

New sustainability agenda must harmonize humanity's relationship with planet – UN Assembly President

27 April 2015 – As United Nations Member States prepare to adopt and move toward implementing a new development agenda, the President of the General Assembly said it is critical to ensure that “a harmonious relationship with our planet underpins our quest to achieve sustainable development.”

“This year’s dialogue on Harmony with Nature is timely, as the formulation of an ambitious and transformative development agenda for the next 15 years is under way,” said General Assembly President Sam Kahamba Kutesa as he opened the Assembly’s interactive dialogue on ‘Harmony with Nature: Towards achieving sustainable development goals including addressing climate change in the post-2015 development agenda.’

The development path the world has taken has imposed a heavy cost on our planet, leading to serious environmental degradation, he said, underscoring that “it is now widely accepted that our way of life, especially the production and consumption patterns, is no longer sustainable.”

“As scientists have repeatedly warned, we are severely affecting the Earth’s carrying capacity and are in danger of reaching planetary boundaries or tipping points beyond which we risk irreversible and abrupt environmental changes,” he said.

“We have to adopt a post-2015 development agenda that is holistic in nature,” Mr. Kutesa continued. “The agenda should put the well-being of both humankind and our planet at the centre of our sustainable development efforts.”

He drew attention to the need to reach a new, universal climate change agreement this coming December in Paris that will be another important step for ensuring a better chance of preserving the planet for the present and future generations.

“Through these efforts, we should bear in mind that profound changes in attitudes, behaviours and policies will be required to create a world in which human beings live in harmony with nature.”

Mr. Kutesa acknowledged the increasing awareness and proactive stances being taken by leaders around the world to address the environmental challenges we face.

“Nevertheless,” he said, “much more needs to be done in terms of policy making, technology development and transfer as well as education and capacity building.”

The General Assembly President opened the meeting with a minute of silence in tribute to the victims of those who lost their lives in this weekend’s devastating earthquake in Nepal and surrounding regions including Bangladesh, India and Tibet.

“On behalf of Member States, I extend my deepest sympathies to the people and Government of Nepal, and all others affected by this disaster,” he said. “I thank all those that have offered their support following this disaster and call on the international community to stand in solidarity with the Government of Nepal following this devastating earthquake.”

‘The power to change begins with you,’ says Ban, urging sustainable choices on Mother Earth Day

22 April 2015 – Humanity is well aware of the devastating damage and pollution it have wrought on planet Earth, and “even with this knowledge, we have yet to change our ways,” United Nations Secretary-General said today urging people to reset their relationship with nature and every living being it sustains.

In his remarks on [International Mother Earth Day](#), marked worldwide on 22 April, Ban Ki-moon called Earth humanity’s “ultimate mother – an astounding planet that has, since time immemorial, supported life in myriad forms.”

This year’s celebration marks the 45th anniversary of Earth Day celebrations from Morocco to Uganda, Armenia to India.

“This can be the year our children and grandchildren will remember as when we chose to build a sustainable and resilient future – both for Mother Earth and all those that development has until now left behind. Let us seize this historic opportunity together,” he [said](#).

“But the big decisions that lie ahead are not just for world leaders and policy-makers. Today, on Mother Earth Day, I ask each one of us to be mindful of the impacts our choices have on this planet, and what those impacts will mean for future generations,” he added.

“Not everyone is able to make sustainable choices, but for those who can, simple decisions such as switching to energy-efficient lighting or buying only what you will consume – when accumulated across billions of people – can transform our world. The power to change begins with you,” the UN chief added.

Humanity’s dependence on Earth makes it all the more astonishing that “we have allowed rapid and often unwise human development to disrupt so many of the delicate systems that have functioned harmoniously for millennia,” he said.

This year, the world aims to finalize the post-2015 sustainable development agenda and reach a new and meaningful universal climate change agreement. These processes have the potential to redefine the future for the better, by eradicating extreme poverty in all its forms.

“We are increasingly aware of the damage our species has wrought – the pollution, the dwindling resources, the species of flora and fauna forever gone, the rush towards tipping points that may alter the way our planet functions. Even with this knowledge, we have yet to change our ways,” he said.

“As a global community, we have the opportunity to make 2015 a turning point in human history,” Mr. Ban emphasized.

In a separate statement on the Day, Martin Sajdik, President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) said: “Now more than ever, on this Earth Day, we must recognize the beauty of our earth, and work as one and deliver for all.”