Governance *for* Sustainable Development

VOLUME 7

Interlinking Major Sustainable Development Events of 2023 to Enhance Policy Coherence and Implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Edited by the Friends of Governance for Sustainable Development

NEW WORLD FRONTIERS
publications

Volume 7: Interlinking Major Sustainable Development Events to Embrace Policy Coherence and Implementation of the 2030 Agenda is produced by the Friends of Governance for Sustainable Development (the Friends Group).

The Friends Group is coordinated by the governments of Germany, Morocco, Indonesia, Nigeria, Romania, and the Republic of Korea, the secretariat being provided by the Rob and Melani Walton Sustainability Solutions Service (RMWSSS) at Arizona State University and Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future. The Friends Group has tried to create an informal space for Member States to discuss governance related issues. The secretariat bears the sole responsibility for the content.

Secretariat support for the Friends is provided by the Rob and Melani Walton Sustainability Solutions Service (RMWSSS) at Arizona State University and Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future.

Published by New World Frontiers

New World Frontiers was established in July 2015 when it launched its first Kindle book – *The Plain Language Guide to Rio+20* by Felix Dodds, Jorge Laguna Celis and Ambassador Liz Thompson. It has since published six volumes of papers by the Friends of Governance for Sustainable Development since 2015 as well as its first comic Santa's Green Christmas: Father Christmas Battles Climate Change in 2017.

New World Frontiers is a publishing house that focuses on sustainable development around the intergovernmental process. It publishes papers and books that advance the global understanding of how sustainable development can bring about change,

New World Frontiers is a collection of people who have engaged in the intergovernmental process at the United Nations, its related Agencies and Programmes and its legally binding Conventions.

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Published September 2023.

The front and back cover were designed by John Charles of Sunday Lunch Comics. https://www.sundaylunchcomics.com/

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Foreword

Oche Agbo, Meriem El Hilali, Sungjun Kim, Yvonne Mewengkang Andreea Mocanu, Ulrich Nicklas, David Banisar, Felix Dodds, Irena Zubcevic and Tanner Glenn

The Friends of Governance for Sustainable Development (the Friends Group) was originally set up in 2010 to help Member States prepare for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

The Friends Group was re-established in 2014 during the Open Working Group for the Post-2015 Agenda. The Friends Group is coordinated by the governments of Germany, Morocco, Indonesia, Nigeria, Romania, and the Republic of Korea, with secretariat support being provided by the Rob and Melani Walton Sustainability Solutions Service (RMWSSS) at Arizona State University and Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future. The Friends Group has tried to create an informal space for Member States to discuss governance-related issues.

The Friends Group has continued to host workshops on governance related issues on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement. The organization recognises that the 2030 Agenda represents one of the most important sets of Global Goals that the international community has committed to. It is an unprecedented effort that embodies universal aspirations for achieving a more just, equitable, peaceful and sustainable future. It is an excellent example of successful multilateralism, supported by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda as a major action plan to help deliver the Paris Climate Agreement.

This ambitious and unique exercise represents a paradigm shift in policymaking for sustainable development. It gives a roadmap by which the UN, governments and stakeholders can work together to address the most pressing global challenges. In this context, the rule of law, as well as effective, robust, participatory and accountable institutions are of the utmost importance to achieve the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and their 169 targets.

This is the seventh volume produced by the Friends Group – *Interlinking Major Sustainable Development Events to Embrace Policy Coherence and Implementation of the 2030 Agenda.*

The chapters in this book are based on some of the presentations made at the workshop titled "Building Momentum for a Successful Interlinked Set of UN Conferences and Events in 2023."

The workshop was organized in partnership with UN-DESA Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development and focused on providing open space for member states to discuss issues that they would be addressing later this or the next year while also having the chance to hear what experts think are useful for their consideration.

We expect the present publication to be a useful input for the ongoing discussions about the institutional architecture for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In 2023, the Friends Group will continue providing space for discussions of the institutional architecture for the 2030 Agenda's implementation, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk

Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement – as well as their follow-up and review.

We know that sustainable development will only become a reality if we have the enabling environment for it to happen. Good governance is pivotal for implementing, reviewing and improving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We hope that this publication contributes to addressing the challenges we will be facing over the coming years leading up to 2030.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

A4SD	Action for Sustainable Development
AAAA	Addis Ababa Action Agenda
ACC	Administrative Committee on Coordination
ACF	Advocacy Coalitions Framework
ACCF	the Africa Climate Change Fund
AHEG	ad-hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter
AfDB	African Development Bank
ADC	Africa Data Consensus
AI	Artificial Intelligence
APF	Asia Pacific Forum
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
ATPS	Africa Technology Policy Studies Network
AU	African Union
AWS	Alliance for Water Stewardship
BOGA	Beyond Oil and Gas Coalition
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBDR	Common but Differentiated Responsibilities
CBHR	Corporate Benchmarking on Human Rights
CEB	Chief Executives Board
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEPA	Committee of Experts on Public Administration
CGD	Citizen-Generated Data
CIVICUS	World Alliance for Citizen Participation
CoD	Community of Democracies
CHB	Complementary Housing Benefit
CJN	Climate Justice Now
CLEW	Climate Land Energy and Water
CO2	Carbon Dioxide
COP	Conference of the Parties
CR	Country review
CSA	Country self-assessment
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DCF	Development Cooperation Forum
DDP	District Development Plan
DEFRA	Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (UK)
ECESA	Executive Committee for Economic and Social Affairs
EEAC	Environmental and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
EMG	Environmental Management Group
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FfD	Financing for Development

FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
GAVI	Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization
GBP	Green Bond Principles
GCMM	global carbon market mechanism
GEAPP	Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet
GFANZ	Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero
GHG	Green House Gass
GN-NCSD	Global Network of National Councils for Sustainable Development and Similar Bodies
GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Cooperation
GPEI	Global Polio Eradication Initiative
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
GSA	German Sustainability Award
GSDR	Global Sustainable Development Report
GWP	Global Water Partnership
HLPF	High Level Political Forum
HPC	Hybrid Parliamentary Committees
IACSD	Interagency Committee on Sustainable Development
IAEA	International Atomic for Energy Agency
IATF	Inter-Agency Task Force
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
ICSC	International Civil Society Centre
IDEA	Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IAEG-SDG	Inter-agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators
IEP	Institute of Economics and Peace
IFI	International Financial Institutions
IFLA	International Federation of Library Associations
IFSD	Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development
IGES	Institute for Global Environmental Strategies
IIED	Institute for International Environment and Development
IMF	International Money Fund
INC	intergovernmental negotiating committee
INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contributions
IOT	input-output tables
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
JPol	Johannesburg Plan of Implementation
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LDC	Least Developed Country
MDB	Multi-Lateral Development Banks
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MDG-EIAG	Millennium Development Goals Expert Inter-Agency Group
MGoS	Major Groups and other Stakeholders
MID	Maurice Ile Durable (Mauritius)
MOI	Means of Implementation

MSP	Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NHRI	National Human Rights Institutions
NCSD	National Councils for Sustainable Development
NCSD	National Commission on Sustainable Development
NDCs	National Determined Contributions
NFFT	National Council for Sustainable Development (Hungary)
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NPEAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NPoAs	National Plans of Action
NSDS	National Sustainable Development Strategies
NSO	National Statistical Offices
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OI	Open Institute Kenya
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
OWG	Open Working Group
PA21	Philippine Agenda 21
PDP	Philippine Development Plan
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
PrepCom	Preparatory Committee
PRI	United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment
PPP	Public Private Partnerships
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
REEP	Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership
RNE	German Council for Sustainable Development
RTI	Right to Information
SAICM	Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management
SAIIA	The South African Institute of International Affairs:
SAP	Strategy and Action Plan
SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation
SBSTA	Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEA	Social Emergency Aid
SEADE	São Paulo State Statistical Data System Foundation
SBP	Social Bond Principles
SDS	Sustainable Development Strategy
SDplanNet	Sustainable Development Planning Network
SDTF	Sustainable Development Transition Forum
SEB	Skandinaviska Enskila Banken
SF	Stakeholder Forum
SHaSA	Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics
SIDS	Small Island Developing States

SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Resource-Based, With Time Based Deliverables
SSI	Sustainable Stock Exchanges
TAI	The Access Initiative
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
URU-Fogar	United Regions Organization
UN	United Nations
UNCAS	United Nations Convention Against Corruption
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UN ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDPI	United Nations Department of Public Information
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO-IPDC	UNESCO International Programme for Development Communication
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP-FI	United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UKSSD	UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development
USP	University of São Paulo
VI	Voluntary Initiative
VLR	Voluntary Local Review
VNR	National Reviews
WB	World Bank
WBA	World Benchmarking Alliance
WHO	World Health Organization
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTO	World Trade Organization

Biographies

Paula Caballero is Regional Managing Director for Latin America at The Nature Conservancy, a leading NGO that works across more than 70 countries and territories, where she advances systems change approaches to tackle wicked sustainable development challenges. She has a long history in the field of development, including service as Senior Director at the World Bank where she launched the Environment and Natural Resources Global Practice, and as Global Director for Climate at the World Resources Institute. As Director for Economic, Social and Environmental Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2010-2014), she was the lead proponent of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which she conceptualized, positioned and negotiated. She also led the agreement to create a technical, science-based group to develop the SDGs which broke with UN tradition and enabled negotiations on a framework with concrete, implementable targets. For this work she was awarded the German Sustainability Award in 2019 and a Zayed International Prize for the Environment in 2014.

Jamie Cummings is part of a Belmont Forum-funded grant, Re-Energize Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience for Sustainable Development. She was the climate change focal point for the recent UNFCCC Bonn Climate Conference for the Sendai Stakeholder Engagement Mechanism and will continue this role at COP28 in Dubai. Jamie attended COP27 where she moderated a panel with the International Chamber of Commerce and spoke at a side event on Localised Solutions to Reduce Climate Induced Loss & Damage for the Most Vulnerable. She has previously interned with the U.S. Climate Action Network which aligns grassroots climate NGOs from across the United States. Jamie is an advocate for youth participation in the global climate governance sphere and works actively with the YOUNGO Communications Team to highlight young voices in the UNFCCC space.

Chris Dekki is the Director of Global Advocacy and Engagement at the SLOCAT Partnership on Sustainable, Low Carbon Transport. Chris leads the policy advocacy and outreach dimension of SLOCAT, engaging with a wide multi-stakeholder base and shaping intergovernmental spaces. He is the co-Focal Point for transport in the UNFCCC and works to engage key transport stakeholders in the climate process. Beyond SLOCAT, Chris has many years of policy experience, working for the UN system at the global (UNDESA, UN Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth), regional (UNESCAP) and local levels (Sri Lanka), as well as in civil society platforms and youth-led organisations. Chris is also a part-time professor of political science and law at St. Joseph's University and the City University of New York - Baruch College in New York City. Finally, Chris enjoys cooking, electronic dance music, history and culture, with a particular love for his region of origin, the Levant.

Dr. Khaled El Taweel has more than twenty years of professional experience in Development and International Law at the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Currently, he serves as Programme Coordinator at the United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub and as Regional Coordinator at the Office of the Director-General of FAO. Khaled served as Chair of the FAO Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP) from 2016-2018 and Chair of the Committee on Food Security (CFS) Working Group on Nutrition 2015-2018. He co-led the implementation of the CFS evaluation. He was elected vice president of the Group of G77 and China in Rome in 2017 and the UNIDROIT General Assembly

in 2016. He holds a PhD in International Law from the University of Pretoria, South Africa, and a Master of International Business Administration from ESLSCA Business school in Paris. He authored several academic books and articles and is a visiting lecturer of International Law.

Dani Gaillard-Picher has 18 years of experience in water, sanitation and development policy and collective action. She is currently Senior Advisor and Team Lead for International Processes and Policy at the Stockholm International Water Institute. She was previously employed as Senior Specialist for Global Processes at the Global Water Partnership and Director of Policy and Programmes at the World Water Council, where she worked extensively on conceptualizing and supporting multi-stakeholder change processes through the triennial World Water Forums. She has served on numerous advisory boards and held the Vice Chairmanship for the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG). Both American and French, she holds undergraduate degrees from the Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore, USA) and a Masters in Global Development Management from the Open University (UK). She is also a mother, writer and musician.

Arjan van Houwelingen is the chief advisor on strategic policy and public affairs for the World Federation for Animals (WFA). The WFA is a large global alliance of animal welfare organizations aiming to establish the relevance and importance of animals and their welfare for achieving sustainable development and addressing the drivers of environmental challenges at the United Nations and in relevant global policy processes. Previously, Arjan worked for the United Nations including four years with UNDP, where he supported the creation of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and the conceptualization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Arjan also spend eight years with the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) where he led negotiations with the Israeli authorities on humanitarian aid security and headed up the socio-economic affairs and research departments. Prior to joining the United Nations, Arjan worked primarily in Central and Eastern Europe where he co-founded the Policy and Education Center for Assistance to Transition (PECAT) and consulted with organizations such as the World Bank, EU, USAID and the OECD.

Patti Londoño graduated from the University of Geneva and the Graduate Institute of International Studies, completed her Doctorate at UNED University in Madrid, Spain and worked at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in Academia for many years. During 2011-12 when the SDGs were crafted was Vice Minister for Multilateral Affairs in the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Dr. Flavia Rocha Loures is a Brazilian environmental attorney and governance specialist, and a published poet. With over 20 years of professional and academic experience, she is the global water policy advisor at The Nature Conservancy. In this position, she supports TNC's engagement with multilateral environmental agreements, global processes, and key partners, while advising regional and national teams on water policy. She has a J.D. from Brazil, an LL.M in environmental law, Summa Cum Laude (US), from Vermont Law School, and a PhD in international water law from Xiamen University (China). She is a member of the IUCN World Commissions on protected areas and on environmental law, respectively, and of the Commission on Environmental Law of the Brazilian Bar Association (Sao Paulo). She is also the author of various specialized publications and has lectured at numerous events, both in Brazil and abroad.

Philip Lymbery is Global Chief Executive of Compassion in World Farming International, the leading farm animal welfare environmental organisation with offices in 12 countries on 4 continents, responsible for achieving major bans on some of the cruellest farming practices in Europe/UK. He is also Visiting Professor at the University of Winchester, President of Eurogroup for Animals, the Brussels-based umbrella body of 80 leading animal welfare societies in Europe. In 2021, Philip had an ambassadorial role with the United Nations as a 'Champion' for the UN Food Systems Summit and was appointed co-lead of the Summit's Sustainable Livestock Solutions Cluster. Philip is a dedicated animal advocate, naturalist, photographer and award-winning author. His critically acclaimed books, Farmageddon: The true cost of cheap meat, and Dead Zone: Where the wild things were, were the first mainstream books to show factory farming as a major driver of wildlife declines and at the heart of what needs to change to stave off the climate, nature and pandemic emergencies now facing humanity. His third book, Sixty Harvests Left: How to reach a nature-friendly future was published by Bloomsbury in August 2022.

Daniel Perell joined the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office as a Representative in 2011. His areas of work include climate change and the environment, disaster risk reduction, global citizenship and global governance. He currently serves as an NGO Major Group focal point for the Disaster Risk Reduction Stakeholder Engagement Mechanism and as Co-Chair of the Coalition for the UN We Need. He is formerly a Global Organizing Partner of the NGO Major Group and Chair of the NGO Committee for Social Development. In 2010, Mr. Perell received a JD from the University of Virginia School of Law and an MA in Law and Diplomacy from the Fletcher School at Tufts University. Mr. Perell has worked with the International Service for Human Rights in Geneva, the United Nations in Aceh, Indonesia, and other organizations in the Marshall Islands and Chile.

Liz Thompson is Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Barbados with responsibility for Climate Change, Small Island Developing States, and Law of the Sea. She was formerly Barbados' Ambassador to the United Nations. Prior to that, she served Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, with specific responsibility as one of two Executive Coordinators of the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development. She was an elected Member of Parliament and Minister of Government from 1994 to 2008. At various times, she held the portfolios of Energy and Environment, Housing and Lands, Physical Development and Planning, and Health. Ms. Thompson led Minority business in the Barbados Senate from 2008 to 2010 and since 2021, she has also been Deputy President of the Senate. In 2008, she was recognised with the UN's Champion of the Earth Award. She is certified in negotiations, alternative dispute resolution and arbitration, is an attorney at law from the University of the West Indies (LLB), and holds two Masters degrees, a general MBA with distinction from the University of Liverpool and an LLM from the Robert Gordon University.

Irena Zubcevic has over 20 years of experience in sustainable development, international relations and development, diplomacy, policy, advocacy, peacebuilding and project management at national and international level. Prior to starting work at the Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future, she worked at the United Nations Secretariat for 15 years in the area of sustainable development holding positions of heads of branches for policy review and small island developing states, ocean and climate. She led a team of professionals working on UN processes related to sustainable development including the 2030 Agenda. She worked to support implementation of the 2030

Agenda around the world. She has broken new ground in many areas of sustainable development including sustainable ocean management, notably blue economy, sustainable transport, sustainable consumption and production patterns, including circular and nature-positive economy. Before that, she worked in the Croatian foreign service, where she is also now a senior advisor. She has been included in Who's Who in the World, in America and in Professional Women and received a number of awards including the 2019 Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award for the excellence in the field of sustainable development. She authored a number of papers.

Chapter 1

Integrating the Sendai Framework into UN Strategies for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience: Addressing Vulnerability and Promoting Interlinkages

Jamie Cummings, Re-Energize Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience for Sustainable Development

Abstract

This chapter explores the integration of the Sendai Framework into the strategies of the United Nations (UN) for disaster risk reduction and resilience. Focusing on the critical issue of vulnerability, the chapter discusses the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework and its implications for the UN's disaster risk initiatives. It examines the outcomes of COP 27, emphasizing the establishment of a loss and damage fund, the institutional arrangement of the Santiago network, and the action plan for early warnings. The chapter further highlights the importance of defining vulnerability and presents the concept as a pathway for interlinkages within the UN system. It explores the development of a vulnerability index to characterize risk levels and promote equitable distribution of climate finance. Finally, the chapter emphasizes the need for increased collaboration across UN conferences to foster momentum and prevent a sectoral approach to addressing climate-related challenges.

Keywords: Sendai Framework, disaster risk reduction, vulnerability, UN strategies, interlinkages, loss and damage fund, Santiago network, early warnings, climate finance, vulnerability index, climate justice, UN cohesion.

The Sendai Framework and the Midterm Review

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 is a global agreement adopted by UN member states in 2015. It outlines a comprehensive approach to disaster risk reduction, aiming to reduce the impact of disasters on individuals, communities, and nations. The framework recognizes that disasters are not solely natural events but also the result of socio-economic and environmental factors. It emphasizes the need for risk reduction strategies that integrate scientific, technical, and traditional knowledge to enhance resilience.

The Sendai Midterm Review holds significant importance as it marks the halfway point of the Sendai Framework's implementation. This review provides an opportunity to assess progress, identify gaps and challenges, and redefine priorities for the remaining period until 2030. It offers a chance to reflect on the achievements thus far and set the stage for accelerated action in disaster risk reduction.

