

Report of the Inaugural Regional Session of the UNEP Science-Policy-Business Forum for Asia and the Pacific: 5 October 2021

The Asia-Pacific region includes several countries with strong economic growth, has eight of the most populous countries in the world, and includes seven of the seventeen mega-diverse countries. It also includes six of the top 15 emitters of carbon dioxide.

It is against this backdrop that the first inaugural regional session of the UN Environment Programme’s (UNEP) Science-Policy-Business Forum for Asia and the Pacific (AP-SPBF 2021) took place. Convened under the theme, “Towards a Healthy Rebound for People, Nature and Economies,” the sessions focused on how the Asia-Pacific region can bounce back from the COVID-19 pandemic alongside the impacts of climate-related disasters. Delegates also engaged in discussions on two issues of regional significance: how to address marine plastic pollution; and mitigating zoonotic diseases.

Key insights from the Forum include:

- For the most vulnerable nations across the region—and the world—the fight against climate change is an existential fight for survival. Every effort must be made by all actors to leave no one behind.
- There is an urgent need to improve environmental big data management and analytics, improve transparency across sectors, and produce ‘knowledge’ out of Big Data that is open to all. The Data for the Environment Alliance (DEAL) offers a unique opportunity to scale up cooperation.
- Artificial intelligence and exponential technology can transform organizations and industry to a more sustainable path, but policies and financial tools are required to power the transformation.
- Greater transparency, through tracking and traceability—including of investment and financial flows—is essential to managing and mitigating marine plastic pollution. It is also important to scale up recycling and empower circularity through private finance and support.
- The Forum underscored the need to complement the use of GDP as a measure of economic activity.
- UNEP’s work on sustainable procurement offers great value and impact. The SPBF will launch a new initiative towards raising awareness, building partnerships, and scaling up the use of technology and Big Data tools in support of this work.

The opening session was held in two parts: the first explored pathways for a sustainable, equitable, inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic; the second considered the role of private sector leadership and how to develop a nature-positive, people-centered recovery.

Key takeaways from the opening session included that:

- the Asia-Pacific will be a key partner in a sustainable, equitable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic;
- public-private partnerships (PPPs) can be instruments to achieve sustainable change;
- collaboration among countries and sectors is needed for true progress to be made;
- we must make use of available “environmental intelligence” and data to inform our responses; and
- we must put nature at the heart of a pandemic recovery.

The thematic session, **Towards Greater Transparency and Sustainable Investment: Turning the Tide on Ocean Plastic Pollution**, underscored the seriousness of ocean plastic pollution for the region, as the region is both one of the biggest contributors to and the most affected by the crisis. Central to the discussions was the key role data and transparency are to understanding how to address the issue.

Accordingly, panelists underscored:

In This Issue

Brief History	2
AP-SPBF 2021 Report	3
Opening Session Part One: From Pandemic to Recovery	3
Opening Session Part Two: Technology, Innovation, People	4
Towards Greater Transparency and Sustainable Investment: Turning the Tide on Ocean Plastic Pollution	5
Mitigating Zoonotic Diseases – Healthy Planet Healthy People	7
Upcoming Meetings	8
Glossary	8

- more accurate data on plastic pollution requires better use of technology;
- information, data uniformity, and traceability on plastic waste are of critical importance; and
- there is a mismatch in economies of scale that fossil fuel companies enjoy compared with businesses seeking alternative solutions.

The final session of the day, **Mitigating Zoonotic Diseases – Healthy Planet Healthy People**, explored how best to mitigate and manage new and emerging zoonotic diseases, especially considering 75% of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic in nature.

Panelists, during their discussions, highlighted that:

- COVID-19 should serve as a wake-up call so faster, more equitable responses to future pandemics can be implemented;
- human-wildlife conflict should be avoided where possible;
- the purpose of organizations and financial capital should be reappraised to optimize for all of society and nature; and
- Big Data use and access need to be upgraded; the DEAL initiative will work with SPBF and actors from the region towards this objective.

The outcome and recommendations of AP-SPBF 2021 were presented to the 4th session of the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific on 6 October 2021. AP-SPBF 2021 met on 5 October 2021 in a virtual format just prior to the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific.

