

## CONCEPT NOTE

### INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON HARMONY WITH NATURE TO COMMEMORATE INTERNATIONAL MOTHER EARTH DAY

#### ***Harmony with Nature: Towards achieving sustainable development goals including addressing climate change in the post-2015 Development Agenda***

United Nations Headquarters, Monday 27 April 2015, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

#### **Background**

The General Assembly on 19 December 2014, adopted resolution 69/224 on Harmony with Nature in which it requested the President of the General Assembly to hold an inclusive and interactive dialogue at the sixty-ninth session, corresponding with the plenary meetings convened during the commemoration of International Mother Earth Day<sup>1</sup>.

The Outcome Document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) entitled “The future we want” *recognized that planet Earth and its ecosystems are our home and that “Mother Earth” is a common expression in a number of countries and regions, and noted that some countries recognize the rights of nature in the context of the promotion of sustainable development.*<sup>2</sup>

Recent General Assembly resolutions on Harmony with Nature<sup>3</sup> have recognized the importance of giving due consideration to this issue in the elaboration of the post-2015 development Agenda. In this regard, under Sustainable Development Goal 12 “Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns”, para 12.8 states: *by 2030 people everywhere will have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in Harmony with Nature.*

Harmony with Nature is a principle to build a different and better world to live well in peace and balance with Nature acknowledging and respecting that there are different worldviews based on living well in harmony and balance with Mother Earth. Harmony with Nature calls for understanding that the strengthening of the ecosystems, biodiversity, and Nature’s environmental functions will only be possible if all living beings live in complementarity with Mother Earth.

The Earth is a living system, the source of life, an indivisible, interdependent and interrelated community comprised of human beings and Nature. It is recognized that deleterious human activity is altering the dynamics and functioning of the Earth System to a degree never seen before. The Earth is not simply a source of resources that can be exploited, modified, altered, privatized, commercialized and transformed without consequences to humankind.

Harmony with Nature offers an alternative to current thinking and practice that has led to the degradation of many ecosystems due to soil erosion, desertification, climate change, loss of biodiversity,

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<sup>1</sup> The United Nations official International Mother Earth Day is on 22<sup>nd</sup> April.

<sup>2</sup> Paragraph 38 of “The Future we want” (Resolution 66/288, Annex)

<sup>3</sup> Five resolutions adopted, see [www.harmonywithnatureun.org](http://www.harmonywithnatureun.org)

and ocean acidification, among others. The global system is further characterized by several challenges, with many of the impacts hitting the most vulnerable populations the hardest.

Mankind has focused too much and far too long on what to take from Mother Earth and needs to act to ensure sustainable development and lifestyles in Harmony with Nature. It is important to draw from the many ancient civilizations, indigenous peoples and indigenous cultures with a rich history and ancestral knowledge of understanding the symbiotic connection between human beings and nature that fosters a mutually beneficial relationship. The research and actions of many experts in different social sciences and other disciplines have proposed new models of economics and technology that support a non-anthropocentric world, in which Mother's Earth care for us is reciprocated.

As the international community formulates and moves towards implementing an ambitious and transformative post-2015 development agenda, it is essential to bear in mind that the economic, social and environmental challenges the world is now facing are inextricably linked and cannot be effectively addressed unless there are profound changes in attitudes, behavior and policies toward building a world where interests of humankind and nature are balanced by greater respect for the Earth.

### **Objectives**

This Dialogue in commemoration of Mother Earth Day will provide a further opportunity for all relevant stakeholders to reflect on the relationship between humanity and nature and explore ways to achieve the sustainable development goals including addressing climate change in the post 2015 development agenda through harmony with nature. The Dialogue will further:

- a) Promote the understanding of the Harmony with Nature paradigm.
- b) Examine how the Harmony with Nature paradigm can contribute towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
- c) Provide examples on how the society would need to function consistent with this paradigm.

### **Format, Outcome and Participation**

The Dialogue will take place on 27 April 2015 in the morning at the UN headquarters in New York. It will consist of an opening segment followed by multi-stakeholder panel discussions.

A President's summary will be prepared and circulated to Member States and stakeholders as the outcome of the Dialogue.

Member States, United Nations agencies and entities and relevant stakeholders are invited to participate in the Dialogue.