

TEMPLATE – SIDE EVENTS SUMMARIES

TWO PAGES MAXIMUM

Summary of Side Event: “Science partnerships: supporting SDG policy and budget decisions that are backed by science and expertise”

31 January 2023, 1:15 PM - 2:30 PM (EST, New York time)

Background on the event (one paragraph)

In Our Common Agenda, UNSG António Guterres makes a strong call for all policy and budget decisions to be “backed by science and expertise”. In the second half of SDG implementation, evidence-based solutions will be crucial to ensure acceleration is effective. The course we take from now on will set an example of how international agendas and global goals fare in terms of leading us to a more sustainable future. This side event focused on this issue and addressed how the spirit of the SDGs as the world’s first effort to bring together all dimensions of sustainable development can be upheld in the second half of implementation and how to avoid questionable cherry-picking of goals. The event also discussed how science partners can support the need to be more practical and more focused from now and until 2030.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- There is surprisingly little science-based evaluation of what works, and which interventions are effective on the ground regarding progress on the 2030 Agenda.
- Partners must think about long-term transformative change, but it is challenging to make any structural change halfway through the agenda. It is time to be pragmatic and achieve as much progress as we can.
- Synergies between the SDGs can be enhanced through existing multi-stakeholder partnerships.
- The steering effects of the SDGs are so far mainly present in political discourses and to some extent at the institutional level. This can be seen as the first step for political action in assessing SDG impacts.
- Even if the transformation brought upon by Agenda 2030 has been mainly rhetorical, the SDGs are changing awareness, holding governments accountable, and offering instruments for local governments and local decision-makers.

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- Science must conduct evaluation research to assess SDG progress and implementation, and the experts must explore how to showcase the results. Likewise, science must ensure data availability and participatory modeling to create the capacity to use evidence and data for evaluating progress.
- *Futures thinking* is key for approaching the SDGs. The idea is to imagine the future and to use that image to take that scenario to reality. Futurist lens or foresight helps to think about how we put insights together to create scenarios and assess what is possible. Then, we can action that imagined future.
- SDG Push will be a strategy to shape the impact of targeted policy interventions in specific scenarios that can accelerate progress. This is a new international futures and systems approach to modeling.
- Science must investigate the normative and institutional effects of the SDGs considering 5 governance dimensions: global governance, implementation at multiple levels, institutional integration and coherence, inclusiveness at global and local scales, and planetary integrity.
- Academia, NGOs, and research institutes should enhance systematic literature reviews on interventions to advance SDGs, systematic reviews on SDG interlinkages, and integration of SDGs into curricula.
- The upcoming events, especially those of high-political influence such as the SDG Summit should integrate Futures and Partnerships dimensions. We must use science to identify the leverage points and synergistic areas. This is the moment for a political commitment that will determine the outcomes in the second half of the Agenda 2030.