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VIRTUAL POLICY DIALOGUE ON GLOBAL COMMONS AND CLIMATE ACTION

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Draft Concept Note

About World Sustainable Development Summit

The World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) is the annual flagship Track II initiative organized by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). Instituted in 2001, the Summit series has a legacy of over two decades for making ‘sustainable development’ a globally shared goal. Over the years, the Summit platform has brought together thought leaders, heads of state and government, scholars, corporates, youth groups, and civil society representatives from across the world. The Summit series has established itself as a responsible and an effective platform for mobilizing opinion-makers to drive ambition and advance pioneering actions to address some of the most relevant issues concerning sustainable development and climate change.

The 22nd edition of the annual flagship event of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)—the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS)—will be held from 22-24 February 2023 in New Delhi. The Summit deliberations will focus on the umbrella theme: *Mainstreaming Sustainable Development and Climate Resilience for Collective Action*.

About Act4Earth and COP27 Compass

Act4Earth initiative was launched at the valedictory session of WSDS 2022. Building on the discussions of WSDS, this initiative will seek to continuously engage with stakeholders from public and private spheres of life with agendas for global, regional, national, sub-national and organizational levels. Under this initiative, TERI will engage in research activities which will systematically seek to identify and analyse good practices that can be taken up by governments for climate action and achieve the sustainable development goals. Given the vast scope of the theme of WSDS, the focus for analysis will be practices which have maximum impact across systems, sectors, and SDGs, including decision-making processes such as goals setting or even annual budgets. More details can be found [here](#).

For nearly three decades, almost every country has met under the UNFCCC umbrella for the Conference of Parties (COPs). With the efforts of the international scientific organizations and bodies, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate change has gone from being a fringe issue to a global priority. In a 2018 special report, the IPCC said that countries must bring carbon dioxide emissions to “net zero” by 2050 to keep global warming within 1.5 °C of pre-industrial levels. Through COP27 Compass,

the research team seeks to bring forward issues pertinent to Global South which are also of utmost importance with respect to upcoming COP.

About the theme

Global commons are extensive resource domains that do not fall under the jurisdiction of any single country. According to international law, four resources are outlined as global commons: oceans/ high seas, atmosphere, the Antarctica and outer space. Some other commonly recognized global commons are cyberspace and forests. These resources are extremely vital for the survival of all species on this planet. But now, anthropocentric actions have over-exploited these commons, pushing them beyond a breaking point. Hence, they need to be protected and governed responsibly. Literature shows that changes in surface temperature of our planet due to is affecting the global commons drastically, which in turn, is affecting the various types of biodiversity dependent on it. For instance, sea level is rising around the world due to melting land ice and thermal expansion of water as temperatures rise. Changes in the strength and direction of ocean currents being seen as a result of ocean warming and occasional severe wind events is affecting the feeding and breeding of many fish stocks, which rely on the direction of the ocean currents.

Evidence also suggests that these global commons can play an important role in fighting against climate change. For instance, oceans absorb 25 percent of all carbon dioxide emissions and captures 90 percent of the excess heat generated by these emissions. Ocean habitats such as seagrasses and mangroves, along with their associated food webs, can sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere at rates up to four times higher than terrestrial forests can. Their ability to capture and store carbon make mangroves highly valuable in the fight against climate change. Thus, protecting oceans have direct linkages to protecting another crucial global common – atmosphere.

Currently, governance of global commons remain contentious since there is no single state or region having complete responsibility for their governance. It also becomes crucial to consider global commons from a lens of equity. The developing countries face a particular challenge in undertaking expensive environmental impact assessments or monitoring the global commons. Lack of sophisticated technology to carry out exploitation or environmental conservation and activities – all of it has to be seen in the sense of challenges.

In this context, TERI is putting together a policy brief urging stakeholders to discuss how and why systemic transformations are needed in governance of global commons to build resilience against the impacts of climate change. Relatedly, this virtual policy dialogue is being organized to engage with stakeholders and experts on global commons and governance to solicit feedback and inputs for the policy brief.

Some of the guiding questions for the dialogue are as follows:

- What kind of transformations are needed to protect and govern global commons (particularly, oceans and atmosphere) such that they are used responsibly to address the challenges related to climate change?
- How can global commons be mainstreamed into the climate action agenda at an international level so that various governance structures are interlinked to ensure appropriate policymaking?
- What are the ways governance of global commons be considered from a lens of equity, ensuring that both Global North and Global South work in a concerted manner to tackle climate change?

Format of the Event

The dialogue will begin with welcome remarks that will set the context and apprise the audience of the expectations from the discussions. The TERI team will make a presentation on the main findings and proposed recommendations as outlined in the policy brief. This will be followed by a discussion among experts and stakeholders who will provide feedback and inputs on specific questions which will be posed by the team. In the final segment of the event, the discussions will be summarized and next steps will be communicated. The team will also circulate a post-event questionnaire for any further inputs. The inputs provided by the experts will be duly acknowledged in the final policy brief prepared by the team.