

Global Business Alliance for the Environment (GBA4E)

Transforming the Role for Business at the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) and UN Environment Program (UNEP)

Submitted to the Joint Bureau by the Global Business Alliance for the Environment (GBA4)

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Overview of GBA4E activities for UNEA 3

The GBA4E membership is focused on making UNEA3 a success. GBA4E is focused on delivering tangible inputs and fostering dialogue with UNEP, its member states and other stakeholders by:

- **Contributing to the Science, Policy and Business Forum**
- **Ensuring a dedicated business event takes place (as part of the Science Policy forum or in addition to it)**
- **Supporting the Innovation Expo**
- **Providing timely input on the draft resolutions proposed and on other outcome documents, including the report “Towards a Pollution Free Planet”**
- **Ensuring strong business sector delegation at UNEA 3**

A New Place for Business

At the 1992 Earth Summit, the first UN Conference on Environment and Development recognized that sustainable development could not be achieved by governments alone without support from all sectors. In today’s interdependent world, international cooperation is vital to tackle major challenges that transcend national boundaries and jurisdictions. Environmental protection is at the forefront of the international agenda, and progress requires cooperative and shared visions and actions between governments, civil society, and the private sector.

The UN Environment Assembly, the 2030 Agenda, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, as well as, other follow-up processes after Rio+20, highlight the critical role of

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business as a valued contributor. The commonality between public and private interest in environmental protection is clear. Successful action to curb environmental degradation will require an unprecedented level of partnership between industry, governments, civil society and other key stakeholders. It also requires significant institutional capacity, mobilization of resources, as well, as collaboration and co-investment between stakeholders. All stakeholders are pivotal in bringing to the table innovative methods and strengthened mechanisms for leveraging funding, creating decent employment, technology, innovation and research.

Businesses, on their part, are equally becoming more cognizant of the commonality between public and private interest, and stand ready to partner around the implementation of sustainable development goals and environmental sustainability. As innovators, goods and service providers and employers, businesses are members of the communities that they work in and serve and only as strong as those communities. Business has a critical role to play in accelerating progress towards sustainable development and environmental stewardship as an engine of economic growth and employment, as a key contributor of government revenues, and as a driver of innovation, capacity building and technology development. Business stands ready to work collaboratively to define comprehensive and viable solutions.

The Role of Business at UNEA

Business is highly diverse in terms of sectors, size and geography. The collective experience represented by private sector constitutes a vast pool of knowledge from which the UNEA could draw working solutions and valuable experience. Private sector is also a crucial partner in implementation and so needs to be engaged in partnerships and policy processes to help support success.

Business is seeking a distinct and recognized role in UNEA, inspired by existing effective mechanisms such as the FAO Food Security Committee, the FfD Private Sector Coordinating Group and the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD. Business was actively engaged in both the FfD and SDG processes providing substantive and technical expertise throughout. Business brings a unique voice, and governments need the unfiltered input of business in the context of these global discussions.

Business should not be subsumed under a “Civil Society” or “Major Groups and Other Stakeholders” construct, as these models consistently dampen or eliminate from processes the constructive input of business representatives, whose unique and practical contributions will be necessary to enable delivery of the UNEA-3 outcomes. The nine-major group system constrains how business can organise since business leadership needs to have different modes of interaction and faces different expectations within the UN system regarding how it will contribute. There are many different kinds of business operating different business models and having different

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relationships with environmental sustainability. This diversity needs to be better represented than the nine-major group system allows.

The Global Business Alliance for the Environment (GBA4E)

To engage more fully in UNEA and UNEP, private sector organisations have come together to form the Global Business Alliance for the Environment (GBA4E). Members of the GBA4E are businesses represented directly or by their representative associations or federations, and whose co-chairs are also the focal points for the Business Major Group¹.

This Alliance seeks to represent the widest possible range of sectors, business sizes, and regions from the for-profit sector. The GBA4E is an alliance, not an association. Participation is open to all enterprises, cooperatives, and trade associations. The Alliance is supported by voluntary donations from its members and a small secretariat team that helps facilitate its activities.

Discussions on the GBA4E resulted in the launch of the initiative in the spring of 2017. Since then representatives of the group have reached out to UNEA member states and UNEP to explain the initiative and seek feedback. The objective of the GBA4E is to ensure broad and inclusive business participation in UNEA through promotion of increased business registration and participation in meetings of the UNEA, UNEA regional capacity building workshops, and relevant Expert Group Meetings and side events. The GBA4E seeks to be a 'one stop shop' for members states and other stakeholders seeking business input and dialogue, and to enable UNEA and UNEP to pose questions and issues directly to the business community. Over time, we hope to develop programmes for Expert Group Meetings and other related events around the Assembly.

Currently the GBA4E is focused on ensuring members input in the documents open for comments, the preparation of a business delegation to UNEA 4, outreach to members states and UNEP Secretariat, and possibly a dedicated Business event during UNEA.

GBA4E members provided comments on the draft report on pollution, "Towards a Pollution Free Planet", and look forward to the next iteration. A letter to UNEP's Director General, summarising the key points from GBA4E and highlighting where business can help address the issue of pollution further, is currently being finalised. GBA4E also welcomed the opportunity to meet with several representatives of UNEP in May and then again July in the margin of the HLPF and looks forward to discussing UNEA priorities with Dr Eric Solheim in September in New York.

¹ Currently the GBA4E list includes over eighty organisations from a wide range of sectors, from energy to agriculture, chemistry, pharmaceuticals, manufacturers, and transport, amongst others.

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Looking ahead, the GBA4E hopes to see more opportunities for dialogue and dedicated input.

Conclusion

In Paris, in New York, in Addis, and Nairobi, over and over again business has stepped forward to support environmental sustainability as a core issue linked to inclusive growth and prosperity. Throughout the world, businesses, large and small, are addressing climate change at local, national and international levels both as enterprises and through public-private partnerships. The private sector in all its forms – farms, small and medium enterprises, family-owned companies, national firms, and multinationals - is making a major contribution to UN Environment Programme's mission and foster environmental stewardship around the world.

Environmental degradation is a global issue that requires a global solution. It is one of the pressing challenges of our times and must be addressed in the context of meeting growing energy needs and achieving sustainable development and economic growth.

Businesses all over the world are part of the solution and have made major changes in how they operate and introduced new processes, products and services. The business community looks forward to engaging at national and global levels to bring business solutions forward and align business priorities with the agendas of New York, Paris, Addis and UNEA 3.