

New High-level Political Forum Starts Work to Reinvalidate and Accelerate Sustainable Development Action

New York, 24 September 2013 —With the goal of injecting new energy into the global effort to implement sustainable development, world leaders will gather at the United Nations for the inaugural session of the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development on Tuesday, 24 September.

The new Forum represents a major step forward in the follow-up to Rio+20, where countries agreed that progress on the implementation of sustainable development—progress that promotes prosperity and social well-being while protecting the environment—had not been sufficient at a time when many global challenges threaten to roll back the successes in fighting poverty.

At Rio+20 – the UN Conference on Sustainable Development -- in the outcome document “The Future We Want,” Member States called for the creation of the High-level Political Forum to ensure that sustainable development tops the agenda of the highest levels of government and is embraced by all actors.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that the establishment of the Forum is a significant step towards realizing the vision adopted at Rio+20. “The Forum is a key platform for examining today’s challenges in a holistic and integrated manner. It can be the catalyst for a strengthened global partnership for sustainable development, providing political leadership grounded in solid science.”

The Forum starts its work at a propitious moment when the international community is debating the future of the UN’s development agenda that will take forward the work of the Millennium Development Goals after the 2015 target date.

“In achieving the primary goals of overcoming poverty and ensuring sustainable development,” General Assembly President John Ashe said, “the High-level Political Forum will help renew partnerships and enhance multilateral engagement. Its role will be paramount in ensuring implementation of the Rio+20 commitments and the post-2015 development agenda, which will include the sustainable development goals.”

“One distinct benefit of the new forum,” he added, “is that it is designed to attract participation from representatives of all three dimensions of sustainable development, rather than chiefly from members of the environmental community. This is critical to ensuring that sustainability is a central modality to development and that it is mainstreamed into policy, planning and living. The Forum’s guidance must be strategic and visionary. Its work must be attuned to emerging challenges and its impact must be real and game-changing. Moreover, it must be responsive to the needs of states and their citizens.”

The new Forum has a novel institutional structure, bringing world leaders -- Heads of State and Government -- together every four years, under the auspices of the General Assembly, to promote the implementation of sustainable development and address new challenges. Their deliberations will translate into an intergovernmentally agreed declaration. The Forum will also meet annually, under the auspices of the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) at the ministerial level on sustainable development issues.

Starting in 2016, the Forum will also include reviews on the implementation of sustainable development by all countries and the UN system. This should allow greater accountability and focus on action on the ground.

"People have a right to expect real results from the new Forum," said UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Wu Hongbo. "There are real challenges that must be faced. People need jobs, health care and education. And they also need food security, clean air and clean water. They need development that is sustainable, and the Forum has to deliver progress in all of these areas."

The Forum replaces the UN's Commission on Sustainable Development, which concluded its work on Friday, after 20 years of promoting sustainable development. Bektas Mukhamedzhanov, Vice-Minister for Environment Protection of Kazakhstan and the Chairperson of the CSD, said the Forum must give strategic yet actionable directions for pursuing sustainable development. "We have learned a lot from the successes and shortcomings of the Commission on Sustainable Development over the years. Now is the time to put this knowledge to good use."

The Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly will address the inaugural session, which will take place on the same day that the General Assembly's high-level General Debate begins. Also addressing the session will be the co-facilitators of the Forum, from Brazil and Italy, as well as World Bank President Jim Yong Kim and International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde.

The opening will be followed by a series of "Leaders Dialogues" that will explore issues ranging from a vision for the Forum to global partnerships that create jobs and improve sustainable lifestyles. Representatives from civil society will also participate in all the discussions.

More information on the Forum can be found at <http://bit.ly/126ZanH>

MEDIA CONTACT

For interviews and more information, contact Dan Shepard of the UN Department of Public Information, 1-212-963-9495, shepard@un.org