



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
INCHEON, REPUBLIC OF KOREA

CONCEPT NOTE

Sustainable Development Transformation Forum 2019

How Can We Achieve Transformations Needed?

22-24 October 2019, Holiday Inn Incheon Songdo (tbc), Incheon, Republic of Korea

1. Background

Established in 2011, the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD) is part of the Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). UNOSD contributes to building, exchanging and facilitating the use of knowledge in support of sustainable. UNOSD specialises in mapping, assessing and improving the exchange of knowledge resources, providing advice to Member States and the broader policy communities on applying such knowledge, and conducting research and capacity development in different areas related to sustainable development with the goal of accelerating progress towards the SDGs.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by UN Member States in September 2015. Included in the Agenda are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated targets, described as “integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities.” Furthermore, in the Agenda Member States note the following: “We are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path. As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind”.

In 2016, the UN Member States decided to ask the Secretary General to appoint a group of independent scientists to prepare a [Global Sustainable Development Report \(GSDR\)](#) every four years, to inform deliberations at the High-Level Political Forum on implementation of the 2030 Agenda and on emerging sustainable development challenges. The first edition of this report was published in September 2019 under the title, “[The Future is Now: Science for Achieving Sustainable Development](#)”.

This year the Sustainable Development Transformation Forum (formerly the ‘Transition’ Forum) will take the GSDR as its framework for the agenda and starting point for discussion.

The event will accommodate approximately 100 participants from governments, UN Agencies, Think Tanks, Development Banks, Academic Institutions, Civil Society Organisations, and the private sector from around the world.

2. Forum Objectives

This year’s Sustainable Development Transformation Forum (SDTF) focuses centrally on what it will take to achieve the fundamental transformations towards sustainable development.

Working at a meta-level above the 17 SDGs, the GSDR identifies six entry points for transformation and four key levers that when combined effectively can accelerate those transformations. The entry points are: human well-being and capabilities; sustainable and just

economies; food systems and nutrition patterns; energy decarbonization and universal access; urban and peri-urban development; global environmental commons. The four levers are: governance; economy and finance; individual and collective behaviour; science and technology.

The event will examine how to catalyse the transformations needed in these areas through a combination of scaling finance, strengthening governance, shaping human behaviour, and applying science and technology. The role of partnerships, business and civil society will be given particular attention, as will the political economy of transformation.

With regard to political economy, the Forum will explore what it will take to overcome entrenched resistance to change from vested interests, and to get political leaders to take the difficult policy decisions needed for effecting systemic changes. Are there good examples of building effective change coalitions?

With regard to behavioral economics, the Forum will explore the psychology of individual and group consumer choice and how sustainable choices can rapidly become the default across all types of consumers.

Questions to be addressed

The Forum will explore answers to the following questions:

- What guidance can history offer on how to move from incremental change to large-scale positive change in economic and social systems?
- Are there new green growth trajectories available to developing and emerging economies which offer the prospect of robust improvements in well-being of their citizens consistent with environmental sustainability?
- What can catalyze people to take the actions and change preferences and behaviors in ways which will help drive market transformations?
- What is needed to induce large-scale shifts of private capital towards environmentally sustainable and socially equitable investments?

3. Forum Agenda

Please visit the [Forum website](#) for the latest agenda and list of speakers, which are currently under development.

4. Outputs

The Forum will produce three primary outputs, one that will prepare and guide discussions during the event, and others resulting from its deliberations. They include:

- Concept note (this document) to guide the preparation for and structure the discussions;
- Forum report documenting the presentations and discussions on the entire integrated agenda, and enumerating suggestions for accelerating progress and enhancing institutional effectiveness in the coming years; and
- 2019 Incheon Communiqué summarizing the key messages which participants would like to convey to the international community regarding the main theme of the Forum, i.e., the ways to achieve the transformations needed and the concrete actions to undertake urgently to accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

5. Schedule and Venue

The SDTF will be held in Songdo, Republic of Korea, at the Holiday Inn Incheon Songdo (TBC). The event will last 3 days, scheduled from 22-24 October; the Agenda is under development. English will be the language of the Forum.

6. Participants and Organizers

The Forum is organized by the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD) of UN DESA, Division of Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) in partnership with the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF).

The Forum will bring together a cross-section of decision makers from the public and private sectors, as well as technologists, economists and social science researchers. It will encourage lateral thinking across specialities and sectors. Through cross fertilization, it aims to germinate new ideas about how to induce large-scale positive shifts towards sustainable development in our economies and societies with a view to “transforming our world” by 2030.