Contextualizing disaster risk reduction within the global climate context is essential due to the interconnection between climate change and disasters. Climate change exacerbates the frequency

and intensity of various hazards, such as hurricanes, floods, droughts, and heatwaves, leading to increased vulnerabilities and risks. The impacts of climate change, coupled with socio-economic factors, disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, including those in low-income countries, small island developing states, and marginalized communities.

Recognizing this interrelationship, the Sendai Framework emphasizes the importance of integrating disaster risk reduction efforts with climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. It underscores the need to address both the causes and consequences of disasters, fostering resilience and sustainable development in the face of a changing climate. By considering disaster risk reduction within the global climate context, stakeholders can enhance their preparedness, early warning systems, and attention to vulnerable populations, thereby reducing the impacts of climate-related disasters.

Outcomes of COP27 and their Implications for DRR

The intertwining of disaster resilience with climate change is undeniable, as climate change engenders disasters necessitating preparedness, early warning systems, and dedicated attention to vulnerable populations.

This aspect assumes particular significance following COP27 and in anticipation of COP 28, the SDG Summit, Our Common Agenda, and other UN conferences. To discern how DRR has transcended its official status within the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), let us delve into some of the outcomes of COP 27.

While expectations for more ambitious language, especially pertaining to emission reductions, were widespread, there are several positive takeaways concerning disaster risk reduction from COP27 that warrant discussion. The first and foremost significant outcome was the establishment of a Loss and Damage Fund in Sharm El-Sheikh. Loss and damage is directly related to vulnerability, with vulnerable populations, who usually contribute the least to its causal factors, being the ones currently grappling with the most acute loss and damage. Vulnerability finds expression in various UN processes. Defining vulnerability proves challenging, yet it offers an ideal avenue for establishing interconnections through a common UN index, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

The second related outcome pertains to the institutional and operational arrangement of the Santiago network. This arrangement facilitates the provision of technical assistance to vulnerable countries in order to prevent, minimize, and address losses and damages. The prevention aspect directly aligns with risk reduction, thus highlighting the synergies prevalent within the UN climate domain.

The final outcome to emphasize is the formulation of a plan to actualize the "Early Warnings for All" initiative at COP 27. This initiative endeavors to ensure that every individual is safeguarded by early warning systems by the year 2027. Naturally, countries must honor this commitment before the impacts become palpable. Nevertheless, this represents another remarkable outcome,

signifying collaboration between the UN General Assembly, UNFCCC stakeholders, and UNDR.

Contextualizing Vulnerability and its Relevance to DRR and Climate Change

Returning to the hard-won outcome of loss and damage discussed earlier, I wish to underscore vulnerability once again as an essential aspect of the fund as we approach COP 28 and gaze into the future. Vulnerability may appear as an elusive concept, which is where the rejuvenated project conducted by the ReEngergize Disaster Risk Reduction and Resiliency (DR3) project assumes significance, offering an opportunity for enhanced collaboration across the UN.

UNDR has defined vulnerability as the condition determined by physical, social, economic, and environmental factors or processes that augment the susceptibility of individuals, communities, assets, or systems to the impacts of hazards. While this definition may appear prolix, grappling with the intricacies of vulnerability proves to be a worthwhile endeavor. The DR3 team are currently working on developing a vulnerability index for various UN stakeholders, encompassing a set of indicators to ascertain their level of risk. Such an index could facilitate the equitable distribution of climate finance, both from the loss and damage mechanism and throughout the broader UN System, to those in need.

Although existing vulnerability index models are available, including one for small island developing states, they could be bolstered and expanded to incorporate additional indicators, such as resilience. Currently, there is only one index for a specific group, namely the UNICEF Children's Climate Risk Index.

Other vulnerable groups, such as women, youth, and people with disabilities, do not always fit within these indices. The DR3 team is employing quantitative data, such as flood exposure and heatwave risk, to incorporate within this index. However, researchers have also discovered that qualitative data assumes a critical role, perhaps even surpassing numerical data points, in identifying those most at risk and working towards achieving climate justice. As part of our ongoing research, we aim to develop a multidimensional index that amalgamates various vulnerable groups across countries and regions, subsequently culminating in a globally accepted index within the UN—a prime exemplification of interlinkages.

One way to promote unity within the UN System is through the development of a Common Vulnerability Index. This index would provide a standardized framework for assessing vulnerability across various groups, regions, and sectors. By incorporating indicators that capture both quantitative and qualitative data, such an index can offer a comprehensive understanding of vulnerability and guide targeted interventions and resource allocation.

A Common Vulnerability Index would facilitate collaboration among UN stakeholders by creating a shared language and framework for addressing vulnerability. It would enable the equitable distribution of climate finance and resources, ensuring that those most in need receive the support required to enhance their resilience and reduce their vulnerability to climate-related hazards.

Disaster risk reduction within the context of the Sendai Framework presents a significant opportunity for enhanced collaboration. As we look ahead to COP28 and beyond, the establishment of a common vulnerability index can foster unity within the UN System, providing a more robust framework for determining the allocation of financial resources.

How the Midterm Review Can Inform the Global Stocktake

Another opportunity for enhanced collaboration is through comparing the two framework review processes within UNDR and the UNFCCC through the Sendai Midterm Review and the Global Stocktake. The two are crucial processes within the international framework of addressing climate change and disaster risk reduction. The Sendai Midterm Review assesses the progress made in implementing the Sendai Framework, a comprehensive global strategy for disaster risk reduction, while the Global Stocktake evaluates the collective efforts of countries in meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change.

The MTR and GST processes offer a unique opportunity to forge connections and synergies between disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Both the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement recognize the interlinkages between climate change and disaster risk, highlighting the need for coordinated action and shared responsibilities.

By aligning the outcomes and findings of the Sendai Midterm Review with the Global Stocktake, policymakers and stakeholders can gain a comprehensive understanding of the progress made in addressing the interconnected challenges of climate change and disaster risk. This alignment enables a more integrated and coherent approach to resilience-building and risk reduction, as well as identifying gaps and areas for improvement.

Moreover, the Sendai Midterm Review can provide valuable insights and data on the impacts of climate-related disasters, their social and economic consequences, and the effectiveness of measures implemented to reduce risk. These insights can inform the Global Stocktake process, contributing to a more accurate assessment of climate change impacts, adaptation efforts, and the overall ambition of countries in meeting their climate commitments.

Furthermore, connecting the Sendai Midterm Review with the Global Stocktake can foster cross-cutting collaboration among different stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, civil society, and the scientific community. This collaboration can facilitate the exchange of knowledge, expertise, and best practices in addressing climate-related disasters and building resilience at local, national, and global levels.

In conclusion, linking the Sendai Midterm Review with the Global Stocktake strengthens the integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts. This alignment allows for a comprehensive assessment of progress, a more effective response to the interconnected challenges of climate change and disaster risk, and enhanced collaboration among

diverse stakeholders. By harnessing the synergies between these processes, we can work towards a more resilient and sustainable future.

Interlinkages and Collaboration within the UN System

Looking ahead to COP28 and beyond, finding interlinkages and fostering collaboration within the UN System, particularly in the domains of disaster risk reduction and climate change, is of utmost importance for addressing the complex and interconnected challenges we face. These challenges, such as climate-related disasters, loss and damage, and vulnerability, cut across multiple sectors and require holistic and coordinated approaches.

By recognizing and capitalizing on the interlinkages between disaster risk reduction and climate change, the UN System can achieve greater synergy and efficiency in its efforts. The two fields are intrinsically linked, as climate change intensifies the frequency and severity of disasters, while disaster risk reduction measures contribute to climate change adaptation and resilience-building.

In addition to the aforementioned Common Vulnerability Index, diverse panel events play a vital role in inspiring interlinkages and moving beyond a sectoral approach. These events bring together stakeholders from different backgrounds, including youth, civil society, academics, and government officials, fostering dialogue and knowledge exchange. By incorporating diverse perspectives and expertise, these events can uncover innovative solutions, promote cross-sectoral collaboration, and encourage holistic approaches to addressing climate change and disaster risk.

Knowledge sharing helps break down silos and challenge the notion that climate change and disaster risk reduction are isolated issues. This book serves as an example of the value of diverse perspectives in the space. They highlight the interconnected nature of these challenges and underscore the need for collaborative and integrated approaches. By showcasing successful initiatives and best practices from different sectors, these events can inspire and motivate stakeholders to work together towards shared goals.

In conclusion, finding interlinkages and promoting collaboration within the UN System, particularly in the realms of disaster risk reduction and climate change, is crucial for effective and sustainable responses to global challenges. A Common Vulnerability Index can foster unity by providing a standardized framework for assessing vulnerability and guiding interventions. Meanwhile, diverse panel events can inspire interlinkages and move beyond a sectoral approach, bringing together diverse stakeholders to share knowledge and promote holistic solutions. By embracing these approaches, the UN System can enhance its collective efforts and pave the way for a more resilient and sustainable future.

Chapter 2

Strengthening Interlinkages at the United Nations

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One of the outcomes of the UN 2023 Water Conference in March of 2023 was a recognition of the need to better link international conferences and events together and to create ongoing momentum for change that works coherently across different areas.

During the Friends of Governance for Sustainable Development workshop two months earlier, we were already discussing how to do that. I was specifically asked to speak about potential linkages between the UN 2023 Water Conference and UNFCCC COP 28.

- How do we create those linkages?
- What do we articulate linkages around?
- Who needs to be involved?

In addressing the "how" question, it's important to understand that outcomes from one conference or event can rarely feed directly into other processes or events because the form of the outcomes and inputs is unique and specific to each meeting, especially in the case of the UN 2023 Water Conference with its Interactive Dialogues and Water Action Agenda. The quality or applicability of outcomes is actually quite variable within an event or process, as well. While water can generically be inscribed on the agenda of any meeting, the specific outcomes and progress made on one occasion are, consequently, not fit for purpose to other processes—unless they are designed that way.

Instead, like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we have to envisage the overall systemic change that we're aiming for, in this case in the area of water and climate, and then design a pathway to get there by breaking it down into smaller stepwise pieces.

The international agenda is such that we have multiple opportunities to come together, take stock, realign and pursue action as a long-term change process. That's the way that we really need to conceptualize this. The pathway from UN 2023 to COP 28 has what could be a number of almost monthly stepping-stone events that we can use to this end.

In January, I suggested that the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies intercessional meetings in Bonn (SB58) in June would be an ideal place for fostering cooperation with parties and stakeholders around specific water action for climate that had been committed to at the UN 2023 Water Conference. Indeed, the members of the Water for Climate collective agreed to co-convene a side event at SB58 for this purpose. The event was designed as a listening exercise, encouraging parties to express their needs for developing and implementing water-wise climate policy. On this basis, the Water for Climate partners will then be able to cooperatively design responses to

overcome obstacles to progress in this domain so that we can go further and faster on our climate goals. Good solutions always start with good listening.

Likewise, the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) will be reviewing SDG 6 on water and sanitation in July. It will also be reviewing SDGs on affordable and clean energy on industry, innovation, and infrastructure on sustainable cities and communities and partnerships. Could we envision discussions between and across all of these SDGs at the HLPF? That would potentially generate mutual benefits for their simultaneous achievement, while taking into account climate change risks which make everything more difficult. Taking a closer look at the countries which have registered Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), which is the mechanism for reporting on progress on the SDGs at the country level, some broader systemic issues emerge that need to be addressed such as monitoring, finance and geographic disparities. These issues could actually serve to unite actors from each of these communities to find common solutions together.

However, the Zero Draft of the HLPF Political Statement was a great disappointment because it barely acknowledged that nearly 11,000 people in all their diversity assembled at the UN in March for the first time in 46 years to address how to overcome water challenges together. It didn't take into account over 800 voluntary multi-stakeholder commitments registered in the Water Action Agenda, a quarter of which attempt to create linkages to other global targets and half of which consider climate change.

Despite what some may say, the Water Action Agenda (WAA) is a hugely valuable source of information because it is the only place where you can see a mosaic view of what people are doing or intend to do on water around the world in the coming years. As such, it can further enable more coordinated action through the establishment of various multi-stakeholder constituencies at different levels. The real challenge now is to breathe life into it so that the actions may carry us closer towards the Future We Want.

It is important to understand that the responsibility for deliver on these pledges does not belong to the mechanism itself, which is just a tool. Rather, the commitments need to be regarded as lying within the agency of the submitters. We are so used to needing to manage everything, and that comforts us in the perception of our own utility. It's like we don't believe anything can happen if we aren't watching it. That simply isn't true. People survive without mandates from the UN every day. The relinquishment of control over that agenda is uncomfortable for some, as we see a need to evolve towards more polycentric governance systems where people are empowered to act at multiple levels simultaneously and in complementary fashion.

Consequently, I maintain that it is much more important for the WAA to provide a set of coordination mechanisms, rather than monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, to enable all actors involved to organize themselves, meet, and converge thinking over the long-term towards their common goals. We have to trust that will happen if people are given the tools to do so, because they have already identified that it is in their best interest.

This support can then be provided by different platforms at different times. The World Water Week in Stockholm, for example, provides an annual opportunity to bring together those communities that have committed to advancing the common agendas collaboratively through the

end of the International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development. It can be an opportunity to take stock of progress and coordinate further action together in global arenas, especially those outside of water, and move together towards a common horizon.

There are also other opportunities to seize, such as the Sendai Framework Midterm Review in May, the Climate Ambition Summit and New York Climate Week in September, World Bank annual meetings in October, the societal dialogues of the Global Commission on the Economics of Water, the Cairo Water Week and Meetings of Finance Ministers convened by Sanitation and Water for All. We should also remember regional opportunities, which are increasingly important, since they can speak to more context-specific realities on the ground.

This leads us to the next question: what is it that we really want to achieve with COP 28 and how do we design that pathway in smaller, more manageable steps using a language that speaks to climate specialists and can be integrated into existing UNFCCC mechanisms? The concept note that framed the discussion for the interactive dialogue on climate resilience and the environment at the UN 2023 Water Conference referred essentially to the SDG 6 Acceleration Framework, which talks about solutions related to finance data and information capacity, development, innovation and governance. It also, unsurprisingly, highlighted improving risk management for water-related hazards and threats, such as flooding, drought, and pollution, and limiting the resulting biodiversity loss through the promotion of nature-based solutions.

The concept note also included other more specific actions related to, for example, the Secretary General's Early Warning Systems for All initiative or the creation of a global water information system or a science-based mechanism like the IPCC but specifically for water. It also discussed the enhancement of policy to reduce poverty and support regulatory frameworks to spark innovation and create green jobs and a skilled workforce and the adoption of global standards for ecosystem accounting.

The note, however, falls into the trap of water experts speaking to water experts and fails to use language that resonates with climate experts. It doesn't provide clear connections with UNFCCC mechanisms such as Nationally Determined Contributions, the Global Stocktake, Loss and Damage, Long-Term Strategies, the Global Goal on Adaptation, the Marrakech Partnership or the Sharm el Sheikh Adaptation Agenda, where water action that will increase climate resilience can actually be integrated and prioritized. So, more efforts are needed to refine the "what" in a way that is truly transformational and can be integrated into COP processes.

We need to recognize issues of accountability of governments to enforce regulations, especially for polluters. We need to address urban planning and local and regional authorities in the implementation of national strategies, where adaptation, capacity, resilience, and vulnerability look very different from one place to another. We need to highlight poor disbursement of funding which is hindering progress. We need to acknowledge that all countries do not have equivalent access to resources to make things happen. We need to prioritize the empowerment of women, youth and populations who are more vulnerable to climate change and disasters and who are more severely disadvantaged.

So, onto the "who." Well, the simple answer to that is, obviously, all of us have a shared responsibility to act. This goes far beyond the reach of the UN System alone. This ongoing collective action exercise, to be driven by all of us, will need to create simplicity within complexity by organizing action into smaller, more specific multi-stakeholder constituencies, each contributing to broader systemic change. And ultimately people—politicians and organizations—will need to actually deliver on what they say they will do.

As we have all heard, achieving SDG 6 will require quadrupling our impact. We can do more and we need to do better when we tackle the challenges together. That means reaching out to other communities, such as those of health, food, energy, oceans, climate, and finance, for example. Those communities need water to be successful, and they need the water community to help them become better stewards for it. We are only going to obtain the critical mass for exponential growth in impact if we get non-water people as excited about water as water people are. When we will finally succeed at bridging silos to foster this cross-sectoral cooperation through a systems-thinking approach, we will then all benefit from more robust decisions, policies, and investments borne of that cooperation.

The Water Action Agenda will also have to be gender inclusive. A majority of the planet's population is female, yet women remain largely marginalized, especially from higher level (water-related) decision-making and planning processes. According to UN Water, involving women can increase the effectiveness of water projects between six and seven times. Also, gender inclusive peace processes have been found to last longer and be more resilient.

Progress will also require solid leadership, not only by a UN Envoy for Water and Sanitation but also from the UN 2023 Water Conference organizers and country co-chairs of the Interactive Dialogue process; both will be able to drive these conversations further in the political sphere. During the HLPF in July, we look forward to understanding more about how the UN intends to continue to drive change through the end of the Decade for Action and through 2030.

But most of all, we all need to drive the momentum forward by becoming leaders for change within our own spheres of influence and inspiring others to act. A poly-centric governance system is emerging where action is no longer top-down nor bottom-up, but both need to co-exist and advance together. As we are reminded by this year's World Water Day campaign, we can all be the change we wish to see in the world.

As a certain young Swedish climate activist reminded us: the house is on fire. We are all the stewards for the water that can put out that fire if we commit now together to ambitious and ongoing collective action.

Chapter 3

Building Upon the UN Water Conference

Dr. Flavia Rocha Loures, Senior Policy Advisor for Freshwater at the Nature Conservancy

The UN Water Conference kickstarted a promising year by finally elevating water to the top of global legal processes, the political agenda on sustainability, and the mandate of international institutions. It also gave many of us hope that the series of events expected to keep the momentum internationally will also contribute to changes at the national level and better cooperation across political and sectoral boundaries.

In assessing the role of the Water Conference, we must keep in mind that it was never meant to be a political event – one that would lead to a new binding agreement or even a negotiated outcome with *soft law* character. The Conference was planned as an action-oriented milestone, made concrete by the Water Action Agenda, and aimed at mobilizing actors, resources, and commitments as well as mainstreaming water as a solution for several development challenges, such as biodiversity, climate, food security and energy security.

The Water Action Agenda has been criticized for not being ambitious enough, not being sufficiently government-led and not containing truly ground-breaking initiatives. Yet, the water community can now benefit from a platform to guide action and make actors accountable, even if it is true that we need more government commitments. We need existing commitments to identify the financing sources that will secure timely and effective implementation. We also need well-defined short-, medium- and long-term targets and indicators and clear monitoring and evaluation frameworks for each commitment.

In this sense, the Water Action Agenda must be seen as a starting point, not the endgame. It is also essential that the international community monitors and pushes for progress and provides the required support to countries, subnational governments, and basin organizations for follow-through.

The vision set out by the UN Water Conference extends into the long-term, building upon key international conferences in 2023 and beyond as stepping-stones to ensure water and freshwater ecosystems receive the attention they deserve. By necessity, the path towards transformational change can only be built if we secure good governance and management of water resources as well as the conservation and restoration of freshwater ecosystems. After all, water cuts across the entire 2030 Agenda, the Global Biodiversity Framework, and the Paris Agreement – a reality not yet sufficiently appreciated by actors outside the water community.

