UNGA CONFERENCE
**TRANSFORMING
OUR WORLD**

UNGA CONFERENCE 2021

unga-conference.org

TRANSFORMING OUR WORLD
Partnerships for the SDGs

Wednesday, September 22, 2021

**JOURNALISTS AND
WRITERS FOUNDATION**

The Journalists and Writers Foundation (JWF) is an international civil society organization dedicated to the culture of peace, human rights, and sustainable development. The JWF promotes diversity and inclusion by creating forums for intellectual and social engagement; generates and shares knowledge with stakeholders, builds partnerships worldwide and develops policy recommendations for positive social change.

JWF is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization registered in New York State, USA
JWF is associated with the United Nations Department of Global Communications.

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INTRODUCTION

The UNGA Conference: Transforming Our World is the flagship event of the Journalists and Writers Foundation (JWF), creating a platform for diverse stakeholders to discuss the Global Agenda 2030, offer innovative solutions, strategies, and policy recommendations to advance further the culture of peace, human rights, and sustainable development throughout the three subsequent panel sessions in response to the priorities of the present UN General Assembly and propose a framework for action.

On the occasion of the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly, the Journalists and Writers Foundation and its Global Partners organized the 6th Annual UNGA Conference "Transforming Our World: Partnerships for the SDGs". Organized by 35 Global Partners from 24 countries, the UNGA Conference 2021 hosted 25 distinguished panelists from 14 countries who shared their knowledge, action plans, and gender mainstreaming policy suggestions to facilitate partnerships for the implementation of the Global Goals with a particular focus on SDG 17, discussed the urgency of the climate crisis, the ecological threats and underlined that importance of right to access quality education during the Post-COVID-19 era and the role of digital technologies.

The action-oriented 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has encouraged all stakeholders, including UN Agencies, Member States, the private sector, civil society actors, and experts to bridge the gap between policy and knowledge while creating interlinkages between them the goals and accelerate the implementation progress of the SDGs.

This year, 2021, still represents the critical turning point for our global community which has been combatting the COVID-19 Pandemic. The challenges posed by his global health crisis enabled our international community to redefine economic and social development while following new trends of methodologies and policy implementations.

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

UNGA CONFERENCE 2021: PIONEERS IN SDGs
AWARDS CEREMONY

On September 15, 2021, the Journalists and Writers Foundation and its 36 Global Partners celebrated the contributions of civil society organizations to the Sustainable Development Goals during the 3rd Annual Pioneers in SDGs Awards Ceremony. This year, 47 outstanding individuals and organizations participated in the project competition with 30 amazing projects from 20 different countries. The international jury members evaluated these projects and their outcomes based on four criteria: innovation, stakeholders, scope, and impact. The winners were announced during the virtual Pioneers in SDGs Awards Ceremony on September 15, 2021.

2021 AWARD WINNERS

FIRST PLACE AWARD
The United Nations Association of the National Capital Area
Global Goals at Home (USA)

SECOND PLACE AWARD
Deep K. Tyagi Foundation Nigeria
Honey and Banana Platform (Nigeria)

THIRD PLACE AWARD
The Smile of the Child
Education Lab serving as a Crisis Management Center (Greece)

OTHER AWARD WINNERS IN DIFFERENT CATEGORIES

INNOVATION AWARD
Dream Learn Work
Vocational Training for Young People in Brazil (Brazil)

STAKEHOLDERS AWARD
Ilitha Labant
Ilitha Labantu Clinical Project (South Africa)

Municipal Health Secretariat of São Paulo – Tellus Institute – Novartis Foundation
Better Hearts Better Cities (Brazil)

SCOPE AWARD
Liberian Youth Foundation
Liberian Youth Empowerment Program (Liberia)

IMPACT AWARD
Generation W
Generation WOW: A Generation W Platform for Girls (USA)

CHANGE MAKER AWARD
Intercultural Dialogue Platform
Extremely EUnited project (Belgium)

CIST East Africa Industries
Clean Cooking Kenya (Kenya)

Green Hope Foundation
Breaking Barriers Building Dreams (Bangladesh)

OPENING SESSION

WELCOME REMARKS:

CEMRE ULKER, US Director and UN Representative to the DGC, Journalists and Writers Foundation (USA)

