

Session: Protecting the planet and building resilience

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

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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?

At the core of Agenda 2030 lies the leave-no-one-behind principle. In that context, a key transformational change is reducing inequality at the global, regional, national, and local level. Inequality is one of the main drivers of negative impacts on livelihoods' resilience, and ecosystem and land degradation. Evidence shows that there is a correlation between inequality and biodiversity loss (Hamann et al. 2018, Islam 2015, Holland et al. 2009, Mikkelsen et al. 2007), and that inequality adversely affects various dimensions of human well-being (Sukhdev et al. 2011). The Anthropocene made the interlinkages between human and environmental systems more evident and critical than ever before, as the Earth life support system reaches a critical condition (Leach et al. 2018, Folke et al. 2016). In particular, halting nature degradation, restoring ecosystems and protecting them requires the adoption of an environmental justice perspective that considers distribution (rights, costs and responsibilities), procedure (participation in decision-making) and recognition (respecting identities and cultural difference) (Basnett et al. 2019, Martin et al. 2016).

Addressing inequality involves multiple dimensions: economic, social, cultural, political, spatial, environmental and knowledge, as well as disparities between individuals and groups such as class, occupation, gender, ethnicity, geography, and identity (ISSC, IDS and UNESCO 2016). These dimensions intersect and the result of their combinations exacerbates inequality when the economically disadvantaged face discriminations based on their identity (ISSC, IDS and UNESCO 2016). It must be noted that while gender equality is a fundamental human right, women are more likely to live below 50% of the median income (UN Women 2018). Moreover, about 30% of income inequality is due to inequality inside households, and between women and men. Another driver of tension leading to tradeoffs are macroeconomic goals, that might hinder the reduction of inequality as oftentimes governments reduce salaries and workers' rights to achieve competitive advantages in global trade. Furthermore, tax reductions to attract private investors and promote business and employment might injure government budgetary capacity to invest in policy interventions aimed at creating and strengthening safety nets to reduce inequality.

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?¹

Achieving lasting transformations is only possible through actions that tackle the root causes that create and reproduce inequality (UNRISD 2016). Accordingly, and within the scope of this question, I will analyze two catalyzing interventions that may contribute to reducing inequality for indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs):

- Securing land tenure and access rights to resources for indigenous peoples and local communities with particular attention to gender equality,
- Developing and strengthening local organizations in forest-based landscapes.

Securing land tenure and access rights to resources for indigenous peoples and local communities with particular attention to gender equality

Clear tenure and access rights are the cornerstone of peaceful and inclusive societies, as uncertain tenure affects livelihoods and food security, induces conflicts and violence, and results in low investments on sustainable land management (FAO 2018b, Mutangadura 2007, UNECA 2004, Maxwell and Wiebe 1998). From the perspective of forest ecosystems, it must be noted that the FAO (2018b) considers the proportion of forests with secure tenure rights for local communities and other forest dependent people as a thematic metric to measure forests' role in ensuring equal rights to economic resources for all. About 76% of all forest area, or 2,969 million hectares, were public property in 2010, while about 1.5 billion IPLCs have secured rights over forest resources through community-based tenure (FAO 2018b). About 1.3 billion people rely on forests for their livelihood, and 300-350 million people live within or close to forests and fully depend on them for their daily subsistence (Katila et al. 2017, Rasmussen et al. 2017, Angelsen et al. 2014).

Enacting a transformational change in land tenure and access rights involves the reform of legal frameworks to implement decentralization and devolution processes (Agrawal and Ostrom 2001, Ribot 2002, Larson et al. 2009, Cronkleton et al. 2012, FAO 2018b). Tenure reforms need to consider the culture of the communities involved, the dynamics of land occupation and use, customary rights, and traditional governance structures. The concrete measures implemented in low- to middle-income countries range from partial devolution of rights resulting in co-management systems (e.g. Bolivia, Senegal, Nepal) to community forestry by empowered local organizations (e.g. Mexico, Guatemala, Tanzania).

