

The introductory statement to webinar 3, January 26, 2023, in the monthly series Countdown to the 2023 SDG Summit

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Good morning, good afternoon and good evening, friends, wherever you are on this earth.

This is the third webinar on the SDGs in our series of 8 monthly webinars, bringing us to the SDG Summit at the UN Headquarters in September this year.

This time, we focus on SDG 5 and SDG 6. Even though each SDG has been given an abbreviated title it is important to remember their full titles: SDG 5 is about: “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.” And SDG 6 is to “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”. Each of these SDGs are supplied with 9 and 8 targets respectively. Add to that, the two goals are supplied with more than 40 indicators.

Which are our aims? Here are some -

- Enabling integrated approaches to SDG implementation by bringing together a range of stakeholders to accelerate progress toward the goals.
- Identifying ways to exploit positive interactions and mitigate trade-offs.
- Forging multistakeholder coalitions behind programmes of accelerated action.
- Identifying good practices for empowering communities, sectoral actors, and cross-sectoral alliances at multiple levels.
- Promoting the establishment of communities of practice that will continue to collaborate in the lead-up to the SDG Summit and beyond.
- Bringing the concept of nature-based solutions to the SDGs

And not to forget, there are in all, 17 Goals, 169 targets and 234 indicators. These numbers speak to the interlinked and integrated nature of all SDGs. With increasing awareness of the complexity of this world, there is an understanding of interlinkages growing exponentially from the UN Conference of the Human Environment in 1972, which established UNEP, through the UN report “Our Common Future” in 1987 when the concept of sustainable development was firmly placed on the global agenda, through Agenda 21 and the 27 Rio principles in 1992, through the establishment of the MDGs in 2003 to the agreement of the SDGs in 2015.

The more we dip into the SDGs and their implementation, the more convincing an interlinked implementation becomes, a message we should bring to the SDG Summit in September.

The two SDGs today, are on water and gender.

Water covers ca 70% of our planet, 97% is salt water, 3% is freshwater, even less, about 1,2% of freshwater is drinking water, even less is clean, and even less is accessible and affordable water for all.

In March this year, the UN will organise “the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development.”

The organisers state simply: “The world is not on track to achieve SDG 6 and related goals and targets by 2030.” They continue:

“Water is inextricably linked to the three pillars of sustainable development, and it integrates social, cultural, economic and political values. It is cross-cutting and underpins the achievement of many SDGs through close linkages with climate, energy, cities, the environment, food security, poverty, gender equality, and health, amongst others. With climate change profoundly affecting our economies, societies and environment, water is indeed the biggest deal breaker to achieve the internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

A significant qualifier is added to today’s SDGs - the word “all.”

SDG 5 is about all women and all girls. “All” is used 175 times in the 2030 Agenda document, the concept “by 2030” is used 61 times and “equal and equality” are together used 40 times. But saying this again and again does not make it real.

UNDP published a Gender Norm Index two years ago. Based on research covering 80% of the global population, its findings were shocking:

- 91% of men and 86% of women held at least one bias against women in relation to politics, economics, education, violence or reproductive rights.
- Almost half of people feel men are superior political leaders.
- More than 40% believe men make better business executives.
- Almost a third of men and women think it’s acceptable for a man to beat his wife.
- In June 2020 The Equal Measures 2030 Partnership found that no country was on track to achieve gender equality by 2030.

We are not **all equal** yet. Will we be **by 2030**?

And we seem to be facing mounting challenges amid global crises that grow in numbers, complexity and severity.

Less than a month ago, we relegated 2022 to the archives of history. We all wished that this year, 2023 would be better than the one we finally left behind. And yet on top of all the crises that relate to sustainable development, to the environment and to nature - we are faced with a troubled political crisis which has manifested itself in a war fought in Ukraine, but which is also a war waged by an authoritarian state against democracy, justice, free speech and liberty for all.

Alas, this brutal war is not the only one. There are more than 50 armed conflicts raging today, brutally killing innocent people, and devastating the environment. Writes The Global Peace Index: “The economic impact of violence on the global economy in 2021 was ... equivalent to ten per cent of the world’s economic activity.”

Thus, we use 10% of the global GDP for destruction in which we seem to excel. 3 to 4% of the global GDP is the estimated cost to implement the 2030 Agenda - in which we do not excel.

Where did our priorities go so wrong?

As a good friend recently wrote in her keynote statement to the Sustainable Development Transformation Forum organised last October “All these crises have been caused by

human actions. And as we have acted wrongly, it is in our hands to act in a better way and create the best world. By acting forcefully, we can turn these crises into opportunities.”

And that is the nature of the SDGs - a tool that can be used by all in turning crises into opportunities.

Thank you for your attention.

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes

Knapstad, Norway, 25 January 2023

Full quote - The Global Peace Index 2022

“The economic impact of violence on the global economy in 2021 was \$16.5 trillion in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms. This figure is equivalent to ten per cent of the world’s economic activity.”