



## VALEDICTORY SESSION - CONCEPT NOTE

### **Collective Action for Ensuring a Sustainable and Equitable Future**

Day: 18 February, 2022 (Friday)

Time: 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm (IST) | [Click here](#) for time in your location

#### **Introduction**

As the Gen-Z words “Blah Blah Blah” echoed the halls of Youth4Climate Summit held in Milan, Italy last year almost everyone was caught in a sense of disbelief. The Youth had found a new slogan to demand accountability from world leaders and boomers while many others with a bag full of years spent talking about climate change and the need for meaningful climate action felt these words as being reductive.

What perhaps eluded the larger narrative, however, was the force with which these few words propelled the climate action discourse. Common but Differentiated Responsibility that stood at the core of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change set forth the principle of equity and climate justice. One often fails to fathom the immensity of climate change and the incredibly complex nexus of issues that tie into it. From poverty and hunger to climate induced migration, the intersectionality of climate change is what makes it a threat unlike any other that the planet has ever seen.

#### **Role of Multilateralism to Act4Earth**

Environmental problems, such as climate change, represent a classic ‘social dilemma’ wherein people have little individual incentive to act but, for societies or social groups as a whole, it is ‘rational’, on in their collective interest, to act<sup>1</sup>. Environmental behavior can be understood as a type of collective action because individuals who engage in these behaviors likely overestimate their individual contribution to mitigating an environmental problem<sup>2</sup>.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including their ambitious targets on climate action, universal healthcare and financing for development, will require stakeholders to work together at all levels in innovative partnerships and initiatives. Only through a renewed momentum for multilateralism, can we shift the world towards a sustainable and resilient path to ensuring that no one is left behind. Multilateral environmental discourses play a critical role in the overall framework of environmental actions and conventions. Complementing and sometimes even nudging national legislation and bilateral or regional policies, multilateral action forms the overarching international basis for global efforts to address particular environmental issues. Even more crucial is the role of multilateralism when it come is addressing issues beyond national jurisdictions.

## **Challenges to Multilateralism**

Unfortunately, multilateralism is facing a crisis, with falling support and rising protectionism, which are challenging the virtue of international cooperation. These obstacles are deterring the world from solving complex challenges that directly touch the lives of the most vulnerable, particularly in the developing countries.

At the July 2020 session of the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), governments considered drafts of the Ministerial Declaration that had been negotiated in the preceding months. It noted that, “strengthening multilateralism, international cooperation and global partnership is more important than ever<sup>3</sup>.” Statements by heads of state and government during the HLPF also aligned with this view: multilateralism is a top priority for surviving the global pandemic and shifting more resources to SDG achievement.

Many countries stressed that the only way out of this crisis is through global solidarity. They also recognize that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is necessary for survival. They agree that multilateralism is not an option but a necessity, to build back better for a more equal, more resilient, and more sustainable world, with the UN at the center of efforts.

## **The Act4Earth Initiative**

TERI will be launching a major initiative titled, “Act4Earth” in the valedictory session. Building on the discussions of WSDS, this initiative will seek to continuously engage with stakeholders from public and private spheres on agendas around sustainable development and climate action. WSDS activities seek to evolve to incorporate principles of outcome-based continuity in stakeholder engagement and action. Being a major global Summit based in the Developing part of the World, WSDS seeks to pioneer conversations to drive ambition and action to protect our fragile planet. Efforts will be made to reach out to policy makers and stakeholders to share best practices and also ask them to take up practices. The Act4Earth platform will have two main initiatives: COP Compass and SDG Charter. The objectives of Act4Earth initiative include:

**[Objective 1]** Fast-track meeting of global goals on climate and sustainable development through a continuous engagement process to enable 'talking to walking' by strengthened stakeholder engagement.

**[Objective 2]** Drive actions by governments, at international, national and sub-national levels by strengthening research-based understanding of sustainable development policies and initiatives from countries across the world.

**[Objective 3]** Enhance international, national and sub-national perspectives for paradigm shifts needed for achieving sustainable development and climate goals through creation and dissemination of knowledge.

**[Objective 4]** Accelerate solution-based approaches for addressing new and emerging challenges through capacity building and nudging action.

## Key Questions

[1] It is clear that without renewed and stronger multilateralism, it will be difficult to achieve the sustainable development goals by 2030. What are the next steps for the international community to reinvigorate multilateral institutions to accelerate action on the SDG agenda?

[2] What role do the multilateral institutions play in advocating for policies for protecting our global commons and in issue areas that beyond national jurisdictions?

[3] The deliberations at COP26 re-affirmed the importance of collective global action to address the impacts of climate change. How can multilateral institutions take this momentum forward to Sharm el-Sheikh, and ensure that urgent and ambitious climate action is prioritized?

[4] What paradigm shifts are needed in multilateralism to gain greater momentum to Act4Earth?

## Session Speakers

### *Chairman's Remarks*

- Mr Nitin Desai, Chairman, Governing Council, TERI

### *Release of Act4Earth Manifesto and Act4Earth Strategy Paper*

- Ms Nivedita Choleyil, Research Associate, TERI
- Ms Anuradha Mathur, Associate Fellow, TERI

### *Keynote Address: The Next Big steps for Multilateralism on Act4Earth*

- HE Mr Abdulla Shahid, Foreign Minister, Maldives, President of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly

### *Special Remarks*

- Ms Kathleen McGinty, Vice President & Chief Sustainability Government and Regulatory Affairs Officer, Johnson Controls
- Mr Manjeev Singh Puri, Distinguished Fellow, TERI

### *Acknowledgments*

- Dr Shailly Kedia, Senior Fellow, TERI

### *Closing Remarks*

Dr Vibha Dhawan, Director-General, TERI

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup>Mancur Olson, J. (1965). *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Harvard University Press.

<sup>2</sup>Smith, E. K., & Mayer, A. (2018). A social trap for the climate? Collective action, trust and climate change risk perception in 35 countries. *Global Environmental Change*, 140-153. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2018.02.014>

<sup>3</sup>Economic and Social Council. (2020). High-level segment: ministerial meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. United Nations Economic and Social Council [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26780MD\\_2020\\_HLPF\\_HLS.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26780MD_2020_HLPF_HLS.pdf)