Going forward, messaging around water issues needs to be concrete and all-encompassing, recognizing water as a common thread that runs through all SDGs and underpinning all proposed solutions for the triple crisis of biodiversity, climate and pollution. This will provide policy coherence and help create transformative change.

We need to focus on integrating the objectives of *water for nature* and *nature for water* – a dimension of integration still not sufficiently prioritized yet one that is of fundamental importance. To be sure, freshwater biodiversity is the most threatened biome and is undergoing the fastest rates of decline.

As the globally agreed framework for sustainable development, does the 2030 Agenda promote integration between the availability of water for nature and water for people? Under SDG-6, the focus seems to be on water and related ecosystem services, i.e., healthy ecosystems and water availability for socioeconomic development. Under SDG-15, inland water ecosystems appear to be captured in their own right, with the implicit recognition that water availability – in the right quantity, at the right timing and of adequate quality – is necessary to sustain their health. Yet, freshwaters have received much less attention than forests or land in the implementation of SDG-15. In SDG-13 on climate, water is never mentioned, even though resilience is mostly about water. Finally, SDG-14 does not capture inland water fisheries or the source-to-sea continuum.

The siloed approach of Agenda 2030 ignores a larger virtuous cycle: water availability sustains nature, which, in turn, is needed to secure water availability and related ecosystem services for people. For example, free-flowing rivers support healthier ecosystems, including migratory fisheries on which livelihoods depend, and ensure the delivery of sediments and nutrients necessary to sustain ecosystems downstream, including mangroves, which protect against sea-level rise. Wetlands are biodiversity-rich habitats and also act as buffers against floods and replenish aquifers where water is stored without being lost to evaporation. Rivers connected to their floodplains support species abundance, underwater and on land, and better enable sediments to settle, resulting in cleaner water for human and environmental needs and fertile soils for agricultural activities. Forested watersheds support terrestrial and aquatic species and protect springs and headwaters that secure sustainable water supplies for communities and human activities downstream.

In the recent CBD Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), inland waters are mentioned explicitly in the context of biodiversity restoration and protection. They are mainstreamed across other targets, such as those on pollution, fisheries and aquaculture, urban planning, and ecosystem services and are implicit to themes such as spatial planning, species extinction, invasive alien species, and climate change. Some progress has been achieved, but more is needed, including a stronger policy emphasis on water tenure, water security for agriculture, and sustainable wastewater management, as well as on the centrality of water and freshwater ecosystems for both climate mitigation and adaptation, the specific water pathways of invasive species, and the integration of spatial, basin and development planning.

A healthy, clean, and sustainable environment has been recognized by the UN General Assembly as a human right. Realizing this right will contribute to the timely achievement of the SDGs, the Paris Agreement and the GBF if water-nature linkages are leveraged for the benefit of all, for supporting climate adaptation and mitigation and for bending the curve on biodiversity loss.

In the context of the Water Conference, the messaging around water and nature was explicitly captured by one of the interactive dialogues and further unpacked in several events placing nature at the heart of the water challenge. This placement could further contribute to this water-nature integration, recognizing water governance as part of the mandate of regional integration organizations, many of which have been working on environmental sustainability issues, the appointment of a UN special envoy for water and a UN general assembly-mandated mainstreaming of water across all the special conferences over the year.

Participants also underscored harmony with Mother Earth, the rights of nature and river/lake rights, linkages and coherence across multilateral environmental agreements and their institutions, joint management of transboundary ecosystems in accordance with international law, ecological standards for water quality, environmental law principles, water-related ecosystems, the triple planetary crisis, nature-based solutions and the combination of grey, green and blue infrastructure and water in the planetary system and as a common good, thus viewed through the lens of the global hydrological cycle. In particular, it was suggested that a legal definition for water security should be developed. Such a definition would need to contemplate protection and restoration of water availability for not only the continued provision of ecosystem services, but also for the benefit of nature in its own right.

Linking the 2030 Agenda, the Water Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the GBF, legal models and scientific methods for durable freshwater protection are already being identified and tested in several places. Countries should leverage existing governance frameworks or consider adopting new laws to promote better integration of freshwater ecosystems into the delimitation, design and management of protected areas. But we need to do more to ensure inland waters, their species and habitats are proactively protected and restored, in line with Targets 2 and 3 of the GBF.

Examples of area-based conservation measures tailored to address the special attributes of inland waters, their species and habitats include protected free-flowing rivers, riparian corridors, water reserves, source water protection sites and fisheries reserves. Traditional protected areas can also contribute to freshwater conservation if dedicated targets are included in their respective management plans.

All these concepts form a toolbox of legal and technical solutions centered on water to protect nature, facilitate climate mitigation and adaptation, and support thriving societies and economies. As the water community comes together to advance sustainability in all its dimensions, it is vital that freshwater ecosystems and the legal models capable of ensuring their durable protection are elevated in the policy solutions for the challenges we face. It is time for water, and the valuable ecosystems that depend upon it, to have their place in the sun!

Chapter 4

Preparing for the SDG Summit

Irena Zubcevic, Director of Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future

Let me start by stating, in my view, what the SDG Summit should not do. It should not reopen the 2030 Agenda or try to renegotiate it. It should not just reaffirm or repeat what we have been saying since 2015. It should not be just another meeting during the High-Level week in September 2023 that will produce yet another outcome document that will not be relevant beyond the walls of the United Nations conference rooms where it will be negotiated using language from previously agreed documents, thus showing that no new agreements could be reached to make needed transformations. It should also not be doom and gloom despite difficult geopolitical situations with many interlinked crises.

Now let me underscore what the SDG Summit should do. It should re-create the sense of ownership, hope, and enthusiasm that characterized the evolution and adoption of the 2030 Agenda. We have heard that we live in a difficult world, so this kind of hope and enthusiasm is badly needed. It should be characterized by optimism, but also realism. We should be optimistic that we have in the 2030 Agenda a blueprint for recovering from multiple crises that we have been facing in the past few years.

At the same time, we need to be realistic. The pandemic and multiple crises of food and energy, economic and social shifts, dangerous planetary changes and complex geopolitical situation have had a profound effect on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

For the first time in the 32 years that the United Nations Development Programme has been calculating it, the Human Development Index (HDI) has declined globally for 2 years in a row showing that human development has fallen back to its 2016 levels. Even countries with the high level of HDI have experienced a 33.3% decline while those with low and medium HDI have experienced a 59.2% decline.[1] This is unprecedented and has reversed much of the progress made toward the SDGs. The latest UN Secretary-General's progress report on SDGs informs us that a preliminary assessment of the roughly 140 targets with data shows only about 12% are on track. More than half, though showing progress, are moderately or severely off track; and, some 30% have either seen no movement or regressed below the 2015 baseline. Under current trends, 575 million people will still be living in extreme poverty in 2030 - and only about one third of countries will meet the target to halve national poverty levels. Food crisis has also increased hunger levels not seen since 2005 and food prices remain higher in more countries than in the period from 2015-2019. The way things are going, it will take 286 years to close gender gaps in legal protection and remove discriminatory laws.[2]

[1] UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). 2022, Human Development Report 2021-22.
[2] Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet, Report of the Secretary-General (Special edition), 2023.

Nevertheless, advances have been made in several areas, even during the pandemic. Thus, for example, the global under-5 mortality rate fell by 12% between 2015 and 2021. HIV infections decreased, particularly in the highest-burdened regions: the estimated 1.5 million new HIV infections in 2021 was almost one-third fewer than in 2010. Between 2015 and 2021, the school completion rate increased from 85% to 87% in primary, from 74% to 77% in lower secondary and from 53% in 2015 to 58% in upper secondary education. Water use efficiency increased by 9% between 2015 and 2020. The global population with access to electricity has increased from 87% in 2015 to 91% in 2021. Labour activity rose by 2.4% in 2021 after COVID. Between 2019 and 2022, 485 policy instruments supporting the shift to sustainable consumption and production were reported by 62 countries and the European Union, increasing linkages with global environmental commitments on climate, biodiversity, pollution and waste.[3]

We need to build on those and accelerate action for those lagging behind. The SDG Summit is the de facto midpoint review of the 2030 Agenda. If we are to achieve significant progress, we need to correct our course now.

But, before going any further, let me dwell on one important point. We are all calling the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the auspices of General Assembly – a mouthful to say – an SDG Summit for ease of reference. However, despite its shortness, the title is not complete as it excludes the rest of the 2030 Agenda. This has led to a discourse where many are forgetting that SDGs are an important part of the 2030 Agenda, but that the 2030 Agenda is much broader. It would be, therefore, very important that we do not forget principles of the 2030 Agenda and that they are also brought to the fore and implemented and reviewed. One principle, at least, has gained a lot of traction, especially in Voluntary National Reviews on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. However, the 2030 Agenda has also other important principles. These are human-rights-based and people-centered approaches which take into account all three dimensions of sustainable development.

This last point is very important if we are serious about combating climate change and keeping the temperature increase at 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic and the crises, many have been returning to patterns of economic growth that are to the detriment of social and environmental dimensions.

There are still quite a lot of those who believe that protection of the environment, including preserving biodiversity and combating climate change, are “nice-to-haves”. This way of thinking can only lead to more catastrophes that we are experiencing today with extreme weather events. The number of persons affected by disasters per 100,000 people rose from 1,198 during 2005-2015 to 2,113 during 2012-2021, leading to more suffering and destruction particularly for the most vulnerable countries and people.[4] Thus, the Summit needs to reconfirm the importance, based on evidence, of taking action in all three dimensions of sustainable development.

[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.

There are two more issues that I believe need to be prominent at the Summit, and those are interlinkages and trade-offs among the goals and accelerated actions to achieve the SDGs. Linkages are defined and set up in such a way as to maximize benefits of one goal as well as other goals. This cannot be done randomly, but rather systematically, in order to minimize trade-offs. For this, we need strong science policy interface – policies and strategies that are grounded in science but at the same time are implementable. The scientific community needs to better communicate its findings and make them useful to decision-makers showing benefits but also consequences, while decision-makers have to make more effort to take into account scientific evidence when defining their policies and strategies.

We also need to break silos and make integrated and holistic decisions across sectors and different levels of government including by defining an SDG implementation roadmap and linking implementation to budget processes. Social protection policies to mitigate negative effects would be essential to put in place as distributional and social impacts of policy reforms have to be assessed on various social groups before, during, and after implementation of policies. Actions need to prioritise equity, social justice, climate justice, rights-based approaches, and inclusivity, lead to more sustainable outcomes, reduce trade-offs, support transformative change and advance climate resilient development. Redistributive policies across sectors and regions that shield the poor and vulnerable, social safety nets, equity, inclusion and just transitions – at all scales – can enable deeper societal ambitions and resolve trade-offs when implementing SDGs. For example, in regions with high dependency on fossil fuels for revenue and employment generation, mitigating risk for sustainable development requires policies that promote economic and energy sector diversification and considerations of just transitions principles, processes and practices. It is also important to evaluate and minimise trade-offs by giving emphasis to capacity building, finance, governance, technology transfer, investments, development, context specific gender-based and other social equity considerations with meaningful participation of vulnerable populations.

We need accelerated actions that will lead to speeding implementation. I fully agree that we cannot be ambitious enough if we want to really move forward, but these actions cannot be limited to small projects. We need to create a critical mass of a large number of actions to be commensurate with the task at hand, and we should stop talking about how projects need to be scaled up and just scale them up. Incremental changes will no longer be enough. We need truly transformational shifts. Attention to equity and broad and meaningful participation of all relevant actors in decision-making at all scales can build social trust which builds on equitable sharing of benefits and burdens that deepen and widen support for transformative changes. The whole-of-government and, even more so, the whole-of-society approach is essential for that. The involvement and active participation of civil society in the monitoring and implementation of the SDGs is crucial for the success of the 2030 Agenda. In particular, young people should be genuinely engaged in all policies, not just on climate, and throughout the whole policy cycle: development, implementation and evaluation. It is also necessary to involve social partners and ensure social dialogue as transformations might have different impacts on social groups.

For this, partnerships are very important to leverage the positive effects, minimize the negative effects and build human capacities to be able to deal with transformative changes to accelerate SDGs locally, nationally, regionally and globally. They can help to address governance gaps and trust deficits that undermine the acceleration and to scale civil society and business engagement in sustainable development. Partnerships can also serve as a platform for convening and coordinating diverse actions of numerous actors and for building mutually reinforcing linkages between different sectors and sustainable development goals. The private sector plays an important role in partnerships. Individual companies are increasingly part of an ecosystem of sustainable development partnerships, some led by business, others by governments or civil society. Spatial and location-specific coalitions that bring together companies, investors, governments, civil society and citizens to agree on shared priorities and develop common plans for action offer high potential to achieve scale and systemic impact.

The SDG Summit will be taking place at a pivotal moment where we have all these working streams in motion, stemming from the Secretary General's report – *Our Common Agenda*, the UN Water Conference, the midpoint review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the HLPF in July.

All these important events will precede the SDG Summit and will define the Summit. If strong and action-oriented outcomes are the result, they will strengthen action and implementation at the SDG Summit. If they are not, the Summit might end on a low note. The outcome of SDG Summit itself – the Political Declaration – is important because it needs to give political guidance for the next four years until the next summit. It is especially important this year when we are at the midpoint in the implementation among so many interlinked crises and extremely challenging geopolitical situations. It should not be just another UN document that will not be understandable or of any value outside the UN corridors. It should really be a call for action with concrete commitments by heads of state and governments to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs both nationally and globally. It should also give a clear message that all stakeholders need to be engaged if we are to achieve transformative changes in our societies. Business as usual is not an option. We have been repeating this for a number of years, but now the clock is ticking, and we are closer and closer to the point of no return.

The two milestones that will happen after the 2023 SDG Summit are UNFCCC COP 28 and the Summit of the Future. These are the two opportunities that we should not miss to reinforce the commitments and boosts for more targeted action that will hopefully come out of the SDG Summit.

COP 28 will take place in November in Dubai and is extremely important as it marks the end of the first global period of assessment or "stock taking" which began at COP 26. The Paris Agreement established the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) with the aim of driving collective action on climate adaptation, while at COP 27 countries decided to establish a framework for achieving the GGA. The framework will be discussed during workshops in the lead-up to COP 28 and should be considered and adopted at COP 28. This and operationalization of a loss and damage fund can enhance action in other SDGs as climate is an enabler for all SDGs. The latest IPCC Synthesis report from March 2023 tells us that climate change has caused widespread

adverse impacts and related losses and damages to nature and people that are unequally distributed across systems, regions and sectors. Economic damages from climate change have been detected in climate-exposed sectors, such as agriculture, forestry, fishery, energy and tourism. Individual livelihoods have been affected through, for example, the destruction of homes and infrastructure and the loss of property and income, human health and food security, with adverse effects on gender and social equity.[5] This proves that policymakers – when implementing the SDGs – need to take a climate responsive lens to successfully achieve the goals. It also shows the intrinsic interlinkage of all the SDGs with climate. Implementation needs not only to consider impacts of climate change, but also the measures needed to implement the SDGs addressing climate change. Even though UNFCCC is the primary mechanism through which agreements about climate are negotiated, it should not be considered as a separate track from the SDG implementation. Rather, there should be complementarity of policies and actions. This means that in governments and in societies there should not be a divide between those who are engaged in climate action and those who are doing SDG implementation because they are two sides of the same coin. We cannot achieve the SDGs if we don't deal with climate and vice-versa. The IPCC Synthesis report rightly points out that multiple climatic and non-climatic risk drivers interact, resulting in compounding overall risk and risks cascading across sectors and regions. For example, climate-driven food insecurity and supply instability are projected to increase with increasing global warming, interacting with non-climatic risk drivers such as competition for land between urban expansion and food production, pandemics and conflict.[6]

The Summit of the Future was proposed in the UN Secretary-General's report *Our Common Agenda* "to forge a new global consensus on what our future should look like, and what we can do today to secure it."[7] It will take place in September 2024, while a preparatory ministerial meeting will take place in September this year. The report puts a lot of emphasis on the Summit as an opportunity to advance ideas for governance arrangements in the areas of international concern and proposes to cover the following areas: advancing governance for global public goods and other areas; anticipating sustainable development and climate action beyond 2030; peace and security, for the new agenda for peace; digital technology for the Global Digital Compact; agreement on the sustainable and peaceful use of outer space; major risks and agreement on an Emergency Platform; and succeeding generations, for a possible agreement on a Declaration on Future Generations.[8] This has met with mixed reactions. Developed countries were largely quite happy with the proposal, developing countries criticized its lack of focus on poverty eradication and means of implementation while civil society is holding its breath hoping that countries will reach an agreement that improves governance of public goods and finds truly transformative actions for our future. Subsequently, the two co-facilitators appointed by the President of the UN General Assembly (Germany and Namibia) have been tasked to facilitate agreement on the scope of the Summit. This has not yet been agreed, but they are proposing to focus on sustainable development and financing, peace and security, digital cooperation, and

[5] IPCC 6th Synthesis report, March 2023
[6] Ibid.
[7] Secretary-General's report *Our Common Agenda*, 2021
[8] Ibid.

transforming global governance for the future. The months ahead will clarify what will be decided, since the preparatory ministerial meeting for the Summit of the Future will take place in September 2023. At the moment, there are those who are in favour of adopting the scope before the preparatory ministerial meeting and those who want to have the ministers first speak about the scope and then make a decision. Either way, the hope is that there will be more emphasis on three dimensions of SDGs, as the environment is currently missing, as well as climate and good governance and rule of law. The criterion that should be used for the scope should be viewed through a lens of acceleration of implementing the SDGs and achieving agreements and targets from the Paris Agreement on climate.

In conclusion, if we are to achieve the SDGs, we need transformative changes, and these can be only done if things are not undertaken in silos and through a top-down, heavy-handed government approach in a business-as-usual way. We believe that only through multi-stakeholder partnerships, looking at innovative ways to engage stakeholders from all spheres of our lives, public and private, from the global to the community level, will we be able to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

This is why we at the Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future are holding monthly webinars[9] where we look at the SDG implementation, focusing on interlinkages, trade-offs, implementation and engagement of all stakeholders. These webinars will contribute to the SDG Summit and will serve as a base for developing communities of practice for the implementation of SDGs to proactively enhance collaboration among experts and practitioners. We hope you can join us and support us on the path to the SDG implementation through holistic and interlinked, science- and evidence-based action.

[9] SF webinars can be accessed through this link.

Chapter 5

The Sustainable Development Goals: Spinning Wheel for Our Time

Paula Caballero and Patti Londoño, Regional Managing Director for Latin America at The Nature Conservancy and Former Vice Minister for Multilateral Affairs in the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The SDGs, off-script proposal

"The genesis of the SDGs proves that it is possible to massively disrupt the status quo, and once a new vision takes hold, many are inspired to action. Bold synergies are now needed to simultaneously achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, stem the destruction of and protect our biodiversity, and boost equity for people around the globe."[1]

In early 2011, the current global agenda structured around the Sustainable Development Goals was conceived. Colombia considered that Rio+20 a unique, historic opportunity to craft agreement around a universal, ambitious, and comprehensive framework capable of shifting the global understanding of development and therefore commensurate with the interlocking crises that we must collectively tackle. Notably, it called for merging two tracks that in the UN were sharply distinct –development (MDGs) and environment (Rio process) – a feat that initially was dismissed as impossible.

