

## ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Essential Actions and Partnerships to Accelerate Integrated Health and Environment  
Solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development  
September 25, 2018

### INTRODUCTION

Awareness is growing of the intimate connections between human health and the environment that need to be addressed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Yet, the pace and scale of action lags behind what is needed to reach the targets. **What steps can be taken to accelerate integrated actions for health and environment?**

This question was at the heart of this roundtable's dialogue, which was co-chaired by Achim Steiner (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP]) and Mark Tercek (The Nature Conservancy) and moderated by Mandeep Dhaliwal (UNDP), with participation from over 30 global leaders and experts. The discussion surfaced three key steps to accelerate integrated health and environment solutions for the SDGs that are based on the notions of equality and the right to human health and healthy environments.

#### STEP 1: Identify the Strongest Linkages for Action

The holistic framework of the SDGs is a powerful advance, yet it also presents the challenge of identifying the most actionable linkages across health and environment to focus action. Toward this, the Bridge Collaborative shared a working draft of its upcoming report, which describes three specific areas that are ready now for cross-sector action: (1) accelerating an environmentally-friendly, clean air, zero-carbon energy future for all; (2) transforming the global food system for health and sustainability; and (3) targeting sanitation and wastewater improvements to benefit people and nature. The Collaborative will release a final version of the report in early 2019.

Participants discussed additional efforts to guide integrated action, including the forthcoming reports from the EAT-Lancet Commission on scientific targets for healthy and sustainable food systems and from the Rockefeller Economic Council on Planetary Health. Participants also highlighted their ongoing activities and partnerships in addressing air pollution and elevating this as a political priority for integrated action.

#### STEP 2: Launch and Evaluate Mechanisms for Integrated Action

Awareness of linkages is powerful when it builds the support for policy, finance and community-based actions to deliver joint health and environment outcomes. As new mechanisms are launched, evaluating them to build the evidence base will be key to building confidence for greater integrated action by governments, corporations and funders.

Three examples were shared by speakers on: integrating environmental planning into humanitarian response in Bangladesh; advancing urban health in Latin America; and the Breathe Better Bond.

Participants highlighted that new initiatives will increasingly need to be framed as partnerships, and new business models may be needed to draw resources from a variety of sources including the private sector, such as insurance companies, pension funds and other investors. This is particularly true as the role of traditional donors is shifting to a partnership model, and their share of total funding is decreasing as a variety of other stakeholders are increasingly entering the financing space.

### **STEP 3: Step Beyond Our Siloes to Communicate and Implement Better**

Participants noted the reality that most organizations work in their sector-based silos, which limits cross-sector interaction and opportunities for innovation and joint policy action. Making rapid progress will require an intentional focus on forums to connect health and environment leaders to drive action.

It was highlighted that development is essentially about managing complexity and thinking at the systems level. For instance, providing access to health care and ensuring a healthy environment are keys to reducing global inequalities and ill health. It was also argued that there is a need to move from a disease-centered approach to one of staying healthy and focusing on risk factors and prevention. There could be, for instance, huge opportunities in highlighting the co-benefits of physical activity and reduction of air pollution to combat non-communicable diseases and climate change simultaneously.

Citizen demand and support for action on health and environment challenges, including climate change, are critical, and the media has a particularly important role to play. However, creativity will be needed in terms of the outlet and message, for example linking to current events and the economy, and focusing on solutions, given the way traditional media has evolved in recent years.

## **ACTION POINTS**

The following are cross-cutting considerations to mobilize greater opportunity for integrated health and environment actions in support of the SDGs:

- Governance at all levels must become more strategic, coherent and ‘common-sense.’ In particular, cities offer an opportunity to jointly invest in health and environment, including for instance encouraging government incentives to switch to renewable energy systems. Emerging, fast-growing cities could be targeted as they offer possibilities to “do the right thing” from the beginning.
- In addition to national and local efforts to ensure policy coherence, the United Nations entities and other global actors have an important role to play in supporting countries with mobilizing technical assistance, funding and partnerships to implement joint health and environment interventions.
- Financing for integrated initiatives benefits from resource mobilization across sectors and scales. Engaging large financial corporations in the global development agenda is an opportunity to be increasingly explored, particularly when there are transparent benchmarks for measuring progress and evidence for return-on-investment for joint health and environmental impact.