

CONCEPT NOTE

Interactive Dialogue of the General Assembly on Harmony With Nature to Commemorate International Mother Earth Day

United Nations Headquarters, Monday, 22 April 2012

Background:

In December 2012, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 67/214, in which it requested the President of the Assembly to convene, at its sixty-seventh Session, an interactive dialogue, with the participation of Member States, United Nations organizations, independent experts and other stakeholders, to coincide with the commemoration of International Mother Earth Day on 22 April 2013. In accordance with Resolution 67/214, the purpose of the interactive dialogue is to advance discussions on economic approaches, in the context of sustainable development, and to further a more ethical basis for the relationship between humanity and the Earth.

The Rio+20 Outcome Document recognizes the contribution of the Harmony with Nature process in advancing sustainable development. In "The Future We Want", Member States and several other stakeholders acknowledged that "Mother Earth" embodies a universal set of principles adopted by societies in the search to recognize the rights of nature in the context of the promotion of sustainable development (RES/A/66/288 para. 39).

It is universally recognized that in order to achieve a balance between the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations, it is necessary to foster a profound respect for the Earth system and its species, as well as an acceptance of our responsibility to restore the health and integrity of the planet's ecosystems.

According to the Report of the Secretary-General A/67/317, on "Harmony with Nature" (para. 60), recent scientific progress highlights the need to carefully consider the long-term aggregated impact of human activities on the Earth system which affects our environmental life support structure. Present economic models have not succeeded in tackling crucial challenges such as global poverty which still affects over a billion people worldwide nor have they allowed mankind to develop a more harmonious and less destructive relationship pattern with the Earth system (A/67/317, para. 66).

The assumption that human well-being increases with the accumulation of more goods and services, through an ever expanding economic growth, seems contradictory to developments over past centuries, namely in the field of climate change and the depletion of non-renewable resources. Environmental economics, while recognizing that our well-being depends to a large extent on ecosystem services, and that we suffer from the effects stemming from an unbalanced relationship with the Earth, is nevertheless devoted to the goal of attaining efficiency.

Accordingly, environmental economists attempt to assign market values to the natural world, recognizing it almost inherently as a part of the mass production system.

By contrast, ecological economics parts ways from neoclassical (and environmental) economics in an effort to set a path towards life in harmony with nature. Whereas the efficient resources allocation is of paramount importance to the collective well-being, ecological economics attach great value to a healthy society, integrated with the natural world, and with intergenerational equality as an important cross-cutting issue. A number of Member States have already taken up this model and have recognized – by law - the rights of nature as a vital tool in the promotion of sustainable development.

The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) recognized the need for a more comprehensive approach to determining our collective well-being and development (RES/A/66/288, para. 38). In the coming years, our entire economic system should be adapted to reflect environmental realities and to co-exist in a more holistic relationship with the Earth.

The massive scope and extent of human impact on the planet calls for a new economic approach that advances the achievement of life in harmony with nature - grounded on sound science and an ethical foundation. Without acknowledgment of our limitations, the path to economic growth may be flawed, and without an ethical foundation for our economic system, principles of economics may be misapplied, placing a value on goals that ultimately harm human society and the Earth system.

Objectives and expected outcome:

Consistent with these findings, the interactive dialogue will examine different economic approaches that further a more ethical basis for the relationship between humanity and the Earth and support sustainable development patterns. Outcomes of the dialogue will include proposals that best serve people and the natural world and achieve lasting and shared well-being, as well as specific recommendations for the discussion of the United Nations development agenda post-2015.

Programme:

The meeting will start on Monday 22 April 2013 at 10 am, with the opening segment, to be followed by a panel discussion, and interactive debate with the Member States and other participants.

Detailed programmed will be circulated in due date

PROGRAMME

Interactive Dialogue of the General Assembly on Harmony with Nature to Commemorate the International Mother Earth Day

UNHQ, New York, Monday 22 April 2013 (10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.)

Conference Room 3 (NLB)

Theme: Discussions on different economic approaches in the context of sustainable development, to further a more ethical basis for the relationship between humanity and the Earth.	
10:00 – 10:30	Political Segment of the interactive dialogue on Harmony with Nature
(30 Minutes)	Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address by His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, President of the 67th Session of the UN General Assembly• Address by His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations• Address by H.E. Mr. David Choquehuanca, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.• Address by H.E. Ms. María Belén Moncayo, Minister of Coordination of Heritage from the Republic of Ecuador
10:30 – 11:30	Interactive Dialogue: Discussions on different economic approaches, to further a more ethical basis for the relationship between humanity and the Earth
(60 Minutes)	Moderator: Andrew C. Revkin, Environmental Journalist New York Times and Senior Fellow at Pace University's Pace Academy for Applied Environment Studies, New York. Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Panelist 1: H.E. Dr.. Fander Falconi, National Secretary of Development Planning of Ecuador• Panelist 2: Dr. Ian Mason, Principal, School of Economic Science, London.• Panelist 3: Dr. Jon Rosales, Associate Professor of Environmental Studies at St. Lawrence University, New York.• Panelist 4: Ms. Linda Sheehan, Executive Director, Earth Law Center
11:30 – 12:45 (90 minutes)	Interactive Dialogue: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Permanent Missions, and Permanent Observer Missions, United Nations system, civil society, Academia, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders.
12:45 – 13:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Closing remarks