

CONCEPT NOTE

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

United Nations Headquarters, Tuesday 22 April 2014

Background

In December 2013, the General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/68/216 requesting the President of the General Assembly to convene, at its sixty-eighth session, an interactive dialogue on Harmony with Nature to commemorate International Mother Earth Day on 22 April 2014, with the participation of Member States, United Nations organizations and independent stakeholders to advance discussions on Harmony with Nature in order to promote a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The same resolution also encouraged giving appropriate consideration to the issue of Harmony with Nature in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda.

The concept of harmony with nature incorporates ideas of non-anthropocentric approaches to development i.e, approaches that consider the intrinsic value in every part of the environment and the need to achieve a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations.

Under the leadership of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, three dialogues have been held to date, to elaborate the principles of Harmony with Nature, This fourth dialogue on Harmony with Nature will allow participants to:

- (i) Take stock of the four reports of the Secretary General as well as the three previously held dialogues, namely: "Ways to promote a holistic approach to sustainable development in Harmony with Nature and sharing national experiences on criteria and indicators for measuring sustainable development"; "Scientific findings on how human activities are affecting the Earth's Ecosystem" and "Economic approaches, in the context of sustainable development, to further a more ethical basis in the relationship between humanity and the Earth".
- (ii) Begin the examination of appropriate strategies to operationalize and implement Harmony with Nature approaches; i.e. it will provide an opportunity to begin to consider practical strategies and approaches at the global, national and local levels for living in harmony with nature. Member States and other stakeholders will also hear from the increasing number of countries and communities where the rights of nature are recognized in the context of the promotion of sustainable development and where the respect for the environment is translated into practical measures that protect it.
- (iii) Examine the policies, legal and institutional frameworks which must be put in place at the local, regional and international level for successful operationalization of Harmony with Nature approaches. In this regard, it is anticipated that the dialogue will *inter alia* highlight the view that in order to effectively achieve sustainable development, the international community must evolve its economic systems to respect Mother Earth and the well-being of present and future generations.

The fourth dialogue occurs at a critical juncture as the international community prepares to define a post-2015 development agenda. It offers thus a unique opportunity to conceptualize how that agenda could be oriented towards one more holistic and integrated for building a new paradigm that actually respects the limits of nature.

Objectives and expected outcome

The Interactive Dialogue will examine the key characteristics of a new, non-anthropocentric paradigm and begin to identify specific strategies on how the society subsequently would need to function consistent with this paradigm. Given the complexity of the task, the Dialogue will provide guidance to build up a knowledge network that will further advance this paradigm, upon which all the different approaches that reflect the drivers and values of living in Harmony with Nature will be rooted. These strategies will rely on the most current scientific information to achieve sustainable development, in light of the fundamental interconnections between humanity and Nature.

The Dialogue will also provide guidance for a knowledge network that will contribute to advance the different approaches that reflect the drivers and values of living in Harmony with Nature.

The outcome of the dialogue will be a summary of the President of the General Assembly.

Programme

The fourth dialogue of the General Assembly on Harmony with Nature will be held in New York on 22 April, 2014. The overall theme of the dialogue will be: "The promotion of a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development through Harmony with Nature".

The dialogue will include an opening segment, panel presentations, an interactive and multi stakeholder dialogue and a closing segment. In accordance with resolution A/RES/68/216 the panelists and chair will be drawn from amongst Member States, United Nations organizations, independent experts and other stakeholders.