



SIDE EVENT

Environmental dimension of the Belt and Road Initiative: opportunities and challenges

Tuesday, 14 November 2017 from 1.15 – 2.45 p.m.

In Room VII, Palais des Nations, Geneva

23rd Session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy

ORGANIZING PARTNERS: the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment).

CHAIR: Ms. Martine ROHN-BROSSARD, Head of Section Europe, Trade and Development, Deputy Head of International Affairs Division, Swiss Federal Office for the Environment, and CEP Bureau member

BACKGROUND:

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), announced in 2013 by President Xi Jinping of China, is intended to enhance inter-regional connectivity through reviving ancient trade routes as the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. China's efforts are focused on five areas of cooperation: infrastructure, trade, policy, finance and people.

BRI spans Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa (60 countries representing 39% of the global land area, 62% of population, 31% of GDP, 24% of household consumption, 55% of CO₂ emissions and 40% of trade). Mobilization of investment exceeding one trillion USD is expected for the building of six transnational economic corridors. BRI presents an opportunity for countries to use the relevant projects to help transform their economies and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and their National Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

To maximize the positive impacts of BRI through enhanced sustainability, in December 2016 UN Environment signed a memorandum of understanding with China's Ministry of Environmental Protection to work together to promote international cooperation for the sustainable development of BRI. At the Belt and Road Forum (Beijing, May 2017), an International Coalition for Green Development on the Belt and Road was launched under the leadership of both UN Environment and China's Ministry of Environment and Planning. The Coalition is assisting investors and stakeholders to promote green and sustainable investments. It is open to any organization, institution, investor or business that is interested in working with UN Environment and its partners.

UN Environment is also managing another coalition — the Green Infrastructure Investment Coalition — that helps recipient countries under the Global Environment Facility to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and related targets committed under multilateral environmental agreements. The objective of the latter coalition is to encourage systemic changes to the financial system consistent with

the need to mobilize financing for the Sustainable Development Goals by identifying and amplifying innovative market, policy and regulatory and infrastructure investment practices.

At the regional level, at the 8th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8-10 June 2016) during the discussion on greening the economy, it was suggested to promote and use the environmental and social standards agreed within the UNECE region when developing the Silk Road Economic Belt.

THE SIDE EVENT will offer a platform for:

- Exchanging information and raising awareness about BRI, including opportunities for green investment and challenges in terms of its potential impact on the environment
- Identifying opportunities and challenges in relation to the environmental dimension of BRI
- Learning about existing environmental legal and policy instruments that can support the implementation of BRI.

The event is open to United Nations Member States, NGOs, business, academia and other stakeholders.

PROGRAMME:

- Belt and Road Initiative: overview, key developments and milestones
(by UN Environment)
- The environmental dimension of the Belt and Road Initiative: opportunities and challenges
(up to 45 minutes)
 - o Relevance of environmental legal and policy instruments in the region
(by UNECE)
 - o Belt and Road Initiative: key outcomes from discussion by the GREEN Action Task Force *(by Co-Chair of the GREEN Action Task Force)*
 - o Moderated discussion exchanging information, experiences and good practices with the participation of countries and other stakeholders
(up to 5 minutes per panelist)
- Questions & answers *(up to 30 minutes)*
 - o Interactive discussion between participants in the side event and panelists
(up to 2 minutes per intervention)

SPEAKERS:

- Fulai Sheng, Senior Economist, UN Environment
- Marco Keiner, Director of Environment Division, UNECE
- Jurgen Keinhorst, Co-Chair of the GREEN Action Task Force, Germany
- Representatives of countries and organizations interested to share their experience
 - o Belarus
 - o Georgia
 - o Kazakhstan
 - o European Investment Bank
 - o European ECO-Forum

The event is in English and Russian, with the support of Norwegian funding to UN Environment.