

PRIVATE SECTOR CHANNEL FOR THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM

DRAFT PROPOSAL PREPARED BY BUSINESS & INDUSTRY MAJOR GROUP

1. Executive Summary – Principles

Business has been an engaged partner in sustainability through knowledge sharing, providing expertise in policy formation and implementation, as well as in partnership. It is in this spirit that we propose a private sector channel to the HLPF.

The essential role of a private sector channel to the HLPF would be to facilitate the input and participation of business representatives, including input to negotiations and decision-making at the HLPF, as well as in the intersessional process to inform preparations.

A private sector focal point would be tasked to dialogue with the HLPF Secretariat and Bureau, invite inputs from business representatives, share documents, seek comments, draft inputs, and facilitate timely response. The private sector modalities would present common positions as they emerge, but also express a range of responsible views and approaches, when the issues warranted.

Such a channel would have to be recognized and deemed to be of value to governments and the Secretariat;

At this early stage, a specific proposal for such a channel would be premature, since the channel should mirror the HLPF's structure, and that is still to be determined. However, some principles for the channel would include:

- a. The private sector channel would be autonomous and self-organized.
- b. The private sector channel to the HLPF would complement established informal and formal dialogues and interactions between business, governments, and the UN system.
- c. All private sector representatives from different parts of the world, inclusive of SMEs and MNEs, appropriately accredited, who want to participate could do so.
- d. Business engagement should be brought in at every step of the process in a meaningful and active way: in developing agendas and setting terms of discussion; in offering submissions and commenting on papers; and in discussions.
- e. Private sector statements and submissions shall represent the maximum consensus possible, but there should also be scope to accommodate a range of business views and approaches, when consensus is not attainable.
- f. Submissions and positions would be constructive, concrete, focusing on mechanisms to improve outcomes in the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

The private sector is highly diverse in terms of sectors, size and geography. Given the array of issues that will come before the HLPF it will be essential to provide business and industry adequate representation to enable broad and deep engagement across the business community.

2. Context/Background

One of the two main themes of the recently concluded United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) was the strengthening of the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development (IFSD). Paragraph 84 of The Future We Want, provides the mandate to “establish a universal, intergovernmental, high-level political forum, building on the strengths, experiences, resources and inclusive participation modalities for the Commission on Sustainable Development, and subsequently replacing the Commission.”

The U.N. CSD, which is the predecessor organization to the HPLF, has a long history of promoting innovative engagement of non-governmental stakeholders, including business and industry. Paragraph 89 of the advance unedited copy of the Report of the Secretary General on *Lessons Learned from the Commission on Sustainable Development* (CSD), specifically calls for “engaging more effectively the private sector.”

Business has appreciated taking part in the CSD and would wish to build on that experience, as well as on beneficial experiences with other consultative arrangements for business in important intergovernmental forums. Since Rio, business has taken part through diverse consultative arrangements in intergovernmental processes including the Committee on Food Security (CFS), the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals (SAICM), and the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), and they all offer models which can inform the business interface with the HPLF.

Business recognizes the unique role of the United Nations as a convening platform for governments and other stakeholders, duly respects the intergovernmental nature of the work of the General Assembly, and appreciates the entry points provided to non-governmental actors to participate in discussions. Business welcomes paragraph 46 of the Future We Want which calls for active participation of the private sector in the achievement of sustainable development and encourages the United Nations to provide the channel for business to fully engage, equitable to the opportunities provided to other non-governmental actors.

Sustainability challenges cannot be addressed by governments alone. Challenges of globalization require active collaboration between governments and stakeholders, particularly with business. An integral part of sustainable development frameworks are major groups and stakeholders, and from our standpoint, business plays a unique and critical role.

A robust private sector is indicative of the level of integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. , and the private sector lends a crucial voice in determining ways to enhance the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT WITH INTERGOVERNMENTAL PROCESSES: DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

Examples from Existing Modalities

1. Committee on Food Security – Private Sector Mechanism

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) was established in 1974 as an intergovernmental body to serve as a forum in the United Nations System for review and follow-up of policies concerning world food security including production and physical and economic access to food.

- Private Sector has access to the CFS Bureau through membership with the CFS Advisory Group. The Advisory Group helps the Bureau advance the Committee's objectives in particular to ensure linkages with different stakeholders at regional, sub-regional and local levels and to ensure an ongoing, two-way exchange of information.
- Private sector representatives have opportunities to speak during the Plenary Sessions
- A private sector focal point consults with broader private sector membership to coordinate inputs to meetings, shares information from the CFS Secretariat and the Bureau to private sector participants, assists in the organization of private sector events related to CFS
- There are no restrictions to the nature of businesses that would like to participate, however, priority is given to businesses focused on food security, nutrition and right to food.

2. Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

IGF supports the United Nations Secretary-General in carrying out the mandate from the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) with regard to convening a new forum for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue - the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).

- All stakeholders (governments, business, civil society, Internet technical community, IGOs) participate on an equal footing
- The private sector representatives have been named as members and participate actively in the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (MAG), established by the UN Secretary-General, to seek its advice on the programme and schedule of the Internet Governance Forum meetings.
- The preparatory process for each IGF is open, inclusive and bottom up.
- There is real-time transcription in all main sessions and workshops which creates another way for interested participants to follow the discussions in addition to remote participation through webex, webcast etc.
- There is no limit to the number or type of private sector representatives that can participate.

3. Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)

SAICM, a policy framework to promote chemical safety around the world, is distinguished by its comprehensive scope; ambitious "2020" goal for sound chemicals management; multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral character; endorsement at the highest political levels; emphasis on chemical safety as a sustainable issue; provision for resource mobilization; and formal endorsement or recognition by the governing bodies of key intergovernmental organizations.

- Private sector participates (non-voting) actively through membership on the Bureau, where they are on equal footing with member states. The Bureau advises the President

and the secretariat on the conduct of the business of the Conference and its subsidiary bodies.

- The private sector participates in all negotiations on an equal footing with governments, including contact groups.

4. International Labor Organization

The ILO is the international organization responsible for drawing up and overseeing international labour standards. It is the only 'tripartite' United Nations agency that brings together representatives of governments, employers and workers to jointly shape policies and programmes promoting Decent Work for all. This unique arrangement gives the ILO an edge in incorporating 'real world' knowledge about employment and work.

- The ILO is the only tripartite U.N. agency with government, employer, and worker representatives. The private sector participates actively through the employer representatives.
- The ILOs Bureau for Employer's Organizations, a specialized unit with the ILO Secretariat, is tasked to maintain close and direct relations with employers' organization in member states, to make ILOs resources available to them and to keep the ILO constantly aware of their views, concerns and priorities.