



Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Climate Change: Learning and Practice Opportunities

9 November 2021

9:15AM – 10:45AM (EST/NY time) and 14:15 – 15:45 (Glasgow)

COP 26 SDG Pavilion and Virtual (via Zoom)

Co-organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DESA/DSDG) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)

EVENT SUMMARY

Background

On 9 November 2021, from 9:15-10:45 EDT, DESA/DSDG and UNITAR organized [**Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\) and Climate Change: Learning and Practice Opportunities**](#) at the UNDESA “SDG Pavilion” during the [**United Nations Climate Change Conference \(COP 26\)**](#) in Glasgow. The hybrid event featured discussions about the importance of reinforcing learning opportunities on the interlinkages between climate change and SDG implementation. The “Climate Classroom” led by UNITAR provided an actual learning session with 110 online and several in-person attendees. The event targeted climate change and SDG global communities in particular in-country SDG focal points, UNRCOs, ACE focal points, international organizations, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders. More information and a recording of the event can be found [here](#).

Opening remarks and context setting

Ms. Naiara Costa, Senior Sustainable Development Officer, Outreach and Partnerships Branch, moderated this session and introduced panelists, provided some housekeeping announcements, and opened the session.

Mr. Nikhil Seth, United Nations Assistant Secretary-general, Executive Director, UNITAR, started by pointing out some highlights about the global COVID-19 public health crisis, the increase in extreme poverty and the rise in global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and how the world community may not be able to reach the goals of keeping climate change and global temperature increases in check and below 1.5 degrees Celsius. He emphasized that if we don't have sustainable agriculture in our water scarce world, energy for all, sustainable cities, meet our goal on water and sustainable infrastructure we are neither achieving the SDGs nor climate ambition. UNITAR's mission is to develop the individual, institutional and organizational capacities of countries and other UN stakeholders through high-quality learning solutions and related knowledge products and services to enhance decision making and to support country-level action for overcoming global challenges. UNITAR is building on their experience in designing and creating E-learning courses, and successfully created a

set of comprehensive and interactive E-learning courses through the [UN CC:Learn](#) and the [SDG:Learn](#) platforms that address the synergies between climate and SDGs. It is their hope to reach more policy makers, decision makers, scholars, students, and individuals who are passionate about a future where the challenges outlined in the Paris Agreement and the SDGs are achieved.

Ms. Lotta Tahtinen, Chief, Outreach and Partnerships Branch, DSDG, UN DESA, reminded the opening statement from the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, at COP26 that the six years since the Paris Agreement have been the six hottest years on record. Moreover, Ms. Tahtinen noted the impact of climate change, as oceans are hotter than ever, glaciers are melting rapidly, the sea level is rising at an increasing rate, and parts of the Amazon Forest are emitting more carbon dioxide than they absorb. She also brought attention to the call from youth to put climate justice to be at the core of decision making, with transparency and inclusion at the whole process. Ms. Tahtinen also recognized the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has increased the number of poor people in 2020 by between 119 and 124 million, causing the extreme poverty rate to rise for the first time in a generation. Additionally, Ms. Tahtinen drew attention to the Second Ocean Conference (2022) and the Water Conference (2023), as these conferences will take part in strengthening the efforts to drive solutions to tackle climate change and achieve the Agenda 2030. Finally, she recognized the importance of the contribution of all sectors to solve the challenges faced today, and therefore launched the new module on “Leaving no one behind” of the MOOC “[Strengthening Stakeholder Engagement for the Implementation and Review of the 2030 agenda](#)”, which is open to all interested participants.

"Harnessing Climate & SDG Synergies" E-learning course - An introduction

Mr. David Koranyi, Consultant for Energy Policy Analysis, Sustainable Energy Team, DSDG, UN DESA, **Mr. Pelayo Alvarez**, Programme and Communications Coordinator, UNITAR NYO, and **Ms. Tianyi Zhao**, Programme Consultant, UNITAR NYO, introduced the "[Harnessing Climate & SDG Synergies" E-learning course](#)", launched by UNITAR, UNDESA and UNFCCC and which builds on the outcomes of the [Climate and SDGs synergies conference in 2019](#) and [online consultations in 2020-2021](#) on this topic. The course is organized in modules: The Global Challenges: Poverty and Inequality, Climate Change, and the Pandemic, The Universally Agreed Global Vision: Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement, and Need to increase the level of ambition on climate change. The main objectives are to educate the public on the positive relations between pursuing climate goals and implementing SDGs, to introduce new sustainable business opportunities and possibilities for stakeholders by making the case for synergies, to introduce the tools used to identify and harness climate & SDG interlinkages, provide practical guidance on the industry level, and to elaborate on the strategies to overcome implementation challenges. Eventually, the course aims to turn the pursuit of positive climate impact and the achievement of SDGs an industry and policy standards.

Climate Classroom – ‘Changing the language of climate change’

Mr. Angus Mackay, Director, Division for Planet, UNITAR, remarked that climate change is complex and that the current language of climate change is hard to relate to, multi-dimensional, science based, procedural. Solutions must engage all since climate change impacts us all; its effects are localized and that everyone has a role to play. For this to happen, he emphasized that the importance of language to influence behavior. He questioned if we were using the full power of words to save our societies and our planet. The Enablers and Barriers in Communication were presented, and it was remarked that language can be an active ingredient for solutions that involve all. Finally, it was remarked that

there should be one language of science and diplomacy and no place for fake news. Lastly, that there should be global and local languages of change as potential solutions because climate issues must be made relatable to the many; it must become inclusive.

Closing Remarks

Mr. Angus Mackay, Director, Division for Planet, UNITAR, remembered how the inclusivity of language, the different expressions to refer to climate change in different countries and how this affects the way actions are taken and the issues are addressed. Some attendees were given the floor to speak their ideas and comments towards the role of different sectors of society in the implementation of language for all and for future generations.

Ms. Naiara Costa, Senior Sustainable Development Officer, Outreach and Partnerships Branch, thanked the assistance of the participants both in person and online and read out loud some comments made from the attendees of their message to COP26 leaders.