



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

21 March 2013

Excellency,

I have the pleasure to inform you that I will convene a thematic debate entitled “**Sustainable Development and Climate Change: Practical Solutions in the Energy-Water Nexus**”. This event will be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on Thursday, 16 May 2013.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) strongly highlighted the need for urgent, practical and sustainable solutions to making development more effective and more sustainable. Water and energy lie at the heart of these solutions, and their “nexus” is likely to be addressed as part of the post-2015 development agenda. This thematic debate will examine and discuss the challenges and opportunities in managing the water-energy nexus to enhance sustainable development and meet the challenge of climate change. It will also provide an informal setting for Member States to exchange their views, ideas, and lessons learned, helping to accommodate differing views and providing freedom to discuss and generate new ideas on the subject in an interactive manner.

The thematic debate is organized in partnership with the United Arab Emirates—a key voice on the water-energy nexus—and is supported by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, launched in September 2012 under the auspices of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and directed by Professor Jeffrey Sachs. This one-day event will consist of two sessions. The morning session will comprise an opening segment and high-level keynote addresses from political leaders and world-renowned experts. Two interactive round table panel discussions and closing segment will take place in the afternoon session.

The concept note of the thematic debate is attached herewith and the draft program of the event will be sent to you in due course. To profit from the wide range of knowledge and expertise throughout the Membership, I extend an invitation to your respective Governments to be represented at the highest possible level. Updated information about the event will be available on the website of the President of the General Assembly. For any questions, please contact Mr. Mehmet Özöktem, Advisor, at +1 (917) 367 5341 or [ozoktem@un.org](mailto:ozoktem@un.org).

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "Vuk Jeremic". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "V".

Vuk Jeremic

All Permanent Representatives and  
Permanent Observers to the United Nations  
New York

**THEMATIC DEBATE**  
**67<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**“Sustainable Development and Climate Change:  
Practical Solutions in the Energy-Water Nexus”**

New York, 16 May 2013

**Concept Note**  
**[Draft]**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

As we approach 2015, the world faces two great opportunities to secure a more prosperous and sustainable future. First, as the existing Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) reach their target year, a new framework (adopted last June at the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development) is beginning to take shape, and will result in the creation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the General Assembly. Second, meeting the challenge of global climate change is more urgent than ever, and 2015 is the deadline for reaching a new climate agreement with legal force.

The world has made great progress on many of the MDGs in recent years. However, future development is threatened by real concerns about the pressure put on natural resources and the threat of climate change. Rising global temperatures are leading to rising sea levels, changing precipitation patterns, more frequent and severe extreme weather events and other impacts. At the same time, growing populations and consumption put stress on water supplies, food production, energy resources and others. As highlighted at the Rio+20 Conference, the world needs urgent, practical and sustainable solutions to making development more effective and more sustainable.

Energy and water are at the heart of these solutions. They are both fundamental requirements for development and are deeply interrelated. Water supply uses large amounts of energy, whether for

pumping, treatment or desalination. Similarly, energy supplies often depend critically on water, for hydroelectricity, cooling or irrigation for biomass. Climate change and international security both impact and are impacted by energy and water management. Food production and distribution requires large inputs of both energy and water—indeed even temporary interruptions of either can have major impacts. The close relationship between these resources has led many to talk of a water-energy “nexus”.

Political and public awareness of environmental threats has increased especially over the last decade, even though scaled solutions continue to lag behind. New frameworks for sustainable development are within economic and technological reach, but require more organized planning, political leadership, and public awareness.

Meeting the challenge of sustainable development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will mean finding comprehensive solutions at local, national and global levels through concerted action and shared responsibility. These can build on the momentum of the 2012 International Year of Sustainable Energy for All and the 2013 International Year of Water Cooperation, as well as key sustainability events such as the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development and the eighteenth Conference of the Parties under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The nexus is likely to be addressed as part of the post-2015 development agenda and the relevant work of the UN agencies as well as the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

Accordingly, this thematic debate will examine and discuss the challenges and opportunities in management of the nexus to enhance sustainable development and meet the challenge of climate change. It will focus on practical, nationally appropriate government interventions in the market and international governance and financing options to spur both investment and resource efficiency.

The thematic debate is organized in partnership with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) —a key voice on the energy and water nexus. In the context of extreme heat and water scarcity, the UAE has introduced the first mandatory water and energy efficiency standards for buildings.

appliances, and agriculture in its region, as well as the first low-carbon energy programme, including pioneering renewable energy, carbon capture and sequestration, and nuclear projects. Its flagship Masdar project additionally offers a new template for technological development and urbanization. The UAE furthermore continues to rapidly expand its international support and examination of sustainable nexus management, including through hosting the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, the world's largest annual energy and water sustainability event coinciding with the Assembly of IRENA, and through multi-billion dollar overseas clean energy investment programmes by both sovereign wealth funds and development agencies.

The thematic debate will be supported by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, which was designed to be a practical step to speed up the mobilization of new technologies and business models to save the planet from human-induced environmental devastation.

## **2. OBJECTIVE**

The objective of the high-level thematic debate is to draw upon the convening power of the General Assembly so that high level representatives of Member States, relevant multilateral organizations, regional development banks, companies, academic institutions, think-tanks, and others can offer their views on frameworks and practical solutions for enhancing sustainable development through the energy-water nexus.

The high-level thematic debate will provide an informal setting to exchange views, ideas, and lessons learned, helping to accommodate differing views and providing freedom to discuss and generate new ideas on the subject in an interactive manner.

The high-level thematic debate aims to contribute to the follow-up on the Rio+20 Conference and related international sustainability work, particularly within the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

### **3. FORMAT**

The high-level thematic debate will be a one-day event. The morning session will consist of an opening segment and high-level keynote addresses from political leaders and experts, including “views from the frontline” covering both the science and impacts of climate change and the realities of investment in energy and water infrastructure.

The afternoon session will consist of interactive round table panel discussions and closing remarks.

The afternoon panels will discuss technological advancements in sustainable energy and water supply; explore effective means to stimulate investment in these areas in view of the increasing challenges posed by climate change; and address how cutting-edge innovation and cooperation can increase resource efficiency across different sectors and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other impacts.

### **4. OUTCOME**

The President of the General Assembly will submit a summary of the debate which will be distributed to Member States and other stakeholders, emphasizing conclusions reached and proposals made.