KEYNOTE SPEECH:

H.E. CÉLIA PARNES, Head of the Secretary of Social Development of the State of São Paulo (BRAZIL)

THE HON. VERITY FIRTH, Executive Director of the Social Justice at University of Technology Sydney, Former NSW Minister for Education and Training (AUSTRALIA)

PANEL SESSION 1 - PROGRESS of SDG 17: PARTNERSHIPS for SDGs

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

H.E. MS. MARKOVA CONCEPCIÓN JARAMILLO, Permanent Representative of Panama to the UN, Permanent Mission of Panama (PANAMA)

MICHELLE BRESLAUER, Executive Director of the Social Justice at University of Technology Sydney, Former NSW Minister for Education and Training (AUSTRALIA)

MODERATOR:

PROF. PATRICIA KUNRATH, Knowledge Coordinator, Group of Institutes, Foundations and Enterprises (BRAZIL)

PANELISTS:

SARMAD KHAN, Member of the ACUNS Board of Directors, Senior Fellow, Center for Global Affairs, New York University (USA & CANADA)

NANCY MAHON, Senior Vice President, Global Corporate Citizenship and Sustainability, The Estée Lauder Companies (USA, National Human Rights Commission (NEPAL)

PROF. CHOL BUNNAG, Director of SDG Move, Thammasat University (THAILAND)

DANA COPPOLA, Public Relations and Media Specialist, Embrace Relief (USA)

ASHOK SAJJANHAR, President of Institute of Global Studies, Former Ambassador of India (INDIA)

PANEL SESSION 2 - CLIMATE CHANGE and ECOLOGICAL THREATS

MODERATOR:

TAKAHISA TANIGUCHI, Environmental Activist (JAPAN)

PANELISTS:

LAUREN HERZER RISI, Project Director of Environmental Change and Security, Wilson Center (USA)

PROF. WILL STEFFEN, Climate Councilor, Climate Council of Australia, Climate Change Expert, Australian National University (AUSTRALIA)

JONATHAN SURY, Project Director for Communications and Field Operations, National Center for Disaster Preparedness, The Earth Institute (USA)

ALEANDRA SCAFATI, Founder and President, Ecomujeres Foundation (ARGENTINA)

ASHOK SAJJANHAR, President of Institute of Global Studies, Former Ambassador of India (INDIA)

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL:

ANNE ETA, High School Senior, The Childville, Ogudu GRA, Cage Free Voices Ambassador Program (NIGERIA)

PANEL SESSION 3 - QUALITY EDUCATION IN THE POST-COVID ERA AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

MODERATOR:

DR. RAJENDRAN GOVENDER, Executive Director of Mzansi Empowerment Enterprise, Social Cohesion Advocate at the Department of Arts and Culture (SOUTH AFRICA) -NCA (USA)

PANELISTS:

PROF. MODESTO SEARA VÁZQUEZ, Honorary President of the Mexican Association of International Studies, Rector of the Oaxaca State University System (MEXICO)

VIVIAN HEYL, Expert from the Minister of Education, (CHILE)

DR. WILLIAM C. SCHULZ, Director of Academic Outcomes Research and Founder of Center for Social Change, Walden University (USA)

MIRABELA AMARANDEI, Director of Strategic Orientation and Public Policies, University of Bucharest (ROMANIA)

FEYZULLAH BILGIN, Managing Director, Nigerian Tulip International Colleges (NIGERIA)

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL:

RARES VOICU, Board member of Organizing Bureau of European School Student Unions, (ROMANIA)

CLOSING SESSION

DR. SWADESH RANA, Former Chief of the Conventional Arms Branch, Department of Disarmament Affairs at the United Nations (USA)

MEHMET KILIC, President, Journalists and Writers Foundation (USA)

PANEL SESSION 1 - PROGRESS OF SDG 17: PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE SDGs

With less than a decade left to achieve the SDGs, partnerships at all levels are essential for implementing the Global Goals and mobilizing national commitments, efforts, resources, and technology.

