

**Statement by University Leaders in Support of The Summit of the Future  
UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network  
June 22, 2024**

We university leaders from around the world are united in support of the Sustainable Development Goals and pledge to support governments, businesses, and civil society to achieve these goals. As members of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), we issue this statement to support the UN member states as they prepare for The Summit of the Future (SOTF).

SDSN was created in 2012 under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General to help governments promulgate the SDGs, and then achieve them, through the education of young people, scholarly research, incubation of technical and institutional innovations, outreach to society, and active work with government, business, and other stakeholders. SDSN has around 2,000 member institutions in more than 140 nations. Its SDG Academy offers free online university courses and other educational materials across the range of sustainable development fields and topics. The SDSN is committed to supporting the UN in its vital efforts for peace, human rights, sustainable development.

The SDGs provide a unique and compelling framework to achieve sustainable development in all parts of the world and to leave no one behind. We take heart that governments around the world are striving to achieve the SDGs, as evidenced by the 188 of 193 UN member states that have presented Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) to the High-Level Political Forum.

Nonetheless, accelerated actions are needed at the local, national, regional, and global levels to achieve the SDGs. To this date, progress is far too slow. This is the result of serious shocks to the world economy in recent years, including the pandemic, wars, and geopolitical tensions, and to the inadequacies of the Global Financial Architecture (GFA), which directs insufficient high-quality finance to the emerging and developing economies. Nonetheless, the SDG framework is proving invaluable to governments, business, and civil society. For this reason, we believe that at the Summit of the Future, the world's governments should extend the mandate of the SDG framework to 2050, with updated high-ambition milestones and quantified objectives.

We also underscore the many specific observations on the SOTF agenda raised in the [SDSN Statement on the Summit of the Future](#) in the [2024 Sustainable Development Report](#).

On our part as university leaders, we pledge the continued best efforts of our universities to support the SDGs, the Paris Climate Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Framework for Biodiversity, and the other globally agreed goals for sustainable development. We firmly believe that universities have a unique responsibility and key role in helping our societies to move to sustainable development in the coming years.

We underscore the pivotal role of universities.

First, in today's global knowledge economy, higher education is indispensable for economic success. Successful economies that are able to support high living standards and to be at the forefront of rapidly advancing technologies, must ensure that a significant proportion of young people achieve a tertiary education. Moreover, the qualified teachers for primary and secondary schools are also the product of the universities, and are vital in instilling a sustainable development ethos and the skill-sets for future leaders of our societies.

Second, the universities uniquely bring together the expertise spanning the natural sciences, engineering, social science, behavioral sciences, and the humanities, in order to address the sustainable development challenges, including the end of extreme poverty, social justice for all, and the successful fight for a safe climate and protection of biodiversity. This interdisciplinary strength supports innovative and cutting-edge solutions to complex SDG challenges.

Third, the universities undertake inclusive, interdisciplinary, problem-solving research on how to achieve the economic, social and environmental objectives of sustainable development, and are able to take into account the specific national conditions regarding culture, demography, patterns of development, physical geography, geopolitics, and global change.

Fourth, the universities are important convenors of governments, businesses, and civil society for a long-term, multi-stakeholder approach to sustainable development. Few other institutions in society have such close and trusted links with all major stakeholders and have the capacity, mandate and opportunity to take a long-term perspective on societal transformation.

Fifth, universities are essential and effective incubators for private-sector and civil-sector innovations and businesses. Cutting-edge new industries, and especially start-ups around the world, are co-located with universities.

Sixth, universities are globally interconnected, with extensive collaborations of scholars, joint degree programs, and networks of students. Universities in resource-plentiful settings partner with and support universities in resource-scarce settings, and can do more.

Seventh, each nation's universities link the nation with academia in all parts of the world, and help to keep the nation's economy and culture interconnected as well.

Eight, universities help to keep their nations connected with cutting-edge developments in science, technology, and culture in other parts of the world, and promote open science and the access of all nations to cutting-edge knowledge and technology.

As university leaders we pledge to do our part to harness these unique roles and responsibilities of the universities on behalf of our nations and the world community. We also commit to do more to engage Indigenous people's worldviews and knowledge systems in sustainability, and to create the space for culturally diverse ways of addressing the sustainable development challenges and opportunities of our world today.

Specifically, on the occasion of the Summit of the Future, we pledge to do our part in the following areas:

- Develop new education programs, including degree programs and professional certification programs, to train our students in the central challenges of sustainable development, including effective climate action;
- Promote interdisciplinary education and research to identify solutions to the central challenges of sustainable development;
- Work closely with governments at all levels – local, sub-national, national, and regional -  
- in order to devise new, bold, and science-based strategies to achieve the SDGs in all of their dimensions: economic wellbeing, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and global peace and cooperation;
- Work closely with the business community and entrepreneurs to incubate new start-ups that can advance technological solutions for the national economy and the SDGs;
- Work with indigenous peoples to mobilize their knowledge systems, expertise, and world views in fashioning approaches to education, research, and policy making;
- Strive to make our own campuses fully sustainable, shifting to renewable energy, circular economy, resource efficiency, and the protection of biodiversity;
- Utilize the new online technologies to expand our delivery of quality education and to enable greater access in the population, while also enhancing on-site education on our campuses;
- Partner with universities across the world, through the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network and via other collaborations and networks, promoting exchanges of faculty and students, joint programs, innovative curricula, open science, and practical support as helpful for universities in resource-scarce settings.
- Promote innovation and technology transfer, including green technologies to enhance the prospects of a successful transition to net-zero energy systems;
- Work closely with governments and SDSN to boost research outputs in the emerging and developing economies.
- Work closely with SDSN to develop student programs to foster peace, appreciation of cultural diversity, and enhance conflict prevention and resolution at a time of heightened geopolitical tensions.

The world today yearns for solutions – to end wars, vanquish poverty and hunger, end social exclusion, and ensure environmental sustainability. The family of nations must rise to occasion to give hope, succor, and practical pathways to the future that we want. Universities around the world pledge to do their part. The commitment to our common global home, and to the world’s youth and future generations, is at the essence of our purpose and role.

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