In September 2023, the UN has invited member states and all stakeholders to convene under the framework of the *2023 SDG Summit* to share their views and visions on this agenda, in preparation for the *Summit of the Future* to be held in 2024. Most certainly, an assessment of SDG implementation so far and of the interlinkages with other global agendas will be one of the main issues addressed during the event.

Our recent book, *Redefining Development: The Extraordinary Genesis of the Sustainable Development Goals*, holds relevant lessons for the forthcoming UN process. We share the story of the genesis of the SDGs, a journey that was fraught with difficulties, resistance, and many obstacles. Ultimately it was only possible because we combined formal and informal diplomacy tracks at the UN together with a dedicated cohort of partners. This experience is extensively detailed in our book, which includes appendices that surface just how significant the opposition to the SDGs was. Understanding the scale of the opposition to this idea which effectively brought about a paradigm shift is essential so that we can appreciate the scale and dimensions of the transformative implementation that the SDGs demand. The SDGs are a universal call to action for implementing an ambitious, integrated, *disruptive* framework, for breaking away from business-as-usual approaches.

"The commonly held assumption that the SDGs were a logical and inevitable sequence to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) belies the stark struggles that took place

[1] Ibid, p.185

across governments and within governments and across constituencies."[2]

Today, many assume that the SDGs were a natural continuation of the MDGs, a logical progression from a narrow metric with a social focus to a framework that incorporates most of the main tenets of sustainable development. But the reality is that absent the process that was led by Colombia, the MDG track at the UN would likely have resulted in a review of the MDGs and a revised set of discrete goals with a focus on social issues, maintaining a clear distinction between the roles and responsibilities of developed and developing countries. It would have been more of the same. And this is what many key stakeholders wanted. There was no single position across most governments: while some ministries or departments largely in the environment sphere welcomed the ambition and scope of the new framework that was being proposed, those in the field of development that had invested heavily in the MDGs were staunchly opposed to the SDGs and what they represented. These divisions were replicated across international agencies, foundations, and organizations.

"The SDGs fundamentally changed the development agenda, moving from a narrow, siloed suite of goals to be delivered almost exclusively by developing countries to a vibrant, inclusive, and universal framework. The SDGs spawned a more integrated understanding of the world, demanding that all dimensions of development be comprehensively and synergistically tackled. Today, they form the backbone of the international development agenda and guide the actions of governments, companies, and coalitions."[3]

The process to get acceptance of the concept of the SDGs was challenging but the fact that it was ultimately accepted and adopted by the UN body of nations is what gives them their power. Negotiations at the UN can be challenging and slow –certainly the process we document in the book on the genesis of the SDGs bears witness to that– but under the current international system, the tangible commitments and decisions of States are needed to unlock and drive global actions. Yet the reality of the SDGs is that while State action is essential, it is not sufficient. Certainly, decisive leadership by government actors is critical, as the high ambition coalitions that have led the drive for deeper impact across the UNFCCC and the UNCBD, to name just two, attest to.

Yet implementation rests equally with other stakeholders, from multinationals to farmer associations, from research institutions to faith-based organizations. The engagement of civil society, academia, think tanks, students, and young professionals is crucial for transformation towards a more sustainable and just world for they bring new perspectives, innovative ideas, and a fresh approach to the challenges we face. Their energy and commitment can drive the change we need to implement the SDGs and other global agendas. The key is to understand how States can help create the enabling environments needed to unlock and incentivize synergies across different sectors and stakeholders, how they can channel both domestic and international resources to more sustainable pathways and help change how natural and human capital is valued.

Changing mindsets is challenging but vital. It is difficult to see progress from one high-level debate to the next. We compile, distribute, and copy statements, but the opportunity during these reviews to truly evaluate policies and actions is missed.

[2] Ibid, p.5.
[3] Caballero&Londoño, 2022, p.1

"The system-wide pathways and responses that the SDGs seek to drive are those needed to tackle the climate change, biodiversity, and pollution crises."[4]

We face a series of mutually reinforcing crises in which natural and social impacts are indelibly intertwined. The SDGs merged the two separate tracks of social and economic development and the environment. Creativity and knowledge of how the UN works made it possible to overcome the rigid structures that govern UN negotiations. The SDGs proposal managed to permeate these structures as support for the initiative gained momentum and forced many to realize that it made no sense to maintain an artificial separation.

Yet today the UN system is characterized by a fragmented approach to defining and implementing global agendas, which then cascades to other regional and multilateral entities, as well as stakeholders operating at the international level. It is time that the UN and other international processes recognize that regardless of the history of the various tracks at international level, it is imperative that they be merged. It makes no sense that the UN still manages the various arenas of sustainable development as distinct and wholly separate domains; a good example is the week of the UN General Assembly General Debate, where parallel summits and meetings have been held on the SDGs and climate as if the two were distinct agendas. How can there be policy coherence, alignment of resources, efficiencies of effort at country and sub-national level if States are expected to maintain the fiction of these separate agendas?

The genesis of the SDGs was exceptional, a "going off-script momentum" as described by Günther Bachmann in his book, *How to successfully encourage sustainable development policy: Lessons from Germany*:

"…then something happens that no one expects. A proposal is put on the table that changes everything. It irritates. And it comes from an unusual direction…. The proposal thus comes from the Global South, not from the regions of the world that have been used to hegemonic politics for centuries."[5]

Important efforts are underway at many levels to channel adequate resources to support implementation of sustainable development issues but insofar as these efforts are siloed into different agendas, their import and impact will be reduced. All efforts should focus on identifying and driving win-win options and synergies across sectors while managing trade-offs. It is in the sphere of the so-called "co-benefits" that the most powerful business cases can be made to align diverse stakeholders around a shared vision and shared outcomes. The SDGs are tools for this in that they aim to integrate social, economic, and environmental challenges under one concept: sustainable development, an encompassing and comprehensive vision of the actions we need to take to restore balance between the needs of humanity and the preservation of the planet.

At this juncture in planetary history, we cannot afford to wait for another exceptional moment or driver of change like we had in 2011-2012. The system itself must recognize the folly of seeking to maintain separate agendas for internal political reasons, and step up the needed integration

[4] Ibid, p.179
[5] Bachmann, 2022, p.32

which is the reality on the ground. For decades, development and environmental policies have been considered and dealt with as separate entities without building bridges and creating platforms for connection. This isolation has had an impact on stakeholders' decision-making, financing, plans of action, implementation, policies, and outcomes.

"The SDGs were about "inequality between nations, inequality within nations, and inequality across generations." If the new global agenda was to result in structural change and a systematic transformation of development trends, then it had to be universal. For us, the SDGs posited a revolution in responsibility for all."[6]

Critically, the SDGs for the first-time engineered acceptance of a universal agenda. Universality is a key aspect of the SDGs because it acknowledges that all countries and all people are connected and interdependent. The pandemic brought home just how integrated our global and national systems are, with implications that transcend boundaries including climate change and biodiversity loss but also trade and finance flows, migration, and organized crime.

Through the SDG process there was finally recognition that all countries face development challenges. It is remarkable to think that only 10 years ago, so many argued that the universal approach called for by the SDGs was absurd because developed countries had no development issues at all. There was also deep resistance to the idea that developed nations could be asked to report to the UN. That initial resistance gradually gave way to a recognition, first voiced in the corridors during negotiations, that no one really knew how to even approach development issues for developed countries and how to come up with meaningful metrics. That's when we all really started to grapple with what universal and differentiated really meant. And that is what a paradigm shift looks like, one that is ultimately co-created by so many.

"Civil society played a decisive role, and from the outset we consulted with and gave representatives a leading place at the table. Many constituencies embraced the SDGs proposal early on and created momentum around it. Getting the SDGs to become a reality literally took a village."[7]

Today, stakeholders at the local, national, regional, and international levels and from the public, private, research and cultural domains use the SDGs as a common language and metric to measure progress in relation to their commitments. However, whereas in the final stages of the SDG negotiations there was a stark sense that the SDGs were transformational not only because of their scope but because they called for integration –for making explicit the synergies and trade-offs across sectors of decisions, policies, actions, investments, and omissions– this commitment rapidly diminished. Current reports on SDG implementation often focus on implementation of specific targets, perpetuating a siloed approach to development.

All targets were meant to be evaluated through a prism that considers the impacts and opportunities at the core of more holistic approaches. We can have an ambitious, forward-looking framework like the SDGs and still, by sticking to pre-established ways of measuring results, turn it into an inert suite of stand-alone measures. Implementing *and* measuring the SDGs as they were

[6] Ibid, p.12
[7] Ibid, 2022, p.3

envisioned can create the space, the momentum, the logic for undertaking the deep shifts needed across markets, across the financial sector, across energy, food, water, and transport systems. Only then can we put in place the needed long-term pathways that will balance social and economic development and the survival of the ecosystems of our planet. That there is collective understanding of this reality is critical as we near the so-called mid-point of SDG implementation.

"Transformative implementation is hard. It requires creating movements to amplify the political space and will for transformative policies, investments, and strategies. The pull of the status quo, of what we came to understand as an MDG+ mentality, needs to be overcome. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) journey yields instructive insights and lessons that may be germane to some of the challenges we face in the coming decades in tackling the crises of the Anthropocene."[8]

Günther Bachmann considered that "transformation is always a matter of power"[9] and that "the momentum for transformation to sustainability is strong when essential elements come together: (a) a sensitivity to pressing problems, (b) ideas that link regulation to self-efficacy, (c) scientific analysis and dialogue, (d) a culture of off-script leadership and responsibility. In short, mindset, governance, knowledge, cultural leitmotif."[10] In this context, the SDGs are designed to facilitate the strategic planning needed across global agendas. They fully inform and underpin a wide range of agendas, from climate change and biodiversity to social development and governance. The SDGs can be a multipurpose tool to align policymaking and decision-making.

Summits, more than words

Ideally in the upcoming SDG Summit, leaders will transcend the artificial strictures that underpin the event and address the interrelated drivers of the multiple crises we face that can only be effectively tackled through systemic approaches and through innovation in how resources are mobilized and channelled. Above all, leaders need to speak to what they have already done rather than simply taking the easy way out by announcing what they will do or recommitting to established agendas that are not delivering the decisive results that are needed. There is a possible pitfall that both the SDG Summit and the Summit of the Future will result in more calls to action without showing tangible action, diagnosing individual goals or targets, or moving beyond hand-wringing around limited progress. Then, as a result of this, there is real danger that rather than courageously facing up to the fact that the limitations result from responses that are not transformational but mere adjustments to current financial, economic, and productive systems, the conclusion might be that we need to renegotiate the SDGs ahead of 2030.

What folly this would be! In the face of the reinforcing crises we face, we need decisive leadership and action, not more negotiations.

We recognize that transformation is a complex and long-term process, and it requires the involvement of all stakeholders, including governments, private sector, and international organizations. Therefore, we need rather to focus on how we can unlock the needed political will,

[8] Caballero&Londoño, 2022, p.177
[9] Bachmann, 2022, p.37
[10] Ibid, p.38

the resources, the policies, the changes in mindsets to jump-start disruptive shifts across entire systems. We have a recent example of disruption worth highlighting.

"Yet as a global community, we are still largely pretending that we will bring about the necessary shifts across all systems – food, energy, transport, health – while eradicating poverty, merely through small tweaks to our business-as-usual models and pathways… The Covid-19 pandemic has shown just what disruption can mean, but despite calls for a "greener recovery," rather than capitalizing on the crisis, humanity is simply slipping back into old habits."[11]

It is said, never waste a good crisis. Yet we wasted the pandemic and have not even begun to grapple with the long-term effects it will have on an entire generation. The pandemic showed how interlinked all global systems –whether trade or biodiversity or public health– are. It showed us what instant disruption looks like: the kind of disruption that may be triggered by any of the crises we are not tackling. But it also showed us the resilience of the human condition, the capacity for adaptation and innovation that resides both in the collective as well as in individuals.

We all participated in what was ultimately a remarkable process that forces us to manage together the unknown, to tackle risks and uncertainties we had never imagined. The pandemic –fuelled by the instant communications that today technology makes possible– brought us together as humanity to a degree that was previously unfathomable. It made it starkly clear just how interdependent we are. It also showed us how brilliantly and rapidly nature can recover when given a chance as the sightings of wildlife in cities and coasts around the world attest to.

During the pandemic there was constant talk of "green recovery" or "building back better". None of it happened. We squandered the opportunities embedded in the pandemic in its immediate aftermath. But now is the chance to look back. To take stock. To realize what disruption really looks like. And to think through how we can ourselves craft the kind of disruption now needed across all our production and consumption systems and values, to stave off the worst impacts of today's crises and set pathways for long-term wellbeing. Now is the moment. All that is needed is true leadership.

"With earnest intent, humans keep trying to get the outcomes that science demands without commensurate transformative efforts, as if somehow doing the same but "better" will ultimately deliver different outcomes or pathways."[12]

There are currently also crises both in the multilateral system as well as at national level where rising levels of populism and protectionism threaten to undermine decades of progressive alignment around a shared global vision. Multilateral organizations were set up to deal with conflict and confrontation. The invitation now is for Member States to embrace the integral vision at the core of the SDGs in this moment in history, where both planet and peoples around the globe demand urgent action as we face potentially irreversible impacts to natural resources and systems, affectations for entire generations, disruptions across international mechanisms that were engineered over decades.

[11] Ibid, p.6-7
[12] Caballero&Londoño, 2022, p.179

We must also hold ourselves and our leaders accountable for delivering on their commitments to the SDGs which are one and the same with the climate, the equity, the biodiversity, and the circular economy agendas.

Ultimately, the SDGs were the result of many collective and individual actions. They are now in our hands to be fully implemented and to become the force of long-term transformation that we envisioned when we generated this movement back in 2011 and 2012. The SDGs are a universal call to action for all stakeholders to work together. We have the tools, the knowledge, and the motivation. Now it is up to us to drive the transformation.

"The story of the genesis of the SDGs is also a story of a movement. …government representatives of Colombia… may have led the process, but without the resolute and vibrant support of a cohort of fellow negotiators and friends, the SDGs would not have been successful. Hailing from countries from both the Global North and the Global South, individual delegates worked tirelessly to position and advance the SDGs' cause in their governments and in their respective political groups."[13]

References and Endnotes

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[13] Idem

Chapter 6

Cross-Cutting Approaches for Achieving the SDGs

Christopher Dekki, Director of Global Advocacy and Engagement at the SLOCAT Partnership on Sustainable, Low Carbon Transport

Introduction: Our collective ambition is at risk

We have been told since well before 2015 and the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that the success of global sustainability frameworks depends on a 'whole-of-society' approach, a true application of systems thinking and meaningful stakeholder engagement, where key actors in society, governments at all levels, experts from a wide range of fields and regular people, work together with a common goal in mind - an economy and civilisation that works for people and planet. People-centred, planet-sensitive policies are at the very heart of ensuring this approach, securing our planet for current and future generations and building an economic system based not on endless growth, endless profit and endless extraction, but on ensuring the wellbeing of all, including our planetary systems - a true application of 'leaving no one behind.'

Nevertheless, even with this understanding of how best to ensure the success of sustainable development policies and frameworks, we still cannot seem to wrap our heads around the ***how*** - even as we proclaim the need to unite all forces in society from the very halls of global power and inside the UN system. As we continue to pay lip service to a whole-of-society approach, we simply cannot get our acts together as the arbiters, leaders, coordinators, vanguards, champions and indeed, the very secretariats of critical global sustainability frameworks.

We talk constantly about 'interlinkages,' 'synergies' and 'nexus approaches,' trying to understand how best to build bridges among many of the implementation and review processes of global sustainability frameworks - like the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR), the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and many others. We profess our faith in and commitment to bringing key stakeholders together, breaking down silos between ministries and different levels of government, whether vertically or horizontally, and empowering people to transform how we live and how the world works. We very clearly know the wide variety of lingo and terminology - the UN jargon (to be frank, what I have just written is a perfect example of the world in which I operate!).

We are in the UN for a reason after all.

Still, it is important to bring a different perspective to the forefront, a different approach to many of these global policy discussions - one that seeks to expand upon the ***kinds*** of stakeholders who sit around the table, and include others who are engaged in the day-to-day work of implementation.

A multi-stakeholder, *multi-sectoral* approach is critical

The global policy processes that are at the heart of our work in the UN system have done a decent job of ensuring the participation and engagement of critical rights holder groups and other constituencies relevant to our aforementioned whole-of-society approach - women, children and youth, workers and trade unions, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, farmers and so many others,[1] must not only have a seat at the table, but their seat should come with an even more enhanced right to impact policy, shape the direction of negotiations and support decision making.

Nonetheless, while engagement mechanisms like the major groups and other stakeholders (MGoS) should be strengthened, there is also a need to provide spaces for key economic sectors in the work that we all do. The UNFCCC process, thanks to the Paris Agreement, has already implemented something like this - ensuring the Observer constituencies, from youth (YOUNGO) to women (WGC), are preserved, while also creating a platform for multi- and cross-sectoral climate action - the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action (MPGCA).[2] While the MPGCA is not perfect and in fact could do much better, it has ensured that core sectors of the economy are engaged in deliberations around the action agenda of the UNFCCC process. The specific sectoral groups activated by the MPGCA include:

- In terms of natural systems -
    - Land-use
    - Oceans and coastal zones
    - Water
- In terms of sustainable infrastructure -
    - Human settlements
    - Transport
    - Energy
    - Industry[3]
- In terms of further, newly added cross-cutting themes:
    - Resilience
    - Finance and investors

As a co-Focal Point for the Transport Thematic Group within the MPGCA (together with a representative of the International Transport Forum of the OECD), it is my duty to ensure that transport sector voices are included in the climate change process - facilitating their engagement

[1] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/mgos
[2] https://unfccc.int/climate-action/marrakech-partnership-for-global-climate-action
[3] https://unfccc.int/files/paris_agreement/application/pdf/marrakech_partnership_for_global_climate_action.pdf

and amplifying the work they are already doing on the ground to scale up the transformation of transport, as well as to ensure that transport is aligned with and supports the delivery of sustainability frameworks. It is no easy task, working to bring together a diverse array of entities and transport modes (like land, aviation and maritime transport), each with its own set of interests and unique politics.

This complexity is especially augmented when you consider that aviation and maritime transport have their own intergovernmental policy processes - the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) - rife with tense negotiations and active stakeholders. As for land transport, there is the need to balance the positions and interests of so many stakeholders, each with complementary and equally important visions and concerns, but who have only recently been able to come together to bridge divides and ally with one another for a larger goal. For example, those advocating for a focus on electric mobility, the wider electrification of vehicle fleets and the total phase out of the internal combustion engine (ICE) are on one side, and those more focused on scaling up the availability of and access to walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure and services, particularly in the cities of the Global South, are on the other. Even though both sets of actors have been moving away from rhetoric that often pushed for 'either/or,' to 'both/and,' finding greater entry points for synergies and more united advocacy, these contrasts were especially exemplified at the UNFCCC COP26 in Glasgow, United Kingdom. There, the UK Presidency itself entered the fray and championed an approach much more focused on motor vehicle electrification and ICE phase out, and much less on walking, cycling and public transport,[4] leaving it up to key stakeholders working with the Egypt COP27 Presidency the following year to balance this out with a Presidency initiative that focused solely on urban mobility - Low Carbon Transport for Urban Sustainability (LOTUS).[5]

Still, despite these often difficult to manage challenges, each of these actors brings something to the table - especially those entities and networks that are often left out of the highly political processes inherent to UN intergovernmental negotiations. No matter what happens in those policy spaces, the world still needs these transport entities and modes of transport to be part of the solution as ultimately, the realisation of the Paris Agreement (and of course, the other global sustainability frameworks) depends on their real world, on the ground transformation.