The 2021 ECOSOC Forum "Partnerships as Game Changer for a Sustainable Recovery from COVID-19" underlined UN Secretary-General`s urgent call for the following efforts to accelerate the recovery processes by (i) taking coordinated actions at the global level to suppress the pandemic, including by supporting the health systems in countries that are most at risk; (ii) promoting comprehensive responses to tackle the devastating socio-economic consequences, focused on the most vulnerable countries and peoples; and (iii) building back better with a view to ensuring sustainability and resilience. [1] Multi-stakeholder partnerships require different sectors working in collaboration by mobilizing their financial resources, assets, knowledge and expertise. Besides the inter-governmental agencies` development policies, socially responsible corporates` and civil society`s best-practices are essential in accelerating national, regional, and sub-national partnerships for the implementation of the SDGs.

Despite the urgent need, the recent UN DESA Report on "The Impacts of COVID-19 on Stakeholder Engagement for the SDGs" indicates that "stakeholder engagement is at risk of falling away in the face of key challenges". One of the most prominent challenges highlighted in the report is that there is a missing framework of an accurate alignment between the local, national and recovery plans. The UN DESA`s studies underline that "a recovery plan that is actively aligned to a holistic, comprehensive account of the 2030 Agenda" is essential to build back better.

Within this context, the Panel Session 1 of the UNGA Conference will address:

- Overview of SDG17: Importance and Current Challenges of Multi-stakeholder Partnership for the Goals
- Corporate Social Responsibility for Implementing the Global Agenda 2030
- Capacity Building for the Socio-Economic Development
- Best Practices: Contributions of the CSOs Initiatives in Achieving the SDGs

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PANEL 1:
PROGRESS of SDG 17: PARTNERSHIPS for the SDGs

H.E. Ms. Markova Concepción
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Panama to the UN
Panama

Michelle Breslauer
Senior Manager
Peace and Humanitarian Affairs
UN Global Compact
USA

Prof. Patricia Kunrath
Knowledge Coordinator
Group of Institutes, Foundations and Enterprises
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USA

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Director
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Thammasat University
Thailand

Dana Coppola
Public Relations and Media Specialist
Embrace Relief
USA

Ashok Sajjanhar
Former Ambassador
India President of Institute of Global Studies
India

PANEL SESSION 2 - CLIMATE CHANGE AND ECOLOGICAL THREATS

The setbacks during the COVID-19 caused a reduction in the ongoing environmental damage, only in the short run. Climate change and ecological threats are still posing a great risk to the timely achievement of the SDGs. The targets of the Paris Agreement are still off track. According to the progress report of the SDG 13: taking urgent action to combat climate change, "in order to limit warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels as called for in the Paris Agreement, global efforts would need to reach net zero CO_2 emissions globally around 2050".

On the other hand, the Institute for Economics and Peace`s Ecological Threat Register (ETR) underlines that ecological threats should be addressed separately. Even though it is a related area of concern with climate change, the ETR 2020 Policy Seminar Document highlights that ecological threats such as water scarcity, food security, and many types of natural disasters exist regardless of the climate change crisis. Experts indicate that "the number of ecological threats resulting in geopolitical issues will increase over the next 30 years, causing the nature of conflict to become more connected with ecological insecurity". Ecological threats inevitably impact the peacefulness of the states as mass displacement, enforced migration wave and extreme poverty causes regional conflicts.

Institute for Economics and Peace, Ecological Threat Register 2020, Policy Seminar Document

The climate change crisis and ecological threats unequally impact women and children especially in situations of poverty and limited access to scarce resources. Women and girls are still included in the world's poorest and most vulnerable groups and they continue to face the environmental, economic, and social costs of climate change. As in all areas of socio-economic development, women`s meaningful participation in climate-related response mechanisms creates a long-lasting positive impact. Their local knowledge, sustainable resource management, community and national leadership make women great decision-makers to resolve conflicts posed by climate change and ecological threats.

In the light of above concerns, Panel Session 2 will include the above themes:

- Climate Change and Gender Equality
- United States` Re-Commitment to Paris Climate Agreement
- Climate Crisis Calling for a Global Response
- Enforced Migration as a Consequence of Ecological Threats

PANEL SESSION 3 - QUALITY EDUCATION IN THE POST-COVID ERA AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

All the Global Goals are interrelated and dependent on each other. SDG4 "ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all" has a remarkable contribution to the implementation of the Global Agenda 2030. One of the critical areas that the COVID-19 Pandemic has caused a substantial setback is access to education.

