



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

HLPF 2022 side event by SEED, in close collaboration with Germany, Indonesia/South Africa, the EU, UNEP, GO4SDGs and 10YFP/OPN

11-14 July 2022, day and time TBC (preferably 8:30-9:45am NY)

Building Forward Better: Delivering Locally with SMEs as Gamechangers

Context and Event Description

The dramatic consequences of the Covid-19 on the people and the economies resulted in serious questioning of our lifestyles and development model. When the COVID-19 pandemic shook the world in 2019, global economic activities have been severely battered, progress towards achieving the SDGs has been threatened, and global efforts are now centered on moving towards medium and long-term sustainable and inclusive recovery. Building Back Better and Building Forward Better should first recognise the non-sustainable pre-pandemic reality and consider all aspects of the SDGs. It needs to focus on a future of economic progress alongside socially and environmentally sustainable, inclusive global value chains and markets.

There is evidence on the importance of green recovery as a means for achieving our global goals and national economic recovery, however decision-makers struggle to prioritise and the attention is rarely put on the “Missing Middle”, the Small and Medium Enterprises, the SMEs, essential to the structure of all economies in all countries. Prioritising attention to SMES and eco-inclusive enterprises will help in delivering triple returns - economic, social and environmental – in both short and long terms, delivering green recovery impact on the ground through their activities, products and services.

Eco-inclusive SMEs are important job creators and drivers of green growth. They provide direct and indirect jobs, often for low-income and underserved communities. They also provide basic services and goods to underserved communities while supporting gender and youth empowerment. They also provide a source of income to low-income and marginalised groups in informal economies worldwide, while actively contributing to the value chains. Through the delivery of green products and services, eco-inclusive SMEs foster sustainable production and consumption, and positively contribute to eco-inclusive economies. SMEs are the bedrock of global, national, and local markets. As key adopters and inventors of environmental innovations in their products, services and value chain, they are at the forefront of climate adaptation and mitigation, helping build resilient and adaptive community structures.

The SMEs offer a largely untapped potential, including for decarbonizing, decoupling and digitalization, with their impact as drivers of innovations that secure local jobs, protect ecosystems, and enhance resilience.

The growing success of green entrepreneurs and SMEs have shown the great potential of a transformative and collective impact, which is central in responding to these crises. They not only spur development and market growth through the provision of innovative technologies, goods and services, but also ensure the preservation of the very foundation of national economies, environmental and social resources, contributing to the delivery of most SDGs, contributing to women employment and gender equality as well as to responsible management of natural resources and effective partnerships.

The event will demonstrate, with practical cases and success stories from the various SMEs SEED have been working with, the potential and necessity to engage with and enable SMEs contributing to local and national process to build forward better, in the transition to sustainability. Together with partners, the event will demonstrate the importance of well-designed collaborations and the necessity to enable and catalyse innovations.

The session will be a lead-up event to the launch of the “Coalition for Innovation, Circularity and Entrepreneurship”. The Coalition aims at enabling SMEs, scaling-up and replicating their good practices, while providing a Voice for the SMEs and enhancing system-wide innovation and collective green climate action.

At the session the SEED Flagship Report “Enterprise Impact at Scale” will be launched and key insights will be presented. The session will also draw on insights from the SEED-GO4SDGs Case Study Snapshot “Green SMEs and their Success Factors for Scale-up and Replication”.

Outline of the event

The event will last 75 minutes, and consist in three parts:

1. Opening and keynote addresses on the importance of SMEs in delivering resilience and circularity for building forward better;
2. Panel discussion with 4-5 speakers, including 3 entrepreneurs from Africa, Asia and Latin America, 1 business organisation, 1 policy maker;
3. Brief presentation of the Coalition and conclusion of the event.

Proposed speakers and panellists

Moderated by Arab Hoballah, SEED Executive Director and former Chief SCP-UNEP

Opening session (15min):

- Arab Hoballah, Brief opening
- Keynote address: Ligia Noronha, Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the UNEP New York Office
- Keynote address: Minister of Environment, Germany

Panel session (50min):

Innovative approaches to local environmental and social problems, resulting from pandemics such as Covid-19, while looking for building forward better and ensuring good business; challenges, drivers, enablers for long-term transformative impact

1. Entrepreneur SME from Africa, Fourth Line Limited (Zambia), agriculture or Green Impact Technologies (Malawi), affordable renewable energy
2. Entrepreneur SME from Asia, Sampangan (Indonesia), waste management; or Find Folk (Thailand), responsible tourism
3. Entrepreneur SME from Latin America, Proplanet (Colombia), Construction and Waste
4. Policy maker, Indonesia or South Africa
5. UN Global Compact

4-5 min pitch by each panellist, to be followed by an interactive dialogue

Wrap-up and Closing (10min):

- Coalition for Innovation, Circularity and Entrepreneurship, Brief presentation
- Conclusion