There are valuable experiences of community-based forest concessions in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, with particularly successful cases in Cameroon, the Congo Basin, Nepal, Indonesia, China, Vietnam, Mexico, Guatemala and Bolivia. Co-management arrangements associated to devolution schemes usually encompass government control over forest resources, ranging from the approval of management plans and logging permits to the creation of specific rules for forest management and restrictive requirements and regulations that might dissuade communities of commercial uses (Larson et al. 2010). Complex or exceedingly stringent regulations and bureaucratic procedures to

¹ My contribution to this section is based on my 2019 work on SDGs 10 and 16 in the UNFF14 Background Analytical Study on "Forests, Peaceful and Inclusive Societies, Reduced Inequality, Education, and Inclusive Institutions at All Levels".

authorize forest management plans may have negative impacts on IPLCs and transparency (Benjamin 2008: 2256, Larson and Pulhin 2012).

Secure tenure and access rights are essential to foster gender equality. Narratives and discourses have evolved but are not sufficient to transform reality. The underlying causes of inequality are socio-cultural factors, including customary and traditional norms. Hence, in some areas of Africa, a woman might lose her land access rights if her husband dies as customary norms deny her the right to inheritance. In Bolivia, quechua communities' customary norms deny women's rights to land. By 2011, women owned 14.3% of titled lands in Mexico (Bose et al. 2017). Land reform programs such as those implemented in Ethiopia and Rwanda, focused on ensuring women's names were included in the regularization process (Meinzen-Dick et al. 2017). It is therefore necessary to promote deep cultural changes if equality is to be achieved. These processes are slow and require constant attention. For example, in Brazilian Amazon, women have an average 25 ha for agricultural production, while men have an average of 60 ha. Nonetheless, women's collective microenterprises are instrumental in overcoming this limitation as they emphasize economic advancement of women and their families, enhance women's self-confidence and social visibility, political awareness, and environmental and forest management knowledge (Bose et al. 2017).

Achieving secure tenure and access rights allows IPLCs to move beyond subsistence and become entrepreneurs. The growing demand for legal timber from sustainably managed forests is an opportunity to improve their livelihoods. Group certification contributes to improve market access, although this may require public investments in sustainable infrastructure such as roads, electricity provision and communications as enabling conditions for local added value. Moreover, capacity building efforts and knowledge sharing are necessary to promote sustainable production systems. Bureaucratic procedures should be streamlined to encourage logging and timber trade legality and reduce the possibility of corruption.

Developing and strengthening local organizations in forest-based landscapes

Community-based forestry (CBF) and small-holders have a meaningful collective impact in the achievement of the SDGs (FAO and AgriCord 2016, Katila et al. 2017, de Jong et al. 2018). Mayers et al. (2016) suggest that forest and environmental income accounts for 28% of total household income in forest landscapes; small-medium forest enterprises (SMFEs) worldwide may contribute US\$125-130 billion of gross value-added; 80-90% of all forestry enterprises in many countries are SMFEs; and 1.5 billion people globally use or trade non-timber forest products. Moreover, there is evidence of the positive impact of community and small-scale forestry regarding landscape-scale improvement in forest condition (Mayers et al. 2016, Macqueen and deMarsh 2016, de Jong et al. 2018, Macqueen et al. 2018), diminishing forest loss (FAO and AgriCord 2016, de Jong et al. 2018), and enhancing local livelihood (FAO and AgriCord 2016, FAO 2016b, Macqueen and deMarsh 2016, de Jong et al. 2018, FAO 2018b).

Community-based forestry (CBF) is gaining momentum in the developing countries, notably in Mexico, Guatemala, Bolivia, Peru, Nepal, India, China, Vietnam, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Cameroon, the Congo region, Tanzania, among others. CBF models usually include the creation of local organizations that produce networks and facilitate technical support to their members, as well as better conditions for market access and advocacy of its members' interests. Depending on the degree of institutionalization, these local organizations may be formal or informal associations of small-holders, indigenous communities, peasants, and local communities relying totally or partially on forest goods and services for their subsistence and trade in local markets. They might also reach national and international markets through networking and second-tier entities that provide further support and political voice.