Brief History

Launched at the third session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-3) in December 2017, the UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment (UN-SPBF) is a framework designed to catalyze a more dynamic interface between science, policy, business, and society. The Forum aims to facilitate multi-stakeholder platforms to identify and promote opportunities for green investment that are driven by advances in science and technology, empowering policies, and innovative financing. It also seeks to function as an accelerator and incubator of innovation and positive change to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Forum brings together more than 2,000 organizations from around the world to:

- facilitate issue-based consultations and building communities of practice around key themes, bringing together top scientists, policymakers, citizen science groups, and the business sector;
- showcase positive impacts of transformative green solutions and technologies, and take stock of the policies and investments required to scale up successful models; and
- contribute to UNEA, the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and other global forums to enhance decision making and inform future visions on the environment.

UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment (2017): The inaugural UN-SPBF took place in December 2017 in Nairobi, Kenya. It launched the report, “Frontiers 2017:

Emerging Issues of Environmental Concern,” which addressed six key emerging issues: the environmental dimension of antimicrobial resistance; nanomaterials; marine protected areas and sustainable development; sand and dust storms; off-grid solar solutions; and environmental displacement.

UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment (2019): The second global session of the UN-SPBF convened in March 2019, in Nairobi, Kenya. In support of the UNEA-4 theme, “Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges and Sustainable Consumption and Production,” UN-SPBF 2019 focused on six streams:

- science shaping green policies and market responses;
- big data: towards a digital platform for our planet;
- smarter, greener solutions for cities;
- green technology startup initiative;
- climate challenge: finance, markets, and non-state actors; and
- sustainable food for a healthy planet.

Priorities for action identified included: the need for more ambition on energy efficiency and climate change mitigation; establishing new business models to drive the circular economy; and focusing on resource efficiency to decouple economic growth from biodiversity and ecosystem services loss.

UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment (2021): UN-SPBF 2021 convened from 18-20 February 2021, virtually, under the theme, “Integrated Solutions #ForNature.” It aimed to identify how to address the three planetary crises—climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution—through a shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns. The Forum was organized along three thematic tracks:

- Big Data and Frontier Tech: Powering the Transition to a Sustainable Future;
- Build Better: Integrated Solutions for Low-carbon, Resource-efficient, Inclusive Societies; and
- Managing Risk: Pollution Prevention and Management.

Key points emerging from the session included: cities are at the forefront of both environmental and health crises and solutions; multi-stakeholder collaboration on food waste, nutrient efficiency, and digitizing farming communities is key to achieving nature-positive food systems; and partnerships can assist in promoting initiatives to address plastic pollution in oceans, seas, and rivers, and to incentivize recycling.



Han Jeoung-ae, Minister of Environment, Republic of Korea

AP-SPBF 2021 Report

Opening Session Part One: From Pandemic to Recovery

This session, moderated by Axel Threlfall, Thomson Reuters, examined pathways for a sustainable, equitable, and inclusive rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic that is good for people, the planet, and economies. It assessed strategies and policies that can be used to ease the transition on the road to recovery. Threlfall highlighted this is the first of the Forum's regional mechanisms and can harness the power of partnership to scale-up solutions.

Welcoming participants, Han Jeoung-ae, Minister of Environment, Republic of Korea, highlighted her country's passage in September of the Framework Act on Carbon Neutrality, enshrining carbon neutrality in the law. Saying industry and business are at the heart of the carbon neutral transition, she stressed the importance of collaboration and shared experiences, technology development, and investment to minimize risks.

Setting the Scene: The Imperative to Act: Noting current environmental and public health challenges recognize no borders, Dechen Tsering, Regional Director, UNEP Regional Office for Asia-Pacific, spoke on the systemic nature of the three planetary crises—climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. She highlighted the need for green development principles, multilateralism, and embeddedness of the science-policy interface.

Bob Watson, Lead Author of the Making Peace with Nature report, and Former Chair of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), emphasized the interconnectedness of the three crises, which threaten the achievement of the SDGs, and the imperative of targeting them in tandem. He underscored the Asia-Pacific as a key region and said that, although the world is currently not on course to achieve any of the climate change and biodiversity targets, political will and collaboration could still make it happen.

Towards Transformative Action for People and Planet: Laksmi Dhewanthi, Director General of Climate Change, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Indonesia, elaborated on Indonesia's environmental and economic recovery through policies focused on food security, labor-intensive social

forestry, and peatland and mangrove rehabilitation. Saying that community welfare is inseparable from environmental efforts, she underscored access to land and strengthening food production.