Staying in the realm of transport, let me move on to an actual real-world example, to show why we need multi-sectoral engagement. Let's focus on public transport operators - entities that work in cities and towns around the world, from massive, sprawling metropolitan areas, to smaller urban settlements, and who are very often disregarded when ministers are making grand speeches and negotiators are making deals in the context of UN sustainability processes.

In the end, it is service providers like these public transport operators who have to be included when it comes to implementation, as they will need the support, finance, capacity building and political will to ensure they are playing a role in helping to solve the climate crisis, while also

[4] https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20230105153249/https://ukcop26.org/transport/
[5] https://cop27.eg/#/presidency/initiative/lotus

ensuring no one is left behind when it comes to access and continuity of services when disaster strikes or if another pandemic hits. Public transport operators, and (in the case of many cities in the Global South), informal transport providers, have the critical responsibility of helping people move around the world's cities, to access economic opportunities, social services, recreation, friends and family and so much else. This is especially the case in places where there are low motorisation rates, and people rely solely on the services provided by these organisations. Yet oftentimes, public transport is taken for granted and rarely provided the support it needs and the funding necessary to grow operations, which would have the most massive benefit in terms of people served and emissions avoided. So even while governments make pledges around climate change, they continue to facilitate the financing of transport projects that have the least benefit to their societies - roads and highways made for cars, whose construction often rips up existing neighbourhoods and destroys walkability, all in the name of perceived political wins that many believe will relieve urban congestion and improve quality of life in the city.

The myth that more roads means less congestion has already been disproven one hundredfold. Better quality of life in cities comes from more walking, more cycling and more public transport - period (more information available via SLOCAT[6] and GIZ[7]). In light of this, UN processes have a lot to learn from these transport providers and should make an effort to provide more meaningful platforms for their engagement, similar to what is happening in the UNFCCC through the Marrakech Partnership. This kind of engagement will bring us all one step closer to realising our goal of a whole-of-society approach, where policymakers at the global level can make policy hand in hand with those entities that understand the needs, nuances and idiosyncrasies of providing a service, like urban mobility, in the very streets where people live, work and play.

Transport: A cross-cutting solution to our most pressing challenges

While I am calling for enhanced multi- and cross-sectoral engagement in solving the world's challenges, I will continue to use transport as an example to further showcase why the inclusion of key sectors in global policy making is so crucial.

This begs the question (beyond the engagement of key sectors and the actors that operate within them) - why is transport so central to actually achieving the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, and all the other sustainability frameworks? Since the SDGs are really at the heart of so much of what we are trying to accomplish as a UN community, I will use them as the basis for this analysis.

The organisation for which I work, the SLOCAT Partnership on Sustainable, Low Carbon Transport[8] has already done a very good job of making the case for ***why*** transport. Transport and mobility touch on a wide range of SDGs and targets and are essential for their realisation. I have already fleshed out several examples above regarding the important role of public and informal transport providers in helping to fulfil the promise of the sustainable transport community's

[6] https://slocat.net/actions-to-enable-walking-cycling-and-public-transport/
[7] https://changing-transport.org/publications/10-principles-poster_sut_giz/
[8] https://slocat.net/

Avoid-Shift-Improve framework: **avoid** and reduce the need for motorised travel, **shift** to more sustainable modes and **improve** transport modes.[9] But when it comes to the specifics of transport impacts on the SDGs, *SLOCAT's Wheel on Transport and SDGs*[10] tells a very clear story:

While the negative externalities created by so much of our existing transport systems are very well known, the positive benefits of ***sustainable, low carbon*** transport can often be forgotten. It is true that transport is currently the fastest growing fossil fuel intensive sector, thanks to growing transport demand in the Global South especially, responsible for 14% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and 24% of global energy related CO_2 emissions.[11] But a closer look at the potential of sustainable transport and mobility systems paints an entirely different picture. Sustainable transport can truly be transformative, bringing about an evolution of how we move people and goods, and be a catalyst for societies that are more healthy, green, resilient and equitable.

For this reason, a fresh cross-cutting approach is needed, ensuring that other sectors are being brought into the many intergovernmental processes upon which we are hedging the future of the planet - from those very same transport providers described above, to energy utilities and stakeholders who work on buildings.

[9] https://slocat.net/asi/
[10] https://slocat.net/transport-sdgs/
[11] https://slocat.net/ndcs/

We are at a critical juncture, rife with danger, but also with opportunities. While it all may seem like gloom and doom with limited progress on the SDGs, the climate crisis continuing to wreak havoc and geopolitical conflict greatly impacting the effectiveness of multilateralism, there are still reasons to be hopeful. Even now, work is underway to stave off the worst impacts of decades of neoliberal economic dominance, and shifts in power are allowing leaders in the Global South - like Prime Minister Mia Mottley of Barbados - to call for meaningful reform of the global financial system. Examples include (the aforementioned) PM Mottley's *Bridgetown Initiative*,[12] which calls for providing significant financial support to the Global South in the face of the climate crisis, as well as UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' call for an *SDG Stimulus*,[13] to rescue the SDGs and ensure a more just and inclusive global economic order.

In 2023 alone, we will see two critical summits in New York in September: the UN SDG and Climate Ambition Summits, both with the potential to bring the world's focus back on what is truly important, with relevant opportunities for up-and-coming geopolitical actors to show their strength and commitment to a more sustainable and peaceful future. In addition, while the preparations for COP28 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) are proving to be as hectic and complex as they are every year, the convening power of the UAE is certainly unparalleled, providing this Gulf state with a truly important role of bringing a shattered world together to truly accelerate progress on the Paris Agreement (despite its own record on promoting the use of fossil fuels).

These and other attempts to restore sanity in the face of ongoing economic and political chaos, including examples of South-South cooperation, will all feed into the UN Summit of Future[14] in 2024 to hopefully begin to put the world on the right track.

How does this all connect to the multi- and cross-sectoral engagement I elaborated upon above? The answer is simple: for all of these efforts converging in the UN Summit of the Future to truly be successful, we need to move away from business as usual and provide the space for key actors to make their voices heard and access the tangible resources they require to bring about the society-wide transformations we so desperately need. Strong political leadership, coupled with the inclusion of core stakeholders can spark the change that will best allow current and future generations to flourish on a thriving planet.

[12] https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2023/04/press-release-with-clock-ticking-for-the-sdgs-un-chief-and-barbados-prime-minister-call-for-urgent-action-to-transform-broken-global-financial-system/
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Chapter 7

Frameworks, Not Recipes; Processes, Not Projects – Redefining the Focus of Sustainable Development Governance

Daniel Perell, Representative of the Baha'i International Community to the UN

The international community is navigating significant halfway points for a number of United Nations processes, including the Sendai Framework, the Sustainable Development Goals, elements of the Paris Agreement, and others. Attention is rightly turning to these mid-term reviews, but thought is needed around how such reviews lead to meaningful implementation and transformation.

The current development model often approaches impact in much the same way we measure economic growth. Practitioners speak of things like "quick wins," "best practices," "replicability," and "scalability." Such concepts have their uses, but over-emphasizing them can undermine human agency and, ultimately, the notion of community ownership and true sustainability. Development is human-driven. It is context-dependent. And it hinges on process as much as substance. That is to say, the process by which we arrive at a solution is as important as the solution itself.

Imagine that Community A, after months of inclusive consultation, investigation, and co-creation, arrives at a simple approach to address a water-supply challenge. The approach is implemented and, after six months, access to water, sanitation, and hygiene improves significantly. Leaders of Community B, on the opposite bank of a shared river, see the improvement and decide to implement the same approach. But this time it fails. Why?

A review might identify differences in soil quality, infrastructure, culture, or similar variables. A well-meaning international agency might do further experiments, taking the Community A solution to various contexts around the world, the vast majority of which fail. The lesson learned might be that Community A simply found a unique solution—valuable, but not replicable or scalable.

In a case such as this, the search for a quick win or replicability would be well-intentioned, but would miss the central lesson to be learned. What was replicable was not the mechanics of the project itself, but the qualities of consultation that led to it—the inclusive approach, the participatory environment, the co-creation, the context-based-solution arrived at. And it is elements of this kind, having to do with process, orientation, voice, and values, that need to be identified, shared, and replicated throughout the multilateral system and in particular around governance for sustainable development.

What does this mean for mid-term reviews and the UN more broadly? Meaningful reform of sustainable development governance will hinge on elements of collective process, conceptual framework, and commitment to principle as much as the adoption of any given mechanism or intervention. Movement in this direction will require new ways of envisioning the future, including building capacity to free strategic vision from the veils of present institutional arrangements, as well as to approach specific proposals as potential steps in a process of ongoing improvement, rather than sufficient solutions in themselves. It will call for far greater acknowledgement of the

basic truth that lived reality is one holistic experience—acknowledgement that will need to find practical application in the definitions we use to shape our collective endeavours, the institutional mandates which structure them, the ways that various thematic areas are understood to overlap, and even the way that event speakers are identified and oriented. And it will require far greater commitment to an overarching global civic ethic, grounded particularly in norms of trust, trustworthiness, and reciprocity. Initial thoughts in each of these areas are offered below, in a spirit of collective exploration and consultation.

Better Ways of Envisioning—and Building—the Future

There is a growing recognition that renewed commitment to cooperative frameworks is critical to effectively advancing complex goals, such as those related to sustainable development. Yet current systems of international governance are unlikely to be in place in the distant future. Present arrangements do not represent the pinnacle of development in the realm of governance. What, then, will constitute the international governance system of the future? What should it be and not be? And what steps can be taken today to help us get there?

Present institutions, systems, and structures can act as veils to vision and imagination. Aspects of the present order are often taken as a given, such as the networked but often ad-hoc system of international agreements, the competition-based interaction between actors on the global stage, even the nation state as the fundamental unit of international relations. When these assumptions are consciously set aside, even temporarily, space is opened to conceive new arrangements, guided by fundamental tenets more suited to the spirit of the age.

With the proposed Summit of the Future taking place in September of 2024, much thought will be devoted to various elements of humanity's collective future. This offers an important period to advance ideas for more effective governance arrangements in areas of sustainable development and beyond. There is a particular opportunity to flesh out the real-world implications of bedrock ideals upon which a stable international order must be built. For example, how might a mechanism of global governance hold sufficient authority to ensure the common good, without fostering an over-concentration of power and authority? How can the wealth of individuals, corporations, and nations be more equitably distributed to benefit the whole of humanity and the earth upon which we depend? How can the international community, given matters of pressing urgency, ensure that future generations are considered in all deliberations? Given the limits of a GDP-centric approach to development, what values should truly be driving development and how can we find ways to measure them?

Conversations at the UN tend to focus on proposing new mechanisms, funds, processes, and bodies. These are what get noted in summary documents and analyzed in editorials. And it is true that many new arrangements will be needed in the coming years. Yet proposed mechanisms often resemble or duplicate extant arrangements. In many cases, problems arise not because a needed structure does not exist, but because the one that does exist is underfunded or opposed by certain factions or lacks a sufficient mandate. Novelty has an inherent allure; the fact that something is new and untested offers the possibility that it might be able to avoid shortcomings that plagued previous efforts. But unless underlying assumptions, models, and conditions are changed, this hope will rarely bear fruit; layering more and more additions on top of faulty foundations is a recipe for

disappointment. We therefore need to consider not just what more we can create, but how to improve and build on what we already have—and how relevant lessons learned in one space can be shared to others.

Equally important is expanding and strengthening an orientation that views any one project, programme, or policy not as a definitive solution in itself, but rather as one step in the path of improvement. Any well-regarded proposal might indeed have benefits that should be explored. It might also have unforeseen consequences, which should also be interrogated objectively. No matter how replicable or scalable, no project will be sufficient, in itself, to meet the needs of humanity. The need, in all cases, is a process-oriented approach to progress—one that builds gradually on strengths, responds with agility to evolving realities, and rests on reasoned and dispassionate inquiry into the merit of any given proposal.

One Lived Reality

Conceptual categories and the institutional structures that flow from them are necessary for organizing large-scale activity. Often, however, such tools are used in ways that constrain, rather than advance, the aims of the multilateral system. Consider, for example, the definition of climate adaptation and that of disaster risk reduction. The former is turned to for how actual or expected stimuli or their effects can moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities for natural or human systems. The latter refers to preventing the creation of risk, the reduction of existing risk, and the strengthening of economic, social health, and environmental resilience.

The overlap is obvious—different words being used to describe realities that are almost identical in practice. More to the point, when you get down to the local level of lived, daily experience, they are, in fact, the same thing. To a community leader or small business owner, there is little meaningful difference in what it looks like to pursue these complementary ends. This complementarity needs to be reflected in the spaces and conferences taking place this year and beyond. Those attending COP 28, for example, can learn from the disaster risk space. The Midterm Review of the Sendai process can similarly learn from efforts on climate issues, where significant research has been done. Both can learn from other related fields, such as land use, cities, and food systems. We need to become much more intentional in seeking to identify what is taking place in one space that can be drawn on and learned about in another—and to overcome the jargon that can act as a barrier.

What might this look like in practice? Panel discussions could include one speaker each from various related areas and such experts could be encouraged and assisted to synthesize their contrasting knowledge, perspectives, and experience into one overarching analysis which serves as a record to be referred to in the future. Alternatively, protagonists from different vantage points of a common successful endeavour could create a narrative related to that experience, for example, how a donor, a recipient, a community leader, a private sector actor came together to determine their needs and take action to meet them. What qualities were present? What capacities were built? What lessons do they wish to share? The policy papers prepared for each UNFCCC COP can inform the Sendai Process, UNEA, meetings on the Conference on Biodiversity, and vice versa. Similar analyses could be requested across many circles, not just at the UN level, but also at the Ministry level of governments, civil society, and the corporate sector. The possibilities are many,

and can span a wide range of technical depth and sophistication.

While such proposals are relatively minor, and some are already taking place occasionally, it is the underlying spirit which must change. Rather than one institution or agency 'owning' terminology, or being credited with progress, a spirit of collective ownership and shared endeavour needs to be encouraged. The United Nations and its Member States already have sufficient competing demands and priorities; let the spaces where there is overlap become sources of shared aspiration and advancement.

Trust, Trustworthiness, and a Global Civic Ethic

Movement toward more coordinated and effective structures of governance, in the realm of sustainable development will require leaders coming together to recast aspects of the current global order. The idea of large-scale international cooperation has, at times, been viewed as idealistic or utopian. But in light of the obvious and serious challenges facing humanity—almost universally global in scope and nature—such cooperation has become nothing less than a pragmatic necessity.

The efficacy of steps in this direction will hinge on well-worn patterns of stalemate and impasse being relinquished in favor of a global civic ethic. Deliberative processes will need to be more magnanimous, reasoned, and cordial—motivated not by attachment to entrenched positions and narrow interests or territoriality, but by a collective search for deeper understanding of complex issues. Objectives incompatible with the pursuit of the common good will need to be set aside. Until this is the dominant ethic, lasting progress will prove elusive.

This will require trust and trustworthiness, among many other requisites. The lack of trust has been identified, time and again, as a key weakness in the multilateral system. In his Our Common Agenda report, the Secretary-General declared that "Building trust and countering mistrust, between people and institutions, but also between different people and groups within societies, is our defining challenge." The High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism similarly noted that the "overall thrust" of its report, A Breakthrough for People and Planet Effective and Inclusive Global Governance for Today and the Future, was to "rebuild trust in the multilateral system."

Trust thus emerges as one of the most vital resources we have, and one without which we can have little expectation for the success of any program, project, or agreement. But building trust is no small task, of course. It requires sacrifice, honesty, and dependability. We have to learn how to break cycles of mistrust and build on successes. We also need to overcome tendencies of aversion to loss—of reputation, position, status, power, resources, and so many similar qualities—that inhibit us from working together more collaboratively with others. Not infrequently do we ourselves, whether personally or in institutional capacities, entrench various silos because we fear ceding advantage or 'turf' to other actors, even those sincerely committed to the same goals we are. Overcoming narrow and zero-sum conceptions of identity, and building increasingly expansive and inclusive frameworks for deep and meaningful collective identity, will therefore be central in allowing learning, insights, and understanding to flow freely throughout the multilateral system.

As important as trust, in this regard, is the role of trustworthiness. Trust can be understood as a logical response to conditions of the world. If we sincerely believe that a co-worker, organization, department, or nation cannot be depended on or is opposed to our well-being, the answer is not to simply trust them anyway. This would be contrary to reason and sound judgement. Focusing on trustworthiness, our energies become centered not so much on determining how much we can trust others, but on how much others can trust us. Can others trust that the reasons our organization or country gives for taking a certain course of action—true though they may be—are actually the ones that prompted the decision? Can our colleagues trust that we will accomplish what we commit to—even when complications arise, resources are reduced, or priorities shift? Giving attention to issues such as these contributes to the construction of a culture of trustworthiness, in which behaviour of this kind becomes assumed and expected—simply the way things are done. And this, in turn, nurtures the expansion of trust so needed throughout the multilateral system.

New Challenges, New Narratives

Were one to graph the mandate of the United Nations over the last 75 years, it would be a steep upward curve, with ever more issues falling under its ambit. Necessary as this has been, were such a graph placed alongside another that charts the global challenges humanity faces, the latter would be even steeper. One can quickly conjure an image of an overburdened vehicle carrying far more weight than it ought to, yet still insufficient for the task at hand. Unsurprisingly, then, any meaningful conversation about how UN processes can strengthen and reinforce each other should strive to understand the bigger picture of where we are and where we hope to be.

For this reason, we must not only assess perennial challenges like territoriality, redundancy, and the like, but peel back the workings of the international order to get to the underlying assumptions which guide it. We know, for example, that consumption-based indicators like GDP contravene the carrying capacity of the earth. We know that territorialities of all kinds—whether state sovereignty, NGO funding, private sector monopoly, UN mandate, or any other—are contrary to humanity's (and the planet's) shared, holistic needs. This chapter looked at some of the outward expressions of sustainable development governance that could be modified through different postures and approaches. But it also sought to ask fundamental questions about the narratives that guide the international community's efforts. With this latter issue come a number of questions that are vital, but often sidelined in favor of technical or institutional deliberations. Elements such trust, justice, notions of progress, and a culture of learning should be central in all these debates. And every time different UN mandates are given the opportunity to interact, sustainable development governance is given the opportunity to advance.

As 15-year development processes reach their midpoints, the international community needs to reflect on areas of progress as well as shortcomings. In particular, it will be vital that the universality expressed in these agendas finds expression not only in rhetoric, but in truly shared efforts. Given the institutional structures of the multilateral system as it stands today, this will be no small task. Different agencies, programmes, and Member States of the UN speaking on each other's panels and similar incremental steps are indeed needed, but the harder work will be developing a compelling and collective vision of the future together. But as this is done, advancement will be faster and more sustainable. The SDG wheel, with its diversity of colors,

represents a lovely symbol of progress in different areas coming together for one purpose. Let's not reinvent it, but rather find ways to use it properly.

