy to improve management of protected areas is using indigenous persons leadership, knowledge and management.

4. Covid-19 crisis

What does the Covid-19 crisis reveal about the human-nature relationship and systemic risk creation? How can nature-based solutions contribute to a post-COVID-19 economic and social recovery that is more sustainable, equitable and resilient? What immediate and medium-term

steps are needed to ensure that the post-COVID-19 economic and social recovery is sustainable, equitable and resilient. How can we redirect financial flows and direct recovery efforts to create better outcomes for people, prosperity and planet?

- The COVID-19 crisis has brought the world's attention to the links between infectious diseases and wildlife, global food safety issues, and human transportation matters. 75% of all emerging infectious diseases indeed come from wildlife. As humans encroach on previously wild areas, animal production intensifies and biodiversity is continually pushed to extinction the human wildlife interface has never been so tangible. Wildlife is seeing its territory reduced and simultaneously gaining exposure to domesticated animals (potential intermediate viral hosts). Never before have so many opportunities existed for pathogens to pass from wild and domestic animals to people. As biodiversity gradually dies out, infectious and parasitic diseases continue to increase. A correlation has associated the prevalence of zoonotic outbreaks to the number of endangered animals in a country.

- In this context, focusing on nature provides opportunities for minimizing future pandemics and leveraging co-benefits for biodiversity and ecosystems, for the human societies that depend on them and for climate change. COVID-19 demands a deeper reflection on our environment and the interactions that humans have with nature. - Ecosystem restoration including in agriculture, pasturelands, forestry, and the expansion and consolidation of protected areas on a landscape scale strengthens biodiversity conservation. Protected areas could benefit from investments into sustainable tourism, including biodiversity and heritage protection and conservation. Halting the destruction of the natural world for agriculture, mining and housing all further drive wildlife into contact with people, would lessen the possibilities of viral transmissions form wildlife to human populations.

- The One Health concept, focusing on the fact that human health and animal health are interdependent and bound to the health of the ecosystems in which they exist, and/or the Planetary Health concepts can be helpful in implementing economic and social recovery with environment at its core.

- Globalization and the interconnectivity of the world is responsible for the speed of COVID-19's transmission globally. Experts are suggesting greater focus on the circular economy through deglobalisation and localisation of produce and support for small and medium-sized enterprises.

- Opportunities for investment to support recovery is provided through large-scale restoration of degraded ecosystems, and enhanced management of protected areas to increase resilience to natural and health disasters. Ecosystem restoration including in agriculture, pasturelands, forestry, and the expansion and consolidation of protected areas on a landscape scale strengthens biodiversity conservation. Protected areas could benefit from investments into sustainable tourism, including biodiversity and heritage protection and conservation. Halting the destruction of the natural world for agriculture, mining and housing all further drive wildlife into contact with people, would lessen the possibilities of viral transmissions form wildlife to human populations. Mobilising financial resources to build health capacity in emerging disease hotspots and for strengthening the implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and

Flora (CITES) could also support the minimisation of risks of zoonosis potentially originating in the international trade of wild species.

- In the aftermath of COVID-19, adopting government stimulus packages and rationalizing fossil fuel subsidies for decarbonization and greening of the economy is an important step for the future. It is opportune timing for tax incentives and smart de-risking of investments to support climate and environmental friendly areas, such as renewables and nature-positive actions. Recovery plans should facilitate public investment in decarbonizing the economy and prioritize the most effective environmentally sustainable activities and projects.

- The wider adoption of a holistic food system approach that enables food security and nutrition and promotes economic, social and environmental sustainability is required and a paradigm shift from industrial agriculture to diversified agroecological systems is now more urgent than ever. Such systems are less vulnerable to the food-chain disruptions caused by pandemics and natural disasters. Climate and nature-friendly farming solutions exist – such as agroecological approaches, organic farming practices and conservation agriculture and should be invested in, to reduce the use of agrochemicals, enhance carbon sequestration and protect farmland biodiversity. Investments into informal markets, and support to existing small and medium-sized food enterprises should also be prioritized, to avoid further concentration of processing and retail, as well as long distance transportation. In order to prevent future zoonosis, attention should be paid to and investments made towards banning wet markets and combatting illegal wildlife trade as well as to support the implementation of the International Arrangements for Food Safety, the adoption and implementation of national sanitary standards and deglobalisation and localisation of production and consumption.

- National capacities need to be developed for monitoring and reporting on status, trends, risks and threats in preparedness for future catastrophes. Proactive border control and tracing apps should be regarded as best practice examples from COVID-19 risk management and response times should be faster when faced with future pandemics.