Bambang Susantono, Vice-President for Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development, Asian Development Bank (ADB), discussed the ADB's position on scaling up nature-positive investment, saying business as usual is not an option for a post-pandemic recovery. He highlighted inclusiveness as an important pillar of the ADB's philosophy to prevent a K-shaped recovery, which would widen the inequality gap going forward. Regarding engaging the private sector, he highlighted the importance of regulatory reform and blended finance to help Asia reach a goal of USD 1.7 trillion per year (about 5% of regional GDP) to develop sustainably.

Leaving No One Behind: Steven Victor, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment, Palau, expressed optimism about outcomes at the upcoming 26th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP 26). He underscored that although island states can improve their resilience, there is not much they can do to reach the 1.5°C warming target, which instead hinges on actions taken by G20 countries.

Pema Gyamtsho, Director General, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, stated that Himalayan communities are suffering simultaneously from the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, saying the pre-pandemic status quo was unsustainable. He urged that, as countries begin to build back better, pre-pandemic standards are not repeated.

Kaveh Zahedi, Deputy Executive Secretary for Sustainable Development, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, said the pandemic has pushed 80 million people back into poverty, with at least 140 million jobs lost. He called for investments in risk reduction systems addressing the overlaying hazards of disease, disaster, and climate change, at a cost of USD 270 billion per year (0.8% of regional GDP). He highlighted helpful financial innovations such as green climate sustainability bonds in Malaysia and Indonesia, and debt-for-climate swaps that have emerged in the Pacific.

Exponential Technologies for an Inclusive COVID-19 Recovery?: Brenda Harvey, General Manager, IBM Asia Pacific, stated barriers to digital adoption have largely broken down as



Bob Watson, Lead Author, Making Peace with Nature, and Former IPBES Chair



Brenda Harvey, General Manager, IBM Asia Pacific

a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. She outlined the use of technology and data for the environment, highlighting blockchain technology to encourage recycling in the Philippines. She said primary barriers to use, however, are culture and the cost of technology.

The Ambitious Actions that Pave the Way: Li Zhang, Secretary General, Society of Entrepreneurs for Ecology Foundation, China, expressed concern insufficient progress had been made in meeting the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. He said efforts to meet the targets under the post-2020 global biodiversity framework should not be confined to government alone. He called for more private sector and civil society involvement for protecting biodiversity and the climate.

During the ensuing discussion, Dhewanthi stated countries cannot make progress alone—support and collaboration regionally and internationally, including on technology transfer, is key. Zahedi called for PPPs to be instruments of sustainable change, as opposed to the procurement mechanisms they are typically used as.

Thu Anh Nguyen, Major Group for Children and Youth, said the moment provides an opportunity to move towards a circular economy and emphasized inclusiveness and the need to recognize youth as important agents of change.

Noting a handful of major corporations are behind most greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation, Wali Haider, Farmers Major Group, called for science and policy that serves people and addresses inequality.

In response to a question on what might be the two or three key actions that will help pave the way forward, Watson stressed replacing or complementing GDP with better measures to value human and natural capital, and eliminating perverse subsidies, especially in energy and agriculture. Dhewanthi pointed to common measures and tools and to shared information and communication. Victor called for a shift from nationalism towards globalization. Gyamtsho underscored regional collaboration given the transboundary nature of problems and better planning and implementation. Zahedi emphasized alignment: aligning the climate change pledges with reality and with national budgets; aligning nationally determined contributions (NDCs) with aspirations; and aligning business plans with action. Harvey addressed corporate responsibility,

technology training, and creating opportunities, including for gender equality. Zhang highlighted engagement of the private sector and civil society to ensure sustainable production and consumption.

Opening Session Part Two: Technology, Innovation, People

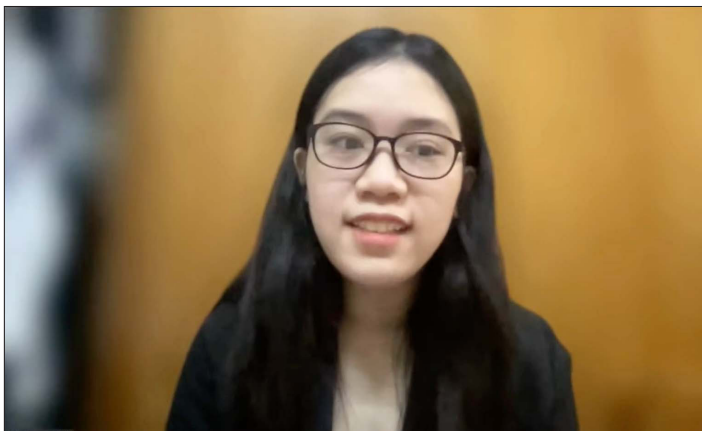
The second part of the opening session addressed private sector leadership and the interdependencies and integration required to develop nature-positive and people-centered approaches to recovery and sustainable growth.