Chapter 8

Disaster Risk and Resilience in Small Island Developing States

Liz Thompson, Barbados Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary for Climate Change, Law of the Sea, and Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

The United Nations first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) was held in Bridgetown in April 1994.[1] Emerging from the Conference was a development agenda for SIDS, agreed on by UN member states and known as the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA). Disaster, risk and disaster risk reduction were important elements in the BPOA, which also had a strong focus on environmental protection, a significant issue for the world's micro-island states. In order to fully grasp what disaster, risk and risk reduction mean for Small Island Developing States, an understanding of scale and context is essential.

Caribbean SIDS and Their Vulnerability

The Barbados Conference agreed that SIDS possess peculiar characteristics and vulnerabilities, including extreme vulnerability to exogenous shock, both economic and environmental. Consequently, they warrant special attention in the multilateral system and require specific and specialised policy, programmatic and financing approaches. The Barbados Programme of Action therefore identified 12 priority areas which put disaster and risk reduction at the centre of the development agenda for SIDS.

Since 1994, SIDS priorities have been climate change and sea-level rise, natural and environmental disasters, management of wastes, coastal and marine resources, freshwater resources, energy resources, tourism resources, biodiversity resources, national institutions and administrative capacity, regional institutions and technical cooperation, transport and communication, science and technology and human resources development.

The multilateral system also accepted that SIDS' very characteristics and vulnerabilities make resilience building a priority. Resilience is necessary to reduce the number and impacts of shocks, build capacity against shocks, as well as boost the time it takes to recover from such shocks. Disaster risk reduction is a fundamental element of resilience building. The SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action agenda, also known as the SAMOA Pathway,[2] the Outcome Document of the third and most recent International Conference on Small Island Developing States held in Apia, Samoa in 2014, specifically addressed the nexus between disaster and

[1] https://www.un.org/en/conferences/small-islands/bridgetown1994#:~:text=The%20first%20conference%20on%20sustainable,development%20challenges%20they%20were%20facing

[2] SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action https://www.undp.org/samoa/publications/samoa-pathway

development.[3] The SAMOA Pathway placed emphasis on a range of issues across the development landscape and linked disaster risk reduction to achieving the broad developmental goals of SIDS.

The World Bank has classified Latin America and Caribbean as the second most disaster-prone area in the world.[4] According to World Bank figures, between 2000 and 2019, some 152 million people in the region were adversely impacted by 1205 disasters of varying gravity. Regional disasters have ranged from seasonal and flash floods to earthquakes and volcanos, protracted droughts and hurricanes, either on their own or in combination with each other, resulting in "complex and multidimensional humanitarian needs."[5] This background enables one to fully appreciate why, in the Caribbean, disaster risk reduction is not merely desirable; it is both imperative and urgent.

Disasters In Caribbean SIDS

From June to November every year, the populations of the Caribbean's SIDS live with the existential threat of the annual Atlantic hurricane season. A few examples from the experiences caused by extreme weather events in the Americas will serve to give both the context and the scale of the challenge for Caribbean SIDS. If one says Hurricane Katrina, listeners immediately visualise the severe damage this Category 5 Hurricane wreaked in 2005 on the Florida panhandle and the gulf states of the United States of America, particularly Louisiana.[6] While the damage of US $160 billion to the affected states is staggering, these states constitute a small percentage of the land mass of the USA and less than 1% of the country's GDP.

Compare, for instance, the impact of Hurricane Maria on Dominica, an island state of 70,000 people. A more intense Category 5 hurricane than Katrina, Hurricane Maria in 2017 caused US $1.3 billion in damage, impacted 90% of the housing stock of the island and wiped out 226% of Dominica's GDP.[7] Crops, livestock, the island's fresh water and food supply, supermarkets, schools, hotels, and major infrastructure, were decimated in the space of a few hours. A mere 188 kilometres or 117 miles away, less than 30 minutes by plane, Maria's estimated damage to the twin island state of Antigua and Barbuda was US $138 million. The devastation this hurricane left in its wake was so severe that the entire population of the island of Barbuda had to be evacuated to the main island of Antigua.

Dominica is a special case with regard to the numerous strikes from extreme weather events with which it has had to cope and to the extent of the damage inflicted on lives and livelihoods by those disasters. Hurricane Dean, which struck in 2007, wrought approximately US $37 million in infrastructural damage and destroyed 99% of the island's banana industry. Eight years later in

[3] https://www.preventionweb.net/publication/small-island-developing-states-accelerated-modalities-action-samoa-pathway
[4] https://www.preventionweb.net/publication/natural-disasters-latin-america-and-caribbean-2000-2019
[5] https://www.preventionweb.net/publication/natural-disasters-latin-america-and-caribbean-2000-2019
[6] http://www.hurricanescience.org/history/studies/katrinacase/impacts/
[7] https://www.gfdrr.org/en/dominica-hurricane-maria-post-disaster-assessment-and-support-recovery-planning

2015, Tropical Storm Erika caused approximately US $483 million or approximately 90% damage to the country's GDP. In 2017, in the midst of rebuilding and recovery efforts, Hurricane Maria struck the island, further derailing national efforts at development, rebuilding and resilience.

Two years after Hurricane Maria left the economies and infrastructure of several Caribbean islands in ruins, Hurricane Dorian, a Category 5 behemoth of August 2019, sat over the Bahamas, particularly Abaco and Grand Bahama,[8] with its full force. After leaving the Caribbean, this unwanted, unruly visitor then hit Florida. The Interamerican Development Bank estimated the damage Dorian left behind on the Bahamian archipelago at US $3.4 billion, or a quarter of the GDP of that country.

Further South, in the Caribbean island-chain, in the 2021 hurricane season alone, Barbados was struck three times; first in April by extensive ashfall from the eruption of the La Soufriere Volcano in St Vincent and the Grenadines.[9] This was followed in June, by a freak storm with 4700 lightning strikes in less than an hour[10] and then in July the island was lashed by Hurricane Elsa[11] at Category 1 strength. With 21 named storms, including seven hurricanes, the year 2021 was the region's fourth most costly on record.[12] Hurricane Ida, in particular, caused considerable damage.[13]

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the United States Department of Commerce, predicted for 2023, "a range of 12 to 17 total named storms (winds of 39 mph or higher). Of those, 5 to 9 could become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), including 1 to 4 major hurricanes (category 3, 4 or 5; with winds of 111 mph or higher). NOAA has a 70% confidence in these ranges."[14] At the time of writing in June 2023, Barbados was already struck by Tropical Storm Bret, the second named storm of the season, which passed 58 miles north of the island at just under hurricane strength on June 22 and then went on to hit St Lucia two days later.

The island states of the Caribbean are very much on the front line of the climate crisis and face increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, with acute human, social, economic and environmental costs.

[8] https://reliefweb.int/report/bahamas/facts-hurricane-dorian-s-devastating-effect-bahamas
[9] https://bb.usembassy.gov/natural-disaster-alert-volcanic-ash-in-barbados-u-s-embassy-barbados-and-the-eastern-caribbean/
[10] https://barbados.loopnews.com/content/weather-expert-says-2021-freak-thunderstorm-could-reoccur-607091
[11] https://reliefweb.int/report/barbados/dem-reports-damage-hurricane-elsa and https://today.caricom.org/2021/07/02/elsa-is-the-first-hurricane-to-hit-barbados-in-65-years-reports-of-damage-across-the-island/
[12] https://public.wmo.int/en/media/news/active-2021-atlantic-hurricane-season-officially-ends
[13] https://www.rainviewer.com/blog/main-facts-about-2021-atlantic-hurricane-season.html
[14] https://www.noaa.gov/news-release/2023-atlantic-hurricane-season-outlook

The region has suffered intense, frequent, devastating and deadly storms over the last 40 years.[15] As has been shown, some islands have been hit more than once in the same hurricane season and others have been struck in consecutive hurricane seasons.

Moreover, the primary source of Caribbean foreign exchange earnings is the very highly environmentally dependent tourism sector. Add to these realities the fact that Caribbean countries are amongst the most heavily indebted in the world, with debt to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ratios that are close to or exceed 100%,[16] and one gets a clear picture of the magnitude of the threat impacting the lives, livelihoods and general wellbeing of Caribbean citizens.

SIDS are generally import dependent, especially for food[17] and fuel.[18] Their manufacturing and trading sectors are miniscule. These factors, added to small terrestrial and population sizes as well as distance from centres of production and distribution, mean that SIDS cannot generate economies of scale. Caribbean countries are water stressed and water scarce[19] and insofar as they import rather than grow their own food, cost, distance and other supply considerations make the region food insecure.[20] These stressors are exacerbated by the climate crisis and its resulting incremental damage and environmental disasters. Yet, Caribbean SIDS have set a development agenda and, with the exception of Haiti, have achieved high ranking on the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI).[21]

Therein lies the double-edged sword for regional island-states. This facade of success and development as indicated by the high GDP and HDI rankings of Caribbean SIDS, without comparative analysis and set off of risk and vulnerabilities, prevents the islands' access to grant funding and concessionary loans and forces them on to the private markets where development capital costs in the region reach interest rates of 40%.[22] And from whom does the high-cost,

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[15] Gilbert, Ivan, Katrina, Georges, Jeanne, Wilma, Hugo, Irma, Maria, Dorian were some of the worst hurricanes to hit the Caribbean island chain from the 1990s onwards.

[16] https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/47743/3/S2101019_en.pdf and https://www.statista.com/statistics/813474/public-debt-gross-domestic-product-latin-america/

[17] Roughly $7 billion per annum or 5% of the GDP of CARICOM countries https://carib-export.com/blog/food-security-is-not-a-dream/#:~:text=Over%20the%20period%202018%2D2020,approximately%205%25%20of%20GDP

[18] https://www.globalpetrolprices.com/gasoline_prices/ and https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EP.PMP.SGAS.CD?locations=S3

[19] https://blogs.worldbank.org/latinamerica/latin-american-climate-crisis-also-water-crisis-how-do-we-move-forward https://www.ecowatch.com/water-shortage-caribbean-2650142909.html and https://www.forbes.com/sites/daphneewingchow/2019/02/12/in-search-of-a-solution-for-water-scarcity-in-the-caribbean/?sh=30012bc91511

[20] https://www.wfp.org/news/food-insecurity-caribbean-continues-upward-trajectory-caricom-wfp-survey-finds https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2022/06/28/food-insecurity-caribbean https://www.fao.org/policy-support/tools-and-publications/resources-details/en/c/1470147/ https://www.caribbeanclimate.bz/blog/2023/03/07/caribbean-food-security-at-risk-from-the-impact-of-disaster-related-events/ https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2022/06/28/food-insecurity-caribbean

[21] https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI and https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/country-insights#/ranks

[22] https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WP/Issues/2016/12/31/Domestic-Investment-and-the-Cost-of-Capital-in-the-Caribbean-19206

private capital come? By cruel irony, private capital comes from the investors of the very high-carbon emitting countries which are the principal contributors to climate change.

Disaster Risk Reduction

The climate crisis places Caribbean SIDS in the crosshairs of risk of annual extreme-weather wipe-out events. Finding the capital and managing disaster risk reduction is therefore a pivotal enabler for the sustainable development of Caribbean SIDS. Capital is needed to build resilient infrastructure, protect the environment, safeguard communities and sustain economies, as well as to finance adaptation and mitigation in the Caribbean and to climate-proof the region's highly vulnerable countries.

The Bridgetown Initiative (1.0, 2022[23] and 2.0, 2023)[24] being spearheaded by Prime Minister Mia Mottley of Barbados is seeking to pioneer a new way of doing business within the context of the international development system and the multilateral development banks. The Bridgetown Initiative is lobbying for:

- Provision of emergency liquidity.
- Making the financial system more shock absorbent by embedding natural disaster and pandemic clauses in all lending instruments. When disasters strike, these clauses would lead to an immediate and unconditional suspension of debt service and an extension of the loan maturity by two years, with no loss of interest, hence lenders suffer no prejudice. This provision of the Prime Minister Mottley's Bridgetown Initiative received a boon when the President of the World Bank, Ajay Banga, announced the Bank's intention to adopt the use of such clauses[25] at the Paris Climate Summit held in June 2023.[26]
- Funding Loss and Damage by drawing from a levy on fossil fuel production or implementing an international carbon tax on the oil and gas sector.
- Restoring Debt Sustainability including by speeding up debt relief.
- Mobilising private sector investment for green and just transitions.
- Increasing official development lending for SDGs achievement.
- Ensuring the multilateral trading system supports a green and just transformation.

[23] https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/climate-change-bridgetown-initiative-mia-mottley/ and Bridgetown Initiative 2.0 https://gisbarbados.gov.bb/blog/bridgetown-initiative-2-0-highlights-six-key-action-areas/
[24] https://gisbarbados.gov.bb/blog/bridgetown-initiative-2-0-highlights-six-key-action-areas/
[25] https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/factsheet/2023/06/22/comprehensive-toolkit-to-support-countries-after-natural-disasters and https://www.cnbc.com/2023/06/22/world-bank-unveils-debt-payment-pause-for-disaster-hit-countries.html
[26] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/23/paris-climate-finance-summit-fails-to-deliver-debt-forgiveness-plan

- Expansion of the lending facilities of multilateral development banks to better reach the climate vulnerable, particularly those the GDP of which prevents access to grants or concessionary climate financing.
- Establishment of a Global Climate Mitigation Trust.
- Making special drawing rights (SDRs) available to the developing countries, the most climate vulnerable which truly need the financial resources, rather than keeping them on standby for those which neither need nor use these resources.
- Reforming the governance and operations of International Financial Institutions.
- Expanding MDB lending for climate and SDGs by $1trn by encouraging MDBs to lend a further $1 trillion by raising their risk appetite and including donor guarantees and SDRs when determining their lending room.

Shaved down to its core elements, the Bridgetown Initiative unlocks capital that can be used for disaster risk reduction, disaster risk mitigation, and the kind of resilience building that characterises the Blue and Green Economies and climate proofs SIDS and small developing countries. The Initiative is in alignment with the mandates set out by the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF)[27] and the Vulnerable 20 (V20),[28] a group of countries regarded as disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Some of the principal objectives of the V20 are "to strengthen economic and financial responses to climate change and the promotion of climate resilient and low emission development … with full competence for addressing economic and financial issues multilaterally."[29]

More than ever, the spreading tentacles of the climate crisis and the multiplicity of global disasters and their pervasive impacts make it incumbent on the multilateral system to integrate disaster risk reduction into social, economic and environmental planning processes as well as international conventions. In 2024, the United Nations will host a number of conferences on themes such as Oceans, SIDS, Water, Global Supply Chains, Biological Diversity and The Summit of the Future, to name just a few. It is becoming increasingly urgent to consider the impact of disasters on these thematic areas, as well as in the context of desertification, water, food and nutrition security, financing for development, and numerous other UN conventions and priority areas.

Consideration also has to be given to the health risks that follow extreme weather events, in addition to the scarcities of food and fuel coupled with severe price spikes. The issue of disaster risk reduction must be fully integrated into the multilateral development agenda and national development planning and strategies. It is noteworthy that following Maria's battering, Dominica

[27] https://thecvf.org/our-voice/news/press-releases/climate-change-wiped-out-fifth-of-vulnerable-countries'-wealth-over-last-2-decades---report-v20-group-of-55-economies-reinforce-demands-for-international-funding-for-loss-and-damage

[28] Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Barbados, Bhutan, Costa Rica, East Timor, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Kiribati, Madagascar, the Maldives, Nepal, the Philippines, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Tanzania, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Vietnam

[29] https://www.v-20.org/about

identified resilience building as a national policy priority and developed a Disaster Resilience Strategy.[30]

Of equal importance to the issue of disaster and risk is insurance, which is intended to address the budget volatility and high expenditures which disasters precipitate. Sendai promotes risk insurance as one of the financing solutions for disasters. Developed with funding from the Government of Japan, the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Reduction Facility (CCRIF) "is a risk pooling facility, owned, operated and registered in the Caribbean for Caribbean governments.".[31] Its purpose is to limit the catastrophic financial impact that extreme weather events create for the budgets of Caribbean governments and the lives of citizens "by quickly providing short term liquidity. … It is the world's first and, to date, only regional fund utilising parametric insurance and low pricing." While insurance represents pre-disaster planning, it is but one of many approaches to disaster risk and financing in the Caribbean.

A corollary of the provision of insurance is the existence of databases and properly resourced statistical departments that have the capacity to actually document the nature, scale, and persistence of losses from disasters. That documentation should take place whether the losses are from sudden onset disasters or are incremental losses caused by an inability to adapt or mitigate. Documentation, record-keeping and statistical collection and analysis are important tools in planning and preparing for and managing disaster risk. In computing elements of loss and damage and the framing of a multi-dimensional vulnerability index, it is vital that national debt, the degree of climate vulnerability, and the capacity to and time taken to recover from climate disasters be considered crucial criteria for inclusion and analysis if such an index is to be beneficial to the most vulnerable and constitute an effective tool for widescale use.

Given this shortfall and the state of the planet, however one views the disasters to which the climate-vulnerable SIDS are exposed, it is imperative that the Parties to the UNFCCC target 1.5 in their NDCs at COP 28. This is all the more necessary considering the very narrow window that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change[32] (IPCC) has determined to be available for the global family of nations to course correct and halt the climate crisis. Greater ambition, even greater effort and far less lip service are needed if key targets and timelines set by the IPCC are to be met. The development challenges of our era call for action at reducing carbon emissions and accelerating efforts to achieve the SDGs, which United Nations member states were not on target to reach even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.[33]

Sendai and the CARICOM Development Agenda

The Sendai Framework is critical to SIDS because it incorporates multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral approaches to disaster risk reduction. It focuses on mainstreaming for resilience building

[30] https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2021/08/11/Dominica-Disaster-Resilience-Strategy-463663
[31] https://caricom.org/institutions/caribbean-catastrophe-risk-insurance-facility-ccrif/
[32] https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/reports https://www.wri.org/insights/ipcc-report-2022-climate-impacts-adaptation-vulnerability
[33] https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/07/1095722 https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/

and prioritises the disaster development link. The Sendai Framework's seven global targets[34] are consistent with the policy approaches of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).[35] The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) is the regional inter-governmental agency for disaster management in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). It was established in 1991 and was initially known as Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA). This successor organisation, CDEMA, has primary responsibility for the coordination of emergency response and relief efforts to its Participating States which require such assistance.

The Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Strategy is the Caribbean's disaster risk reduction framework which is aligned to the Sendai Framework. It is an integrated and proactive approach to disaster management and seeks to reduce the risk and loss associated with natural and technological hazards and the effects of climate change and to enhance regional sustainable development. For Caribbean SIDS, resilience-building must be a key development across the social and productive sectors. The comprehensive disaster management strategy which is being used in the Caribbean is helpful and could, in fact, be scaled up or replicated across other Small Island Developing States.

