Nexus Dialogues
Operationalizing environmental issues within the UN system is at the heart of the EMG’s work, including promoting coordination, information exchange and joint action among UN agencies. The Nexus Dialogues promote nexus-driven action towards the 2030 Agenda. The Dialogues bring UN agencies and other entities closer together in identifying synergies and partnerships at the intersection of the different SDGs from an environmental perspective. Participants are able to acquaint themselves with available nexus methodologies and seek to identify practical strategies for integrating the nexus approach into their work.

Fundamentally, this provides an opportunity to identify areas of mutual interest and to better understand transmission channels through which an action in one sector might impact the outcomes of another.

Nexus Dialogues
The nexus approach is a way of conceptualizing and optimizing a series of connections linking two or more sectors. By addressing gaps and overlaps between the sectoral approach to addressing the SDGs, a more efficient and integrated outcome can be achieved. In this sense, the nexus approach can be thought of as a potential tool to solving problems without creating new ones.

“The ideal nexus approach outcome is being able to solve one problem without creating another.”

Dr. Elena Manaenkova, Deputy Secretary General of WMO; Mr. Nikhil Seth, Executive Secretary of UNITAR; Mr. Stephen Pursey, Senior Policy Adviser and G20 Coordinator of ILO; Mr. Felix Dodds (facilitator), Senior Fellow, University of California
Nexus Dialogue One: addressing policy, planning and practical implementation of the nexus approach

Respectively the Technical Segment and High-Level Segment attracted over 70 participants.
April 26 2017

The Technical Segment probed the practical implementation of the approach at the global and country level, exploring ways to establish and maintain nexus partnerships among agencies, ministries, private sector and NGOs; focusing on opportunities and challenges.

April 27 2017

The High-Level Segment gave an opportunity for UN Senior Officials, academia, the private sector and civil society to discuss the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships to strengthen policy coherence in implementing the environmental dimensions of the SDGs.

Left to right: Mr Asad Naqvi, PAGE, United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), Perception Change Project. Mr Eric Kemp-Benedict, Stockholm Environment Institute.

Technical Segment Overview

The SDGs have guided the UN system now for almost two years. Only by first understanding the existing nexus programmes and initiatives working towards achieving the SDGs, can we ensure that the nexus approach becomes an effective tool. To understand real opportunities and challenges, and to reflect on their own work, participants were presented with valuable case studies from a variety of backgrounds. During discussions among the presenters and participants, a lack of cohesion in knowledge **between and within sectors** was alluded to, and a possible lack of **nexus skills** around negotiating and identifying trade-offs.

A pinpointed barrier was the need for country specific protocols. The inclusion of the SDGs in the governance structure of Sweden was provided as a successful example. Following the case studies, breakout sessions facilitated reflection and discussion about participant’s own work and exploration of methodologies and tools.

For more information, visit the EMG Website
unemg.org/emg-nexus-dialogues
The Partnership for Action on the Green Economy (PAGE) brings together 5 agencies: UN Environment, UNITAR, UNDP, UNIDO and ILO. Together, they address the 3 dimensions of Sustainable Development. Mr. Asad Naqvi shared the modalities by which PAGE supports Member States in this task. Building on this presentation, the emphasis was shifted from the UN system to the country-level. PAGE within Peru was presented as a nexus success story by Ms. Dorit Kempter of the ILO.

**UN AGENCY CASE STUDIES**

Mr. Jonas Rodhe of the Swedish Environment Protection Agency spoke of the opportunities of governing the Swedish Environmental Objectives and how these national objectives align with the SDGs.

Dr. Catalina Spataru, from University College London, showcased research in the context of Brazil. The IDA3 model, developed by UCL, addresses the water-energy-land nexus.

Dr. Kaveh Madani, from Imperial College London demonstrated different tools used to influence policy through the use of examples from work undertaken in Alaska.

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**Topics for future dialogues**

**Environmental and humanitarian issues nexus**

Timeline difficulties were highlighted as the humanitarian sector must often react swiftly; whilst the environment timeline is often longer-term. There are possibilities to include the environment into operating procedures and training. A lack of skills-sharing and institutional structures to foster joint work were identified.

**The environment and poverty nexus**

An opportunity exists to clarify the dependency between these issues; in particular between rural development of renewable technologies and energy (SDG7) and sustainable consumption and production (SDG12). There is a need to coordinate with local planning and engage stakeholders, to consider political agendas, and for support and transparency.

**The urban pollution, health, and sustainable development nexus**

This nexus could focus on common threats as potential synergies; waste, pollution, urban heat islands, and increased incidence of disease.

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High Level Segment Overview

Mr. Elliott Harris and Mr. Felix Dodds delivered the opening remarks. Felix Wertli expressed the position of the nexus approach within the political climate of the UN in Switzerland and the Swiss support for the Dialogues. Panelists then discussed the benefits and challenges of cross-sectoral cooperation in implementing the environmental dimensions of the SDGs.

In successfully meeting the SDGs, the UN system and Member States must prepare for more uncertainty. Mr. Janos Pasztor suggested the world which created the 2030 Agenda may have passed; we face a changing, unpredictable future. Exciting and worrisome, our response must engage the world in a more flexible way. Nexus thinking advocates for specialization within silos, as conveyors of each SDG, as long as inter-agency partnerships are formed. PAGE is one example. We must know from where to pull expertise to communicate, organize, and collaborate outside of our field.

Mr. Stephen Pursey noted that our technology, climate, and social and demographic systems are changing; the UN must ensure it is shaping the future, not predicting it. We must support training, especially cross-agency, and skills.

For a nexus approach to be effective, we need to understand where the existing initiatives and overlaps are and where there is a need to do more. Simultaneously, we need to move beyond the identification of common interests and develop transmission channels and action. Largely, data to support cross-sectoral issues exists. We must build on this through straightforward narrative. EMG is well-placed to improve understanding of these issues and support the implementation of such narrative. Moreover, there may be a need for an EMG approach to create an ‘SDG Management Group’.

Multi-sector response is not a new concept; the AIDS Crisis one example. Ms. Nadia Isler reminded that, whilst a public health crisis, this sector was assisted by the trade, labor and education sectors. In theory, we understand the benefits of this approach, yet this is not reflected in widespread practice. Discussion regarding the risks of staying within the silos must increase.

Nexus solutions are found at the science-policy interface; the UN, Member States, academia, national research bodies and ministries, and the private sector must come together. Dr Elena Manaenkova drove home our need to work across boundaries, as ecosystems do not work on political boundaries. The multilateralism which the 2030 Agenda was built upon is under threat. Special guest, Dr. Joachim Monkelbaan argued we must nourish and inspire optimism in the face of fear, anger and pessimism.

To reach the required flexibility, strict funding schemes are a significant obstacle. State funding targets outcome-based projects, not research and training. For as long as funding is directly distributed to agencies, competition between agencies will prevail, with little incentive to consider issues outside one’s own sector. By identifying existing overlaps, and reallocated funding for collaborative projects, existing funding would stretch further. Collaboration needs to be mobilized and normalized, and possibly incentivized. A higher emphasis must be placed upon the non-monetary benefits and calculation of multi-sector outcomes for projects.

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