Setting the Scene: Sveinung Rotevatn, UNEA-5 President and Minister for Climate and Environment, Norway, welcomed the first regional event in the Asia-Pacific, noting the region faces great challenges but also holds great promise. Saying “business as usual” does not describe what is going on, he referred to encouraging transformative action by businesses, more effective assistance, and significant climate action in the Republic of Korea, China, Bhutan, and other countries in the region.

Sonja Leighton-Kone, Director of Corporate Affairs, UNEP, said people are increasingly asking whether or not the pandemic is a sign that humanity has pushed nature too far. She stated that integrated global challenges require integrated solutions. She cited pioneering net zero carbon emission initiatives, such as in the Republic of Korea, which recently became the 14th country to pass a carbon neutrality act.

Role of the Private Sector in the Context of UN Reform: Tapan Mishra, UN Resident Coordinator, Mongolia, said reforms to the UN Resident Coordinator system since 2018 have helped overcome challenges associated with a fragmented network of entities that were not fit for purpose in order to deliver the change countries needed. He said the pandemic was the first major test for the UN Resident Coordinator system, which provided a blueprint for accelerating implementation of the SDGs during the UN Decade of Action. He said Resident Coordinators are now responsible for coordinating country-level development activities, ensuring a single coordinated response at the country level.

Restarting Economies and Accelerating the Net Zero Transition: Harry Verhaar, Vice President, Head of Global Public and Government Affairs, Signify, stressed the importance of moving faster toward net zero carbon emissions, which



Thu Anh Nguyen, Major Group for Children and Youth



Sveinung Rotevatn, UNEA-5 President and Minister for Climate and Environment, Norway

can be reached through two related strategies: innovating on infrastructure in developed countries; and technological leapfrogging in developing countries, particularly regarding energy efficiency and lighting. He highlighted an urban street lighting project Signify implemented in Uttar Pradesh, India, noting efficiency gains can reduce a city's energy bill by 50-70% in some cases. He referenced the work of the Three Percent Club, a group of governments and businesses, including Signify, which aim to put the world on a path to a 3% annual efficiency improvement.

Steven Kukoda, Executive Director, International Copper Association, said energy efficiency is an essential step to achieving the Paris Agreement. He called for regional harmonization of efficiency standards. He also pushed the financial community to reduce the shortage of bankable projects by committing to energy efficiency and helping refine projects that might otherwise be rejected. He highlighted the work of United for Efficiency (U4E) to standardize energy efficiency standards regionally, but said more work needs to be done.

Diane Holdorf, Managing Director of Food and Nature, World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), stated that while the COVID-19 pandemic made the planetary boundaries very clear, the acknowledgement of planetary boundaries has been lost during the course of the pandemic. She underscored the need to address the inequalities in society, which were made stark during the pandemic. She stressed this needs to be done by both the private and the public sectors. She explained while stock price is still at the heart of company valuations, more questions are being asked regarding their action on, for example, climate readiness, deforestation, and inequality.

Interdependencies and Integration Across Communities:

Noting the nexus between the three key global policy agendas—climate change, biodiversity, and oceans—and the need for integrated solutions, Yana Gevorgyan, Director of Secretariat, Group on Earth Observations (GEO), underscored a data-driven, interconnected approach, interdisciplinary research, and collaboration. Saying trust is key and open access should be the default, she called for extending involvement in middle- and low-income countries and for cross-sectoral conversation at the ministerial level.

Graham Durant, Director, Australia's National Science and Technology Centre, elaborated on the importance of citizen



Diane Holdorf, Managing Director, WBCSD

science for gathering data and turning citizens into active participants. Citing examples in monitoring coastal conditions, insect-borne diseases, and invasive species, he called for promotion, innovation, and scaling-up of these initiatives. Gevorgyan suggested the possible introduction of a citizen science track in upcoming GEO symposia.

