

HLPF 2017 SEED Side Event on

Innovative and Eco-Inclusive Entrepreneurship, the SMEs in support to SDGs delivery

a SEED side event co-organized by South Africa and Germany, in partnership with UN Environment, UNDP and IUCN (SEED Founding Partners), and PAGE/Partnership for Action on Green Economy;

At a time when the global community is looking for practical and “down-to-earth” approaches for effectively delivering sustainability, it is of critical importance to pay due attention to and associate the Small and Medium Enterprises/SMEs in the sustainability process, in particular through the implementation of the SDGs.

It is with this aim in mind that this side event was organized, looking for highlighting the vital importance of the SMEs, in particular the innovative eco-inclusive enterprises, in delivering sustainability, alleviating poverty, generating local income and jobs, using more efficiently local resources, while identifying realistic and accessible solutions and unlocking opportunities through partnerships, in response to local, community, regional and national social, environmental and economic challenges.

During the presentations and discussions, the importance of small and medium enterprises for innovation, employment/decent work, economic and inclusive growth, was emphasized while at the same time promoting sustainable solutions to development challenges. Considering the need for relevant investments, SEED could play a key role in identifying high-impact approaches and business models that are scalable and replicable. To that end, it is essential to leveraging the synergies between SEED and similar initiatives, such as the Equator Prize and the work of the Poverty and Environment Initiative, as well as PAGE. Certain countries, such as South Africa, using innovative entrepreneurship as change lever to foster sustainable development are leading by example, adapting global solutions and tools to national contexts.

These innovative eco-inclusive enterprises are however not very “visible”, generally hidden champions, that SEED is trying to bring up to light through its Awards system and follow up support assistance.

During the event, the winners of the SWITCH Africa Green-SEED Awards were announced, fifteen African eco-inclusive enterprises from Ghana, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Uganda, Mauritius and South Africa, demonstrating how such SMEs can be creative in front of local challenges with existing resources in surrounding ecosystems.

A specific feature of this side event was the direct involvement of two previous SEED winners from South Africa and Colombia, interacting with the participants on their challenges, opportunities and solutions, their desire to scale up and get their innovations be replicated elsewhere for a larger impact, would it be for improving local agricultural production on one acre or for recycling packaging wastes for producing school tables, both with clear contributions to various SDGs and targets.

The launching of the 2017 winners during this side event and the presence of representatives of two previous SMEs winners have attracted the attention of UN Radio, conducting interviews in English and in French.

Side event held on 13 July 2017