

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes Statement - Countdown to UN SDG Summit Web 1 SDGs 1 and 2 (29 Nov 22)

Thank you for introducing me. Good morning, good afternoon and good evening – wherever you are

We are about one month from sending the year 2022 to the annals of history.

It has been a significant year and it has been a remarkable year.

It has been significant because it was the year when we were finally going to open up, have in-person meetings and negotiations and re-set development after the drama of covid. We were all going to build back better and plan forward in improved ways.

2022 has been a remarkable year because the world was thrown into a war by the unprovoked attack by Russia on Ukraine, a war which many nations claim to be a regional Inter- European war. But which also is a war where a despotic and authoritarian state have chosen to wage war against democratic values, freedom of speech and values of liberty, freedom and justice. Good governance is at peril everywhere in such circumstances.

2022 has been a remarkable year because it was the year we could celebrate 50 years of concerted, consistent and continued work to safeguard the environmental stability and well-being of the planet. It was 50 years since the UN Environment Programme was founded.

2022 is also a remarkable year because the principle of “Loss and Damages” in the context of global warming and climate change, was agreed to at COP 27. But 2022 was also a remarkable year because countries almost reneged on the 1.5 degree target agreed to in Paris in 2015 and emphasised in Glasgow, almost exactly a year ago.

2022 can be a remarkable and significant year, if the upcoming COP on biodiversity in Canada in December can deliver a decisively positive outcome and halt the loss of biodiversity.

2022 can be a remarkable and significant year if we by now start preparing for a successful and promising SDG Summit in September next year.

Today is the first of a series of 8 monthly webinars we will organise preparing and advocating for this Summit. Each will deal with two SDGs; each will look at what is unique about the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs – that they are indivisible, interlinked and integrated, that they are people-centred, planet sensitive and universal, that they incorporate the three dimensions of sustainable development, the economic, social and environmental reality.

The purpose of the webinar-series is to determine where we are in the process of implementing the SDGs, identify transformative actions for change, assess what kind of disruptions they might create together, look for alliances they may suggest, all to accelerate progress.

Bringing together a wide range of experts, policymakers, and practitioners with knowledge and insights on integrated approaches, with understanding of the interlinkages within the SDGs, we seek to establish a community of practice and experience. We must ask a set of critical questions – are we falling behind the schedule to save the world? If so, what needs to be done. Do we understand obstacles? Can we replicate progress? Can we strengthen good partnership, and dissolve poor ones? Do we need to reset the 2030 Agenda? If so – how?

A few weeks ago, I attended a high level conference organised by the UN Office for Sustainable Development called the SDG Transformation Forum. A great many delegates emphasised the necessity ‘to manage expectations’ with the upcoming SDG Summit.

Two weeks earlier I had been speaking to a seasoned delegate about the upcoming summit next year. Referring to the outcome declaration from the 2019 SDG Summit, he claimed it was filled with self-evident statements, lofty clichés at worst, aspirational promises at best.

Friends, we know what to do, how to do it and we have the money to set this planet on a right course. Getting it done, is a matter of politics, a matter of priorities and values. If we do not set high and auspicious goals and map out

possible ways to implement these, what is then going to encourage us to go the extra mile?

Yes, the 2019 Summit Declaration was ambitious! Yes, the Decade of Action is ambitious! And we need to be better than those. If we now start to manage expectations, and are fearful of being ambitious, we will have relegated the 2023 Summit to failure.

We cannot manage expectations – they are supposed to be high. Those who judge content claiming it is riddled with clichés are creating explanations for them not to be disappointed.

The 2030 Agenda is precisely the answer to the Post Covid Credo: “Building Back Better”. It is about transformative change; it is about planning forward. Leaving no one behind is no cliché. Completing the 2030 agenda is not too ambitious. We cannot manage and modify the expectations of an ambitious realisation of the five P’s – People, Planet, Partnership, Prosperity and Peace.

Creating a momentum for the upcoming summit next September which will be ambitious, hopeful and successful, is also why we organise these monthly webinars.

2022 was a remarkable year, because we continued to believe in the full realisation of the 2030 agenda.

2023 will be a significant year, if we can agree at the Summit to intensify and implement the acceleration of the 2030 Agenda with the SDGs.

Thank you for your attention.

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes

Knapstad, November 29, 2022