Saying “nothing could be worse than a return to normality,” Julio Anton Mulawin R. Nemenzo, Major Group for Children and Youth, urged increasing meaningful participation by youth groups and called for supporting them with increased access to funding.

Agreeing on the crucial importance of youth having a seat at the table, Gevorgyan noted the opportunity for a GEO Youth community of practice, while Mishra pointed to Mongolia's Youth Parliament. Together with Graham, they agreed to establish further communication with the Children and Youth Major Group to take these ideas forward.

Panelists responded to questions about whether governments could move more quickly and be more transparent with respect to sustainable procurement. Harry Verhaar said the challenge is always the temptation of the lower price tag. “We are not good at investing in the future,” he said. Steven Kukoda agreed, and linked standard setting with sustainable procurement, saying standards help set baselines beyond which no one can go below. Diane Holdorf highlighted the pioneering work WBCSD has done with the UNEP Finance Initiative. She encouraged the financial community to do more in terms of assessing performance throughout commodity value chains, for example.

Closing the session, panelists discussed key takeaways from the session, including the power of PPPs, the need for urgent action at UNFCCC COP 26, the importance of scaling, the need to make use of available “environmental intelligence” and data, and the need to put nature at the heart of a pandemic recovery. As part of this, Sonja Leighton-Kone highlighted the work the UN-SPBF is doing to accelerate partnerships between all essential stakeholders.

Towards Greater Transparency and Sustainable Investment: Turning the Tide on Ocean Plastic Pollution

This session, moderated by Naka Kondo, The Economist Intelligence Unit, examined the steps needed to address the crisis of ocean plastic pollution.

Setting the Scene: Nanqing Jiang, Secretary General, All-China Environment Federation, said China is responsible for



Moderator Naka Kondo, The Economist Intelligence Unit

approximately 30% of the world's plastic production and has the highest waste treatment rate globally but only 30% of plastic is recycled. She urged taking a whole value chain approach as recycling alone is insufficient to address plastic pollution.

Dominic Charles, Director of Finance and Transparency, Minderoo Foundation, on why transparency matters, said “you cannot manage what you cannot measure.” He noted the plastic supply chain is complex and called for mandated, legislated reporting of plastic footprints, and traceability standards to trace and validate recycled plastic.

Common Responsibility, Differentiated Roles: Jacob Duer, President and CEO, Alliance to End Plastic Waste, said plastic pollution should be stopped at the source, and questioned what infrastructure solutions could be used. He said actions should be in line with the SDGs and be at scale, noting billions of dollars are needed to end plastic waste.

Phineas Glover, Head of Environment, Social and Governance, Credit Suisse, noted that, unlike other issues such as carbon emissions, we are only now starting to trace the path to zero plastic waste and understand the plastic value chain. He highlighted the work of the Pew Charitable Trust, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, and others in moving towards what represents a major growth opportunity to channel capital into solutions to plastic waste.

Praveen Hariharan, Sector Leader, IBM, shared IBM's work addressing the data challenge and bringing together platforms and harmonized methodologies to support decision making and allocate funding. He also highlighted the Global Platform on Marine Litter, IBM's VolCat technology for recycling plastic, and upcycling carbon dioxide for plastic replacement.

Heidi Tait, Founder and CEO, Tangaroa Blue Foundation, highlighted citizen science as a key but undervalued resource, the need for a strategic framework, avoiding duplication of efforts, and increased confidence and trust. She also called for addressing greenwashing.

Novrizal Tahar, Director General of Solid and Hazardous Waste Management, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Indonesia, outlined various ministerial regulations and initiatives to reduce marine plastic litter, including application of “extended

producer responsibility” and implementation of local policies banning the use of plastic bags, straws, and containers.

Tomoe Kotani, Deputy Director Division of Global Environment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, spoke on collaborative initiatives by Japan to support marine litter reduction in Asia-Pacific. He called for new business models to accelerate the move towards a circular economy in the region.

The Ambitious Actions that Pave the Way: Hans Brattskar, Special Envoy for the UNEA-5 Presidency, Ministry of Climate and Environment, Norway, said plastic pollution is a global issue with unique challenges for each region. If business continues as usual, he said, plastic pollution will double by 2025. He called the SPBF a unique opportunity for all stakeholders to share experiences and promote joint actions, and noted many countries are calling for the resumed fifth session of UNEA (UNEA-5.2) to resolve to start a negotiating process on a new global agreement on plastic pollution as a long-term solution.