The CDM promotes "the management of all hazards through all phases of the disaster management cycle – prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery and rehabilitation - by all peoples - public and private sectors, all segments of civil society and the general population in hazard prone areas. CDM involves risk reduction, management and integration of vulnerability assessment into the development planning process."[36]

There are points of intersection between Sendai and Caribbean regional policy; for example, attempts at building infrastructure, reducing the impact of disasters, minimising the number of people impacted by disasters, and reducing the nature and types of losses. Disaster planning for the water, energy and agriculture sectors is central to disaster risk reduction and disaster impact minimisation. It bears repetition that Sendai also promotes institutionalising the documentation of disaster losses. This will be a critical input to the loss and damage discussion at COP 28 and to the development of an effective MVI. CARICOM has several ongoing initiatives to develop databases for climate impacts and disaster losses and also to standardise post-disaster assessments as much as possible.

Early Warning Systems (EWS)

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) sees the need for "the adoption of a comprehensive risk management approach that encompasses loss and damage, a shared understanding of risk, and the integrated implementation of disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation strategies." It regards these as "crucial" elements "for formulating

[34] https://www.undrr.org/implementing-sendai-framework/what-sendai-framework
[35] https://caricom.org
[36] https://www.cdema.org/cdm

effective policies and plans to address climate impacts and build resilience."[37] An early warning system for disaster risk reduction is defined by UNDRR as an "integrated system of hazard monitoring, forecasting and prediction, disaster risk assessment, communication and preparedness activities systems and processes that enables individuals, communities, governments, businesses and others to take timely action to reduce disaster risks in advance of hazardous events."[38]

At COP 27, United Nations Secretary General António Guterres launched the UN's Early Warning Systems for All (EWS4ALL),[39] which are important in avoiding disasters, mitigating disaster impacts and building resilience. Understanding risk and providing early warning systems for disaster allows for informed decision making, community sensitisation and whole of society responses. CDEMA has a regional response mechanism[40] that allows for early response from all participating countries and stakeholders – national, regional and international.

Despite their efficacy, cost effectiveness and beneficial impacts, more than half of UN Member States do not have early warning systems. The numbers for the Caribbean are similar. Some 19 States and territories participate in CDEMA, but only one third of them have established roadmaps for multi-hazard early warning systems.[41] To strengthen response and capacity, the Caribbean's first regional plan on early warning systems was launched between Caribbean and UN leaders in February 2023.

The scientific evidence on climate change is clear and mounting, and it paints a stark, almost apocalyptic future for Small Island Developing States. Climate parameters in the region are changing, as has been posited by (CDEMA) and climate change scientists who presented their findings in the 2020 State of the Caribbean Climate Report. In the circumstances, CDEMA has cautioned that it is unreliable to use past disaster events as an indicator of what to expect in future disasters. CDEMA therefore stresses the enhanced need for investment in Early Warning Systems (EWS), particularly multi-hazard early warning systems.

By way of an example of what is happening in the Caribbean region, the Barbados Meteorological Service (BMS) has been in the process of revamping its EWS since June 2020. This process has included implementing national multi-hazard, impact-based forecasting (IBF) products and services to encompass the major hazards that pose a significant threat to lives and livelihoods in that country. The hazards covered include excessive rainfall, high winds, marine swells, Sahara dust and severe thunderstorms; tsunamis and volcanos were added to the list in 2021. To foster national support, stakeholder consultations were included, as it is the strong view of the BMS that the national early warning system must be an amalgamation of various processes, networks and technology and must be under near constant review by the BMS, national stakeholders and all citizens of Barbados.

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[37] https://www.undrr.org/implementing-sendai-framework/what-sendai-framework
[38] https://www.undrr.org/terminology/early-warning-system https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/climate-solutions/early-warning-systems
[39] https://unsdg.un.org/latest/stories/caribbean-sees-first-regional-launch-global-plan-early-warning-systems
[40] https://www.cdema.org/rrm/
[41] https://www.cdema.org/ews-project

A United Nations report on Caribbean, multi-hazard, early warning systems (MHEWS) is available.[42] It notes that gender considerations will have to be fully integrated into disaster risk reduction. The report further notes that the Caribbean is at a turning point towards addressing MHEWS in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. Such MHEWS are also being developed under South-South cooperation initiatives.[43] Technical cooperation is ongoing, but ultimately the establishment and functioning of such systems will depend on the access to the resources required to set these systems up and keep them working at critical times, particularly at the community level. Training for communities and identifying leaders who can be trained to support communities and assist with the spreading of best practices for disaster risk reduction at the community level will also be invaluable.

The Sendai Framework also articulates the following: the need for improved understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions of exposure, vulnerability and hazard characteristics; the strengthening of disaster risk governance, including national platforms; accountability for disaster risk management; preparedness to "Build Back Better;" recognition of stakeholders and their roles; mobilisation of risk-sensitive investment to avoid the creation of new risk; resilience of health infrastructure, cultural heritage and work-places; strengthening of international cooperation and global partnership, and risk-informed donor policies and programs, including financial support and loans from international financial institutions. There is also clear recognition of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and the regional platforms for disaster risk reduction as mechanisms for coherence across agendas, monitoring and periodic reviews in support of UN Governance. In the Caribbean where the risk and impact of disasters is high, the necessity of such EWHS and the protection offered by the policy umbrella of Sendai are equally high.

Given the high risk of and vulnerability to extreme weather events, the small island developing states of the Caribbean have given priority to disaster risk reduction and resilience building. Both are planks in the construction of national and regional development. The test of disaster risk reduction and resilience building is not merely one for the Caribbean region. Globally, from wildfires to droughts, to crop failures and famines, to heatwaves, to cyclones, to melting tarmacs, melting ice caps, ice storms, and every manifestation of extreme weather events, the world must adapt to and mitigate against climate change.[44]

COVID-19 showed how interconnected the world is and the way in which a health challenge in the East 'travelled' the globe, not only affecting healthcare systems but supply chains, inflation, social stability, the labour market and every sphere of development, society, economy and environment. The lesson of Covid was that national problems cannot be contained or prevented from crossing borders. Common solutions are needed to save the planet and its people. Disasters

[42] https://reliefweb.int/report/world/caribbean-multi-hazard-early-warning-systems-mhews-thematic-case-view-mid-term-review-implementation-sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030

[43] https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/latinamerica/9e95e812b60a808821f897ae31ae7fcf2af72d14dd11437c35cc2bc7f9f760c1.pdf

[44] https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/photos-extreme-weather-events-2023-climate-change/#:~:text=We%27ve%20already%20seen%20a,is%20happening%20here%20and%20now

and difficulties are not another's – they belong to all of us. Our responses will determine if we succeed together or fail apart and fall apart. Real resilience is working together and winning together.

Chapter 9

Disaster Risk and Resilience in Small Island Developing States

Dr. Khaled El Taweel, Programme Coordinator of the United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub[1]

Introduction

The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development was designed in a way that envisaged maximum synergies between its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while minimizing trade-offs. Among these goals, certain points hold a transformative power capable of influencing many SDGs.

Food Systems hold a key transformative power. They influence and are being influenced by many of the SDGs. They run across many of the SDGs: Food Systems are closely linked to SDG1 (poverty eradication) and SDG2 (zero hunger), and they play key roles in supporting or undermining the global efforts to ensure healthy lives (SDG3) and achieve equality (SDG5) (SDG10). Food Systems transformation can ensure the availability and sustainable management of water (SDG6) and can help mitigate climate change (SDG13), while encouraging collaboration among governments, the private sector, civil society and national and international organizations to achieve this transformation (SDG17).

The Food Systems Summit 2021

Acknowledging the centrality of sustainable food systems to our planet and livelihood, the Secretary General of the United Nations convened a Food Systems Summit in September 2021, emphasizing the important role that food systems play in Agenda 2030.[2]

The summit was organized in an inclusive way and brought together all UN Member States and constituencies around the world – including thousands of youths, food producers, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, researchers, the private sector and the UN system.

In his Chair Summary and Statement of Action, the United Nations Secretary- General stressed that many governments are committing to accelerate and deepen the transformative power of food systems in a manner aligned with the 2030 Agenda. The focus is increasingly centered on feeding growing populations in ways that contribute to people's nutrition, health and well-being;

[1]Khaled Eltaweel is the Programme Coordinator of the United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub. This chapter is based primarily on the presentation he delivered to the event organized by the Friends of Governance for Sustainable Development on the 10th of January 2023.
[2]https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit

restore, and protect nature, are climate neutral, adapted to local circumstances, and provide decent jobs and inclusive economies.[3]

The Summit emphasized the need for a systemic approach. Food system does not thrive without all sectors working as one, towards common goals. It involves multiple sectors of government and different groups of civil society, with the interaction of multiple scientific disciplines, as well as traditional and Indigenous knowledge.

The Food Systems Stocktaking Moment

To ensure that the commitments to transform food systems will go beyond expressions of intent, the UN Secretary-General committed to convening a global stock-taking meeting every two years to review progress in implementing the outcomes of this process and its contributions to the achievement of Agenda 2030.

The first of these Food Systems Stocktaking Moments will take place in July 2023. It will primarily give space to countries to report on the progress they have made in the implementation of their national pathways and food systems transformation visions at the national and sub-national levels, maintain the momentum for acceleration and bold action signalling national ownership of the food systems agenda, as well as solidify the global understanding of the role of food systems in achieving the SDGs, especially in the current food and cost-of-living crisis context.

The systemic approach necessitates that the stocktaking moment is connected with other important global events including the SDGs Summit (September 2023), the United Nations Climate Change Conference "COP 28" (November 2023), The Nutrition for Growth (2024), the Summit of the Future (2024) as well as the annual High-Level Political Fora and Financing for Development conferences.

The objective is to integrate Sustainable Food Systems transformation objectives across global, regional, and national policy discussions, commitments and targets ensuring that the power of sustainable food systems is used to support the achievement of the SDGs.

A World Off Track to Achieve the SDGs

The stocktaking moment takes place at a time when the world has changed substantially from what it was during the UN FSS, due to a number of pre-existing and ongoing challenges, including, but not limited to, the triple planetary crisis, the cost-of-living crisis and the impacts of conflicts on food systems.

[3] The Secretary General Chair Summary and Statement of Action https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/news/making-food-systems-work-people-planet-and-prosperity

In the context of these challenges, it is evident that the world is not on track to achieve most of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the meantime, it put additional emphasis on the role that sustainable food systems can play in supporting Agenda 2030.

The current food systems are not supportive of Agenda 2030. The hidden social, economic and environmental costs associated with today's food systems amount to a staggering USD12 trillion, undermining decades of collective development achievements.[4]

The State of Food Security and Nutrition Report (SOFI-2022) confirms what we already know. With eight years remaining to end hunger, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition (SDG Targets 2.1 and 2.2), the world is moving in the wrong direction. Between 702 and 828 million people were affected by hunger in 2021. The number has grown by about 150 million since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic – 103 million more people between 2019 and 2020 and around 46 million more in 2021.[5] It is estimated that nearly 670 million people will still be undernourished in 2030 – 8 percent of the world population, which is the same percentage as in 2015 when the 2030 Agenda was launched and which would officially declare the failure of SDG2.

The matter is not limited to hunger. Nutrition targets are also under pressure, especially with the increasing cost of a healthy diet, which is not unaffordable for almost 3.1 billion people – 42 percent - around the world.[6]

Moreover, we can see the negative impact on other SDGs. Although food systems account for a significant proportion of global employment, agricultural households constitute up to two-thirds of people living in extreme poverty worldwide pointing out the correlation between food systems, poverty and equality.

Meanwhile, the current food systems continue to negatively impact our environment and sustainability. They generate soil, water, and air pollution, contribute more than one-third of greenhouse gas emissions, as much as 80 percent of biodiversity loss, and use up to 70 percent of freshwater use.[7]

Increasing weather and climate extreme events have exposed millions of people to acute food insecurity and reduced water security, with the largest adverse impacts observed in many locations and/or communities in developing countries and least Developed Countries (LDCs).[8]

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[4] Growing Better: Ten Critical Transitions to Transform Food and Land Use, available from https://www.foodandlandusecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/FOLU-GrowingBetter-GlobalReport.pdf>

[5] The state of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023 https://www.fao.org/3/cc3017en/online/cc3017en.html

[6] The state of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 20232 https://www.fao.org/3/cc3017en/online/cc3017en.html https://www.fao.org/3/cc0639en/online/sofi-2022/food-security-nutrition-indicators.html..

[7] United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, 2022. The Global Land Outlook, second edition. UNCCD, Bonn, available at https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-04/UNCCD_GLO2_low-res_2.pdf

[8] Global Land Outlook (second edition) Land Restoration for Recovery and Resilience, available at https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-04/UNCCD_GLO2_low-res_2.pd

The Power of Food Systems

Facing all these compound challenges, the transformation of food systems presents itself as a unique opportunity to salvage the SDGs. We need more integrated and systematic approaches that address multiple goals simultaneously.

Food systems transformation presents an extraordinary opportunity to achieve the world's shared ambitions. The 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) stressed that the biggest transformative potentials of the 2030 Agenda did not lie in pursuing single Goals or targets, but in a systemic approach that manages their myriad interactions.[9] Because of their synergetic role, food systems are one of the key entry points needed to keep us on track to achieve the SDGs.

These shifts have the potential to generate multiplier effects, acting as catalysts for broader transformation across multiple systems and SDGs, by reimagining and redesigning our food systems.

Building on the vision of the UN Food Systems Summit held in 2021, global efforts can accelerate actions toward more sustainable, inclusive, equitable and nutritious food systems.

As stated by the United Nations Secretary General in 2021, countries should go beyond rhetoric and take concrete steps towards implementing their newly adopted food systems national pathways which are the agreed strategic frameworks tailored to each country's context, outlining specific actions to be undertaken for food systems transformation.

The stocktaking moment will discuss the signs of food systems transformation, the challenges facing efforts in this direction, and how we can learn from success stories. It is evident that this transformation requires profound shifts across the value chain from production to storage to consumption and disposal of food.

Additionally, the stocktaking moment will be an opportunity to uphold and upgrade these pathways ensuring that are in line with national priorities and new realities.

An Inclusive Preparatory Process

The High-Level Political Forum in 2022 gave a clear direction for the future global work on food systems. Members agreed to remain committed to keeping a strong focus on the sustainable transformation of the global agrifood system, aiming for a global system that can deliver sufficient, safe, affordable, nutritious food and healthy diets for all people and provide employment and income, particularly in rural areas, while at the same time fully respecting planetary boundaries in line with the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity and its upcoming post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

[9] Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: The Future is Now – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development, (United Nations, New York, 2019), https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf

This also emphasized the inclusivity of themes and stakeholders, a concept that is at the core of the Stocktaking Moment.

In preparation for the stocktaking moment, the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, in collaboration with the UN Regional Commissions and other regional partners, is organizing a series of five regional preparatory meetings in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Arab Region. The meetings will include representatives from governments, private sector, civil society and regional bodies.

These meetings will as a platform for the sharing of experiences, good practices, and lessons learned in regional National Convenors' efforts to follow up on the UN FSS, including through the operationalization and implementation of their national pathways.

In addition, participants will be invited to identify priority actions and key messages for the region, to be synthesized in the form of a technical report.

The regional preparatory meetings will provide an overview of countries' progress, challenges, and key priorities leading up to the stocktaking moment. They will facilitate discussions among stakeholders to evaluate efforts and identify challenges.

By engaging in these consultations, National Convenors and other stakeholders will contribute to building a collective understanding of progress made and identify areas for improvement for each region. They will provide important inputs for the vision and roadmap of the stocktaking moment.

Additionally, the preparatory meetings will seek to ensure that the stocktaking moment is lined with other important meetings that takes place in 2023 and beyond.

The Work of the Hub

In order to better understand the country’s needs and priorities, the Food Systems Coordination Hub conducted a survey in 2022. This survey was a crucial step in understanding what countries need to transform their food systems and what their priorities are.

The survey showed clearly that countries prioritize advocacy-driven systemic policy and institutional strengthening as the first step toward the 2023 stocktake moment. As a no surprise, financing was identified as a priority area that is indispensable for food systems transformation.

Moreover, counties are expecting support in leveraging the connections, existing tools, knowledge and networks that can play a key role in national implementation.

Measuring progress and evaluation is another area where needs are high, especially among developing countries.

The countries’ priorities are shaping the work of the Hub. The Hub is working closely with national Convenors to address their needs.

These needs have informed the Hub work plan's six key functions. These functions were designed to empower the Hub to coordinate multistakeholder, multisectoral and multilevel support for countries to achieve their pathways, respecting principles of subsidiarity and leaving no one behind:

a) Supporting National Pathways implementation.

b) Strengthening strategic thought leadership.

c) Engaging with the ecosystem of support and stakeholders.

d) Mobilizing adequate means for collective implementation.

e) Communicating and advocating the food system's approach.

f) Preparing for the Stocktaking Moment.

For instance, the Hub is working closely with IFAD and the World Bank to develop a budgeting tool that will help countries understand their financing needs and funding gaps in food systems transformation. This is a crucial step for achieving the SDGs. The Hub is also helping in advocacy, not only at the international level but also at the regional and national level to make sure that food systems are on top of these agendas and that funding is sufficiently allocated to food systems.

The Hub is capitalizing on south-south and triangular cooperation as a vehicle to share knowledge and success stories amongst countries facing similar challenges.

In the long term, the main challenge is systematic policy change. This is something that will take time, but the Hub is working closely with national convenors to make the needed change.

The Hub is also trying to assess how to monitor the progress. The stocktaking moment is a crucial step in this direction. Members reported on what they have achieved and what challenges they face. The Hub is helping countries in developing evaluation indicators working closely with regional bodies.

Conclusions

The stocktaking moment is a crucial opportunity to solidify the global understanding of the role of food systems in achieving the SDGs. It will build on the momentum of the 2021 Food Systems Summit and will create a conducive space for countries to review progress on the commitments to action and identify successes, enduring bottlenecks and priorities in order to close the implementation gap by effectively and efficiently utilizing the Means of Implementation for food systems transformation.

It is an opportunity to further socialize the powerful role of sustainable, equitable, healthy and resilient food systems as critical SDG accelerators and advocate for urgent action at scale, building on the latest evidence that sustainable food systems contribute to better and more sustainable outcomes for people, planet and prosperity leaving no one behind.

Food systems go beyond their basic function and become powerful forces for change that impact economies, societies, and the environment. Transforming these systems to align with the SDGs shows how humanity can bring together its hopes and actions. This commitment is an investing in a future where success isn't seen in separate achievements, but in how different goals work together. In a very challenging world, our collective mindset should realize that food systems are not the problem but the solution.

Chapter 10

Leading With Compassion on Global Issues

Philip Lymbery, Global CEO of Compassion in World Farming International

The choice now facing humanity is extinction or regeneration. Looked at through the lens of the four seasons, our society is currently living through summer, an endless party, a time of limitless consumption as if the planet has no boundaries. Yet, the browning leaves of autumn are starting to show as anxiety grows over the climate and nature crises. Carry on as we are, and we face a perpetual winter. Covid-19 gave us a collective taste of that perpetual winter. It showed how society is vulnerable, fragile, not to be taken for granted.

But how do we get to a new spring? The great news is there are beautiful, life-affirming, compassionate solutions already at hand that can take us to that never-ending spring.