There is an important opportunity for governments to leverage the benefits of CBF and local organizations to create synergies with public policies aimed at poverty (SDG 1), food security (SDG 2), reduced inequality (SDG 10), mitigation and adaptation to climate change (SDG 13), forest ecosystems' health and restoration (SDG 15), peace and justice (SDG 16), and partnerships (SDG 17). In order to harness this CBF potential, governments should, inter alia:

- Advance secure and, when necessary, clarify land tenure and access rights.
- Create and enforce an appropriate legal framework fostering participatory governance arrangements and the rule of law,
- Promote sustainable financial solutions for SMFEs,
- Provide forest communities and smallholders with technical extension and support services,
- Implement simplified bureaucratic procedures for forest communities and smallholders.

Other policy measures involve levelling the playing field so that large corporations and SMFEs can develop synergies and coexist in the marketplace; enhance transparency along the value chain; implement incentive programs including fiscal instruments that facilitate investments; encourage gender equality; promote the involvement and inclusion of youth; and support sustainable infrastructure. These measures will foster a virtuous circle of sustainable inclusive growth and stimulate forest communities and smallholders into further investing for sustainability. Also useful to this end is enhancing local capacity on marketing, business management, and partnership development (deMarsh et al. 2014, ASFN CSO Forum 2015, FAO 2016a, Macqueen and deMarsh 2016).

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?

Deepening democracy can provide a solid base to advance the 2030 Agenda, catalyzing action for transformational change and engagement to bounce back in track after the global disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This could be addressed through enhanced participatory governance platforms and decentralization processes, as participation is a human right under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Inclusive participatory forest governance platforms provide examples of dialogue spaces that allow for grassroots democracy to thrive, fostering the participation of women, youth and other vulnerable groups, as is the case in Bolivia, Guatemala, Mexico, Nepal, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Tanzania, Finland, Sweden, Canada and the USA (FAO 2018b). Further action is necessary to foster meaningful participation through capacity building for sustainable governance including not only topics related to accountability, transparency, multi-stakeholder participation and the rule of law, but also capacity and tools for improved government performance such as statistics, coordination, fundraising, and aligning spending and regulations to SDGs (Elder et al. 2016).

There is a growing recognition of the value of traditional knowledge in tackling the challenges posed by the adaptation and mitigation of climate change and the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem degradation. In particular, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CDB), especially its Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), recognizes the value of traditional knowledge in harnessing resilience and sustainability of ecosystems and their environmental goods and services. In terms of the CDB, traditional knowledge encompasses “knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity” (article 8 j). Moreover, IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services acknowledges the need to incorporate IPLCs knowledge, innovations, practices, and institutions to enhance governance and safeguard nature and its contributions to people. There is a strong correlation between biodiversity hotspots and the cultural diversity of the indigenous peoples living in those areas (Trosper et al. 2012). In contrast, it must be noted that IPLCs are among the most affected by the negative consequences of global change as it deepens inequality and disrupts local livelihoods. Furthermore, current gaps in regulations of bioprospection and the failure to put in place an adequate sui generis system for the protection of traditional knowledge in line with the Nagoya Protocol weaken provisions for equitable benefit sharing and might unwittingly incentivize biopiracy. There is an opportunity to address these issues in a holistic manner in the CDB Post-2020 Framework, raising the level of ambition for inclusive and environmentally just biocultural diversity conservation and enhanced resilience.

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 pandemic and its predecessors show that as anthropic disruption of natural ecosystems advances, so does the rate of expansion of emerging diseases originated in wildlife. Globalization and the resulting intensification of movements of people and goods triggered an unprecedented expansion of a disease whose vector we are. Visible consequences of these few months already show deeper inequality and discrimination with vulnerable groups taking the hardest blow, and increased gender-based violence.

In the light of the events still unfolding, a priority and urgent measure should be to adopt the “One Health” approach in policy making and policy interventions at the global, national, regional, and local levels. This approach acknowledges the complex interrelations between animals, humans and the environment while promoting collaboration to improve the health of people and animals, including pets, livestock, and wildlife (El Zowalaty and Järhult 2020, Lebov et al. 2017). A communication and education strategy is essential to convey this message to society at all levels. It is also necessary to scale-up social protection and ensure access to health for vulnerable groups, while strengthening the social safety net, including food security and access to safe water from a rights-based approach.

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