Neth Daño, Science and Technology Major Group, said direct involvement of people and communities is essential, and public information and education can help ensure meaningful participation in monitoring, accountability, and creating greater transparency. She expressed hope a key outcome from UNEA-5.2 in March 2022 will be the start of negotiations toward a global convention for plastic pollution.

During the closing roundtable, panelists discussed ambitions for the future, including making better use of technology to have more accurate data on plastic pollution, which can better inform policymaking. Underscoring this, Phineas Glover noted the critical importance of information, data uniformity, and traceability on plastic waste globally. Citizen scientists were highlighted multiple times during the discussion, as were the negative impacts of greenwashed marketing claims.

Dominic Charles highlighted the mismatch in economies of scale that fossil fuel companies enjoy compared with businesses seeking alternative solutions. Jacob Duer said plastic pollution has moved to the top of the world agenda in just five years. Reiterating this, Tomoe Kotani noted Japan prepared a draft resolution on an international legal instrument for the 4th Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific, which can be forwarded for adoption by UNEA-5.2.



Phineas Glover, Head of Environment, Social and Governance, Credit Suisse



Jacob Duer, President and CEO, Alliance to End Plastic Waste



Moderator **Rohit Sahgal**, The Economist Intelligence Unit

Mitigating Zoonotic Diseases – Healthy Planet Healthy People

This session, moderated by Rohit Sahgal, The Economist Intelligence Unit, explored pathways to mitigate and manage new zoonotic diseases and the impact of ecosystem degradation on human health in the Asia-Pacific region.

Setting the Scene: Is the Pandemic a Warning we are Pushing Nature too Hard?: Colin Butler, Honorary Professor, Australian National University, recalled UNEP's first Executive Director Maurice Strong's work on imagining the future and said economic progress worldwide over the last few decades has created a risk of complacency. He said the COVID-19 pandemic should be taken as a warning and reminder of the need to collectively prepare for risk.

Towards an Integrated Approach to Human Health and the Environment: Jos Vandelaer, Regional Director for Emergencies, World Health Organization (WHO) South-East Asia noted up to 75% of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic in nature. He elaborated on the One Health approach, which brings together an understanding and assessment of animal and environmental health along with human health. He called for interdisciplinary work and joint planning, surveillance and detection, information sharing, and coordinated investigation and response.

Tahmina Shirin, Director, Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, Bangladesh, drew attention to the increased rate in zoonotic diseases and their link to ecosystem degradation and close-contact living. She referred to work in Bangladesh on identifying zoonotic diseases, including the Nipah virus, and the importance of understanding transboundary animal value chains and of early warning systems.

Innovation, Planet, People: Barbara Han, Disease Ecologist, Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies, US, expressed optimism we might be at a tipping point that will allow innovations in technologies, such as machine learning and artificial intelligence, to provide actionable predictions of risks to human health and the environment, including regarding pathogen spillover.

Calling for increased awareness and the need for evidence-based decisions, Ado Lõhmus, Permanent Representative of Estonia to UNEP, and UNEA Vice President, highlighted

UNEP's Global Environmental Data Strategy and the need to address information gaps and measure progress on the SDGs.

Financing Healthy Planet and Healthy People: Edward Moncreiffe, CEO, HSBC Insurance Limited and HSBC Life, highlighted lessons from the pandemic, including that: risk models have failed to consider globalization; biodiversity needs to be given more attention in its own right; and the way governments unilaterally step in as insurers of last resort could have a big impact on the financial sector. He called for a more proactive role for the insurance industry, moving away from being a reimbursement player towards using its collective powers for prevention.

Preventing Future Pandemics: Yi Wang, Associate Professor and Researcher, Tongji University School of Medicine, demonstrated technological solutions used in Shanghai and throughout China allowing citizens to download an app that presents a QR code, which changes color based on the users' recent contacts with potential COVID-19 positive people or visits to areas of risk. She highlighted the importance of improving health infrastructure, and said she believes the emergence of COVID-19 indicates humans need to show more respect for the boundary between human activities and nature.

The Ambitious Actions that Pave the Way: Cathy Yitong Li, Major Group for Children and Youth, said zoonotic diseases link closely with environmental issues and reiterated the critical importance of including youth and consulting with them throughout the policymaking process. Responding to Li's remarks, Edward Moncreiffe said HSBC takes youth extremely seriously and has a wide variety of youth partnerships. He noted that if only governments pay for decarbonization, biodiversity protection, and other such efforts, those costs will be passed on to youth who will pay in the future, and so risk must be minimized now.