Focal Points

We need to move quickly. If we are to have any chance at all of addressing pressing planetary emergencies of climate and the collapse of nature, or achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we will have to focus on where we can have the most impact.

So, let's ask ourselves, then, what is the biggest land user on the planet? It's food. What is responsible for a third of greenhouse gas emissions more than any other sector? It's food. What accounts for 70% of all freshwater use in the world? It's food.

What this tells us is that the answer to addressing the climate and biodiversity crises, water conservation issues, and meeting the SDGs lies with our food system.

When it comes to food, animal welfare, and the environment, we're starting to see how things are intertwined. There is a growing recognition of the principle of One Health, One Welfare: that the future health of people relies on the wellbeing of animals and a thriving ecosystem. That we are all in it together.

Joining the dots with an open mind should quickly get us to the point where we can see that being cruel to animals harms us all. This was brought home to me when out walking the fields near the farm hamlet that is my home in the south of England.

Walking on the Moon

It was early morning, and a tractor was pulling a plough. Back and forth it went, ploughing its lonely furrows. Behind the tractor, dust clouds spiralled and caught the sun, creating an aura. A timeless symbol of the season. Only, something was missing: there were no screeching gulls following the plough in search of worms.

I took a closer look. The tractor was ploughing across a footpath, giving me a bird's-eye view of the newly upturned soil. As I stared down, do you know what I saw? Nothing.

There were no worms, beetles, or bugs desperate to get back into their world turned upside down. The soil was lifeless. It was like sand. We could have been walking on the moon. That field should have had millions of worms in every hectare, in every patch the size of a football pitch.

There should have been 13,000 species of life with a collective weight of an elephant: five tonnes. But instead, there was nothing. The field was planted with maize (corn), a crop commonly used as animal feed. Treated with chemical pesticides and artificial fertilisers, the soil had degenerated and was washing into the river.

It reminded me of seeing flowing green oceans of maize corn in the American Midwest of Nebraska, much of which was destined for the feed troughs of factory-farmed chickens, pigs and cattle. I remember seeing feedlots. Hundreds of cows and calves stood in barren pens, not a blade of grass in sight. Despite the hot summer sun, they had no shade. I watched as they jostled in the searing heat, trying to get in each other's shadow for some respite.

It was a potent example of the factory farming regime that now ravages the planet.

Industrial Farming

Industrial agriculture is a recent phenomenon. It was but a single human lifetime ago when we started removing animals from the land to be caged, crammed and confined. Vast acreages of cropland elsewhere were then devoted to growing their feed. Factory farming was born.

Far from making food, factory farming wastes it. Animals are not efficient in converting crops into meat, milk and eggs. They waste most of the food value in terms of calories and protein in the process. In this way, we squander enough food to feed four billion people – that's half of humanity alive today.

What has become obvious is that the way that we produce and consume food has changed beyond all recognition. It has become more industrialized and more focused around animal-sourced foods. That change has brought us to the point where intensive food production is now the biggest driver of wildlife declines worldwide. Through the factory farming of animals, it has become the world's biggest cause of animal cruelty.

It is also what is undermining the very thing we need to produce food in the future soil, which is why the UN has rightly warned that if we carry on as we are, we have just sixty harvests left in the world's soil. No soil, no food – game over.

The choice before us, then, is extinction or regeneration, which was the theme of the major conference organised by Compassion in World Farming in partnership with IPES-Food and other multi-sectoral partners in London in May 2023. It was a conference that brought together thought leaders, academics, farming practitioners and those working on the front line of new and regenerative solutions to talk about how the food system needs to change.

UN Food Systems Summit

The conference was building on the groundbreaking work of the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021, which was a crucial milestone for saving the planet. World leaders gathered for what was billed as a 'people's summit,' it brought together a wide diversity of voices globally, including young people, women, food producers, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, researchers, private sector, finance and governments. Its stated aim was to focus on transforming food systems to drive our recovery from Covid-19 and get us back on track to achieve all 17 SDGs by 2030.

Lord Zac Goldsmith, Minister for the Environment, spoke on behalf of the UK; his was just one of more than 90 government statements delivered at the summit. "Our food systems are heaping costs on future generations and on the planet," Goldsmith warned. The way we produce and consume food is "fundamentally unsustainable, increasing the risk of zoonoses and the threat of antimicrobial resistance and putting impossible pressure on freshwater, forests, biodiversity, climate and weather systems." He continued by referring to the independent review of the nation's food strategy together with action on food waste and plans to switch farm subsidies to support good environmental stewardship.

Like other governmental leaders, Goldsmith called for global action to feed everyone whilst tackling the growing challenges of health, climate and biodiversity loss. There was no shortage of fighting talk coming out of the summit.

The man behind the summit, the UN's Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, framed the problem saying, "We are waging a war against nature - and reaping the bitter harvest. Ruined crops, dwindling incomes and failing food systems… The war on the planet must end, and food systems can help us build that peace."

The gauntlet to world leaders was well and truly thrown down.

Changing the Narrative

What the summit achieved was a changing of the narrative, moving away from 'business as usual with a few tweaks' to one that speaks to the need for transformational approaches to food system reform. It felt like we were entering a new era of thinking.

Thirty years ago, the paradigm was very much that things have 'never been better' and that anyone raising issues like hunger, wildlife declines or animal cruelty was being annoyingly political. Radical even. All we could hope for were tweaks to the system to make it less bad. Fundamental change was but a pipedream.

If government interventions at the summit were anything to go by, official attitudes are changing. A procession of national leaders queued up to recite reasons for food system change. The emphasis was on things like aiming for the provision of school meals for every child, zero food waste and agricultural innovation. Profoundly good and much needed changes.

Yet what seemed obvious was that the changes governments were gravitating toward were low

hanging fruit rather than fundamental.

Blind Spot

Much rarer were statements offering genuine game-changers, such as moving away from industrial animal agriculture and tackling diets over-reliant on livestock products. The reality is that without moving away from factory farming, most of those UN SDGs will remain seriously out of reach as will addressing the growing crises of climate, nature, and pollution. So far, it remains largely a universal governmental blind spot. Without tackling factory farming and associated diets heavy in animal products, our global society will continue heading toward an existential threat.

Scientists are clear that we have less than a decade left to cut emissions to keep global warming within 1.5 degrees Celsius of temperature rise deemed 'safe'. As it stands, government pledges made at COP26 leave the world on course for global temperatures to increase by 2.4 degrees Celsius.

Climate change will hit developing countries and people on low incomes disproportionately hard. It will also affect animals, not only leading to extinctions but greater suffering caused by flooding, drought and wildfire disasters like those seen in Australia, Pakistan and the Amazon.

As for nature, if we carry on as we have done for the last half a century, the world is on course for almost total obliteration of our wildlife by 2040. At the same time, tropical forests, vital as the lungs of the Earth, are under enormous pressure, not least through expansion of industrial agriculture. Current rates of deforestation look set to erase an area of forest the size of half the EU by 2040. On top of this, the soil – the very thing that stores so much atmospheric carbon and water, as well as producing most of our food – is disappearing, with industrial agriculture being largely responsible. By 2040, in a world with more than a billion more mouths to feed, there could be a third less soil, with devastating implications for food production.

Decisive Decade

The 2020s have been described as the 'decisive decade' on climate change. The available evidence shows that without ending factory farming and associated high-meat diets, it will be followed by the 'desperate decade' of the 2030s where government leaders scramble belatedly to do what they should have done today. Urgent action is needed to stave off a planetary tailspin and the 'deadly decades' that would follow.

What the data tells us is that shifting to regenerative farming and diets much less dependent on animal products needs to happen now, with the utmost urgency. Leaving it beyond 2040 will be too late.

Largely Absent

Outside the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit and its associated Stocktaking Moment in 2023, transforming food systems barely gets a mention. It's so often overlooked when talking about how to achieve the SDGs. It hardly figures in global talks on biodiversity or climate, rendering the latest

COP (Conference of the Parties) a copout. It's the elephant in the room.

Addressing the elephant in the room means facing up to the prospect that as things stand, our over-consumption of meat alone could trigger catastrophic climate change. This is why we need a food system based not on cruelty, extraction and decline, but on putting back into nature's bank account, working in harmony with Mother Nature, and respecting animal sentience as key to a future-fit food system. As things stand, the one thing we can be sure of is that big change is inevitable. We simply cannot go on as we are.

Beyond Sustainability

In a world with more mouths to feed and shrinking planetary resources in terms of land, water and climate stability, being able to do tomorrow what we do today – the definition of sustainability – won't be enough.

Instead, we need solutions that are regenerative – working with nature in ways that put back by rebuilding soils, water and wildlife biodiversity while producing nutritious food in ways that ensure all animals can flourish from high welfare.

Embracing a Positive Future

This is why we need those beautiful, life-affirming, compassionate solutions – which can be summed up as the three 'R's: Regeneration, Rethinking Protein, and Rewilding, not least of all the soil.

Regeneration of the countryside through high-welfare, nature-friendly or regenerative farming involves restoring animals to the land as rotational grazers or foragers where they can express their natural behaviours – running, flapping, grazing – making for happier animals with better health, too. Regenerative farming cuts reliance on chemical pesticides, fertilisers and antibiotics, reducing costs to farmers and creating a varied landscape bursting with wildflowers that lure back pollinating insects like bumblebees as well as providing seeds and insects for birds and other wildlife.

We need to rethink protein by reducing our consumption of meat and milk from animals. Combining regenerative farming with a serious reduction in the number of farmed animals can create food systems that are genuinely sustainable. Based on scientific assessments within the EAT-Lancet Planetary Health Diet, we can see that saving the planet will require drastic reductions in consumption of animal-sourced foods. Evidence shows that by the middle of the century, our consumption of animal products globally must be reduced by more than half. In high-consuming regions such as the West, deeper cuts will be needed. For example, the UK and EU would need reductions of two-thirds, while the US would need a reduction of four-fifths.

By rethinking protein, meat from farmed animals would come only from higher welfare, nature-friendly regenerative farms. Consumption of animal-sourced foods would be reduced through replacement with plant-based and other alternative proteins, including cultivated meat and precision fermentation, together with eating more fruit, vegetables, and legumes.

We need to rewild the soil returning animals to the land regeneratively as part of mixed rotational farms where they can turbocharge soil fertility. Farmed animals could be living their best lives, huge amounts of carbon could be locked up in healthy soil, much more water would be conserved for crops, and a vast array of biodiversity would be restored to thriving farmland.

Towards a New Day

We urgently need a new dawn for animals, people and the planet. The big question is: how do we get there, and fast?

The major challenge and opportunity ahead of us is to integrate transformation of food systems as a central theme, not just in the UN Food Systems Summit Stocktaking Moment but also in global conversations on climate, water, biodiversity and achieving the SDGs. In this way, each conference would be building on the last, helping to address the elephant in the room – food system transformation – in ways that could truly help to build the outcome of the other conferences.

Ending the war on the planet and building peace through nature-friendly food systems means moving away from damaging and unsustainable industrial agriculture. It means moving towards more balanced diets, avoiding the prospect where our over-consumption of meat alone could trigger catastrophic climate change. It means embracing food systems that are truly nature-based, animal-friendly, inclusive, livelihood-sustaining, and carbon-capturing. It means making decent, nutritious, planet- and animal-friendly food a basic human right, not just a privilege for those who can afford it. It means moving to an agro-ecological and regenerative food future.

If existing forums on climate, biodiversity, food security and the SDGs are to have any hope of being successful, then what is hugely needed is a dedicated UN forum on food – a framework agreement on transforming food systems toward a new agro-ecological era.

Key Stakeholder Actions

So, who needs to be involved and how? The answer lies in us all playing our part: governments and the EU, business, finance, the UN and civil society working in partnership to transform the food system. It lies in governments creating policy environments for change, using directives, incentives and subsidies to steer food and farming away from cages and confinement toward this new animal and nature-friendly era. The opportunities for greening food production are enormous – take subsidies, for example. Globally, governments provide $700 billion a year in farm subsidies, more than $1m per minute, much of which currently drives industrial farming, the climate crisis and destruction of wildlife. That money could be far better spent on regenerative farming and reducing demand for meat.

Food companies must set measurable targets for the reduction of animal-sourced foods, shunning those from the factory farm altogether. Cage-free commitments are a key prerequisite to humane and sustainable food. Moreover, the financial sector must ensure funding is available to support the transition toward welfare-friendly and nature-positive practices.

Policymakers need to recognise that big change is inevitable. We no longer have the luxury of asking if we can afford to change. Leadership is therefore needed at the highest level through an overarching UN Global Agreement to transform food systems. Such an agreement should recognize food's central role in the success of existing conventions, not least on climate and biodiversity. The agreement should move agriculture away from factory farming and recognise animal welfare as an essential element of sustainable food systems and thereby a future for all.

We are beyond the eleventh hour. We have just 8 harvests left to save the SDGs. We have just sixty harvests left to save the future for our children. For animals, people and the planet, the clock is ticking. There is no time to lose. What we do now will define the next one thousand years. Let's get to it.

Chapter 11

Integrating the Review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction with the Food Systems Summit Stocktake

Arjan van Houwelingen, World Federation for Animals

The period between 2012, when the global community embraced a collective vision of 'The future we want' at the Rio+20 conference, and 2015, when the global community adopted the Sustainable Development Agenda, the Paris Climate Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, felt like a period of hope and enthusiasm to many. This was a period where Member States converged on a common agenda, a shared sense of urgency and a collective conviction of the need for true transformative change, while at the same time retaining a sense of focus.

The need for transformative change was reflected in both the title of GA resolution 70/1 - 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' - as well as its core content where Member States "*committed to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – in a balanced and integrated manner*." With this, Member States redefined the concept of sustainable development by i) clarifying that the three dimensions of sustainable development are one integrated whole, ii) elevating the protection of the environment to equal the need for economic prosperity and social progress; and iii) determining that progress across the three dimensions can only be achieved in a balanced and parallel manner.

The sense of focus was encapsulated in the phrase "*Leave no one behind*" reflecting a consensus that in order to effectively address the world's sustainability and development challenges, the effort should start with addressing the issues of poverty and the vulnerability of both people and planet.

That seemingly clashing need for transformative change and a sense of focus was also reflected in the Sendai Framework in what was a clear and perhaps relatively simple narrative embedded throughout the language of the Framework and subsequently also in the Sendai Framework core indicator set.

The narrative becomes apparent almost immediately in the expected outcome statement of the Sendai Framework. Here, in a departure from the Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA), which largely focused on the imperative to saving people's lives and protecting critical infrastructure, the Sendai Framework clarified that effective disaster risk reduction requires a strategic shift from disaster management (or how to deal more effectively with the effects of disasters) to disaster risk management (or how to be more effective in preventing the effects of disasters from occurring in the first place). Additionally, and equally important, the Sendai Framework

expected outcome statement recognized that this shift means that real resilience comes from the protection of not just people's lives but also their livelihoods and health.

Subsequently, in the Sendai Framework's Guiding Principles, UN Member States further clarify that the protection of people's livelihoods means, first of all, a focus on the protection of people's productive assets and, secondly, a need to provide special attention to people disproportionally affected by disasters, especially the poorest.

In the Priorities for Action section of the Sendai Framework, Member States defined the key productive assets most in need of protection to secure the livelihoods of the poorest and those most vulnerable to disasters as "livestock, working animals, tools and seeds," recognizing that agriculture is the most vulnerable sector to the effects of disasters.

This sense of focus on the need to protect people's livelihoods was eventually also reflected in the core set of Sendai Framework indicators through the inclusion (for the first time) of an indicator (B5) that specifically measures the impact of disasters on people's livelihoods.

One could argue that this clear narrative is also present in Sustainable Development Goal 2 where targets 2.1 and 2.3 encouraged a focus on the poor and vulnerable and stimulating the livelihoods of small-scale producers while target 2.4 recognized the particular vulnerability of the agricultural sector to the effects of disasters.

A great deal of progress has been made since the adoption of the Sendai Framework, particularly in the areas of early warning systems, strengthening disaster loss and risk data, and transboundary cooperation. However, the 2022 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction Co-chair's summary clarifies that there is still a clear need for accelerated implementation across the Sendai Framework's priorities to stop the spiral of increasing disaster impact and risk. Government policies remain largely reactive and the vast majority of public spending is still allocated to recovery efforts and infrastructure and not in support of affected people and their key productive assets. Agriculture remains the most vulnerable sector to disasters and absorbs most disaster losses.

As such, it will be important that the Sendai Framework Mid-Term Review and subsequently the Food Systems stocktake moment will revisit and re-emphasize the key narrative and sense of focus that was identified back in 2015. In order to truly protect the lives of the poorest and those most vulnerable to disasters, it is crucial to focus on enhancing the resilience of people's livelihoods. To do this, greater attention and investment is needed in relation to the protection of the key productive assets that the poor and vulnerable rely on for their livelihoods, in particular livestock, working animals, tools and seeds.

The UN Food Systems Summit equally reflected the Sendai Framework narrative through the inclusion of the importance of advancing equitable livelihoods and building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stresses in two of its five action areas. With natural disasters already being the single greatest cause of agriculture production losses across the globe, it will be critical for the upcoming stocktake event, which is intended to be solutions-oriented, to highlight the

need for greater attention and investment in the protection of key agricultural productive assets, as defined in the Sendai Framework, and to equip Member States with practical tools to do so.

More broadly, the protection of animals and their welfare could be considered an effective pathway to ensure an integrated approach or policy coherence across UN processes and conferences, particularly those focused on securing a sustainable future for all.

For instance, with regard to climate change, the protection of animals is crucial to maintaining the carbon sequestration capacity of Earth's natural carbon sinks, without which the drive to achieve net zero will fail. In relation to biodiversity, the IPBES 2019 Global Assessment clarified that the systems of production and consumption that rely on the inhumane use of animals are the dominant drivers of harm to nature. Similarly, with regard to pollution, it is increasingly clear that only a transformation towards more regenerative, nature-based and humane food systems can stem the tide of altered biochemical cycles (phosphorous and nitrogen) exceeding planetary boundaries even further. Finally, with regard to health, only a truly integrated One Health approach focused on preventing zoonotic disease from emerging can contribute to reducing the risk of future pandemic disease.

On a related note, it will also be important for Member States to heed the call by the UN Secretary-General in "Our Common Future" to urgently find measures of progress that complement GDP and account for planetary sustainability. The valuation of nature is crucial to ensuring the true value of the natural world and all that inhabits it are taken into account when developing policies to secure economic prosperity or social progress. Within such a context, animal welfare will unavoidably be regarded as an investment that provides positive direct benefits across all three dimensions of sustainable development.

The direct benefits of the protection of animals and their welfare for addressing environmental challenges and achieving sustainable development and resilience was recognized by Member States in the Sendai Framework, the Food Systems Summit and again, more recently, in UNEA resolution 5/1. To achieve the kind of transformation envisioned in Sendai, Paris, and New York back in 2015, it is now imperative this recognition be applied and translated into real action in the coming years.

Specifically, with regard to the Sendai Mid-Term Review and the 2023 Food Systems stocktake event, following the pathway of protecting livelihoods through a focus on the key productive assets of the poor and those most vulnerable, including livestock, working animals, tools and seeds, is perhaps the most efficient route to addressing vulnerability, enhancing resilience, addressing food insecurity, and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development agenda.