

Science-policy Interface for Integrated Decision-making for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Beyond

The Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations, in partnership with Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future and co-sponsored by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the International Science Council

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Informed and integrated decision-making is essential for addressing the interconnected challenges arising from the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The science-policy interface (SPI) serves as a bridge between research and policymaking, enabling identification of evidence-based solutions. Strengthening this interface is critical for fostering coherence, effectiveness, and innovation in SDG implementation. However, the relationship between science and policy is neither linear nor one-dimensional. The interface between science and policy is a complex space, in theory and practice, that sees the interaction of various actors and perspectives coming together to enable policy-relevant evidence to support decision-making. Its complexities may be better understood as nexus relationships with multiple entry points. Applying science is therefore important to make decisions relevant and credible. It has different roles to play at the different stages of the policy process, from identification of issues and analyzing problems, agenda setting and identification of goals and objectives, to selecting methodology and tools, and finally to monitor and evaluate outcomes and lead to subsequent changes in policies and evaluation of their impacts.

Communication between scientists on one hand, and policy-makers and the wider public, on the other, is one of the critical factors impacting the effectiveness of SPIs. Scientific information is more likely to be used if it is delivered in appropriate formats, at the right time and through the appropriate channels. Demonstrating the relevance of scientific research to solving real-world problems people care about as a matter of priority is crucial to effectiveness.

Commonly accepted criteria for assessing the effectiveness, influence, efficacy and impact of science-policy interfaces are credibility, relevance and legitimacy. Other criteria often mentioned are accessibility, transdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary. Credibility refers to the perceived quality, validity and scientific adequacy of the information generated and convened at the SPI such as the perceived scientific and technical soundness of scientific assessment. Relevance refers to the alignment of scientific evidence to the needs and priorities of decision-makers. Its results need to be useful, applicable and practical for decision-makers to make informed decisions. Legitimacy reflects the perception that the generation of scientific findings has been unbiased and has considered all relevant inputs. In addition to applying the additional three criteria, SPI approaches must also ensure that principles of good governance are upheld.

This side event will look at ways to use the SPI for effective integrated decision making at different stages of the policy making process and to inform and engage different stakeholders from governments, intergovernmental organizations, and academia to civil society organizations in shaping effective evidence-based policies they can support to accelerate implementation of the SDGs in the five years until 2030. Science is forward-looking, exploring emerging issues and new solutions, and in this regard the SPI should be an important place for consideration of the way forward on a global sustainable development agenda and how it can be best used to inform thinking Beyond 2030.