Anna Meloto-Wilk, Major Groups and Other Stakeholders, said the COVID-19 pandemic could have been prevented if nature had been treated differently, but the way in which intensive resource extraction and land degradation have destroyed the natural species barrier has given rise to zoonosis. Colin Butler responded by noting the UN system must more clearly acknowledge that resources and economic growth are limited, so that ultimately people can develop a less exploitative



Barbara Han, Disease Ecologist, Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies, US



Edward Moncreiffe, CEO, HSBC Insurance Limited and HSBC Life

attitude to nature. On ambitious actions needed, Vanderlaer urged using COVID-19 as a wakeup call to be better prepared, react quicker, and be more equitable when responding to future pandemics. Han said communication is critical, and that messages must be aligned so programmes and action engage people and move in the right direction. Lomas called for strengthening international environmental governance.

Moncreiffe stated society must be more forward looking in measuring and anticipating pandemics. He urged working on an international, collaborative basis for processing data and said the purpose of organizations and financial capital should be reappraised to be optimized for all of society and nature. Moncreiffe closed, stating “we’re all talking the talk; we must now walk the walk.”

Upcoming Meetings

First Part of the UN Biodiversity Conference: The first part of the 15th meeting of the COP to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 15), the 10th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and the 4th meeting of the COP serving as the MOP to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing are scheduled to take place in a virtual format with limited onsite presence of delegates from embassies and organizations based in China. The first part will include the opening of the meetings and will address agenda items identified by the Bureau as essential for continuing the operations of the Convention and its Protocols, including the budget. A High-level Segment will convene on 12 and 13 October. **dates:** 11-15 October 2021 **location:** Kunming, China, and online **www:** cbd.int/meetings/COP-15

World Health Summit: This Summit is a strategic global health forum convening leaders in politics, science, medicine, the private sector, and civil society, with the SDGs at its core. Central topics in 2021 are: vaccines, the role of the EU in global health, mental health, artificial intelligence, lessons learned in pandemic preparedness, and the WHO Council on the Economics of Health for All. It is convened under the patronage of Germany, France, the European Commission, and the WHO. **dates:** 24-26 October 2021 **location:** Berlin, Germany, and virtual **www:** worldhealthsummit.org

UNFCCC COP 26: COP 26, the 16th meeting of the COP serving as the MOP to the Kyoto Protocol, and the third meeting of the COP serving as the MOP to the Paris Agreement will convene, after being postponed for a year due to COVID-19. **dates:** 1-12 November 2021 **location:** Glasgow, Scotland, UK **www:** unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/conferences/glasgow-climate-change-conference

Barcelona Convention COP 22: The 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols is scheduled to take place in December 2021. Among the issues COP 22 is expected to discuss are: assessing and controlling marine pollution; ensuring sustainable management of natural marine and coastal resources; protecting the marine environment and coastal zones through preventing and reducing, and, as far as possible, eliminating pollution; protecting natural and cultural heritage; strengthening solidarity among Mediterranean coastal States; and contributing to improving quality of life. **dates:** 7-10 December 2021 **location:** Antalya, Turkey **www:** www.unenvironment.org/unepmap/meetings/calendar

Resumed Session of UNEA-5: Convening under the theme, “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the SDGs,” the UNEA-5.2 will provide a platform for discussing and implementing nature-based solutions that contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by holistically addressing its social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Building on UNEA-5’s online session in February 2021, the meeting will discuss ways to ensure policies for economic recovery following COVID-19 lead to a resilient and inclusive post-pandemic world. UNEA-5.2 will also discuss whether to establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee towards a new agreement on marine litter and plastic pollution. A session of the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum is also scheduled to precede the meeting. **dates:** February 2022 (TBC) **location:** UNEP, Nairobi **www:** web.unep.org/environmentassembly

For additional meetings, see sdg.iisd.org/

Glossary

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AP-SPBF	Regional Session of the UNEP Science-Policy-Business Forum for Asia and the Pacific
COP	Conference of the Parties
PPP	Public-private partnership
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNEA	UN Environment Assembly
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UN-SPBF	UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment
WBCSD	World Business Council on Sustainable Development
WHO	World Health Organization