The progress report of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on sustainable development identifies the long-term implications of unequal access to education during the pandemic as a "generational catastrophe". As crowded public places, schools were among the institutions that are closed for in-person access all around the world. However, this health precaution created unprecedented consequences for the social wellbeing of children and impacted their learning trends. An increased number of children may never have a chance of returning to school as they are forced into child labor or child marriage. The progress report also indicates that "an additional 101 million children and youth (from grades 1 to 9) fell below the minimum reading proficiency level due to COVID-19 in 2020, which wiped out the education gains achieved over the last 20 years".

The 59th Session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD) highlighted "The Role of Digital Technologies on Social Development and Well-being of All". Stakeholders indicated that a global unity and collaboration facilitated using digital technologies is required as COVID-19 reversed a decade of action. To lower the disparities among the most vulnerable, the CSocD Chair Ambassador Ms. María del Carmen Squeff of Argentina underlined that there is an increased "urgency of closing the digital gender divide to ensure that women and girls benefit equally from the opportunities available online"..

Within this framework, the Panel Session 3 of the UNGA Conference will address:

- Long-Term Implications of an Unequal Access to Education During COVID-19
- Remote Learning: Opportunities and Challenges
- Overview of Global Access to the Digital Technologies, Resources, and Disparities
- Girls` Education and Women's Empowerment in the Era of Digital Technologies

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PANEL 3:
QUALITY EDUCATION IN THE POST-COVID ERA AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Dr. Rajendran T Govender
Executive Director
Mzansi Empowerment Enterprise
South Arica

Prof. Modesto Seara Vázquez
Rector
The Oaxaca State University System
Mexico

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Managing Director
Nigerian Tulip International Colleges
Nigeria

Rares Voicu
Board member
Organizing Bureau of European School Student Unions
Romania

UNGA CONFERENCE OPENING SESSION

WELCOME REMARKS - Cemre Ulker, US Director and Representative of JWF to the UN Department of Global Communications, Journalists and Writers Foundation | USA

Cemre Ulker is a human rights advocate leading global programs for the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, creating a positive social change with a particular focus on SDGs 4, 5, 16, and 17. Her focus areas are socio-economic development, CSO participation at intergovernmental platforms, women`s right, and children`s empowerment.

Ms. Ulker is also the Co-Founder of Set Them Free, a civil initiative raising awareness on the violation of women`s rights in Turkey, promoting the rights of women human rights defenders. Set Them Free also works on social empowerment programs for the enforced women migrants and refugees. Ms. Ulker studied Economics at the University of Maryland with a specialization in Development Economics. She is currently completing her Master`s Degree in Human Rights at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York.

As the High-Level General Debate started at the UN Headquarters, Heads of States are delivering their statements on the world`s most pressing issues. The main theme of the 76th Session of the UNGA is "Building resilience through hope." Recovering from COVID-19, rebuilding sustainably, responding to the needs of the planet, and respecting the rights of people are set as the priorities of this year.

The President of the 76th Session, His Excellency Abdulla Shahid indicated that "We place our hope in humanity because, at the end of the day, that is all there is." And today in partnership with 36 civil society organizations from 24 different countries, we are here to transform our hope for inclusive societies into action, offer innovative strategies, and policy recommendations to advance the culture of peace, human rights, and sustainable development.

> We place our hope in humanity, because at the end of the day, that is all there is.
> *His Excellency Abdulla Shahid, President of the UNGA76.*

The successful implementation of SDG #17: Partnerships for the Goals is the main mission of this international platform. We believe that SDGs can only be implemented with strong global partnerships of civil society organizations with Member States and UN agencies. Throughout the UNGA Conference, we will be listening to 25 distinguished speakers from 14 countries, all are experts in different areas. Following today's gathering, we will adopt a Declaration and Proceeding Document, as well as an action framework to be implemented by the Conference stakeholders.

The UNGA Conference leads another initiative under its umbrella: The Pioneers in SDGs which pay tribute to outstanding individuals and organizations that help achieve Sustainable

Development Goals by implementing innovative and creative projects benefiting local communities. This year was a great success as we received 30 project submissions from 19 countries. Our international jury evaluated the projects based on the criteria of innovation, stakeholders, scope, and impact with a focus on community service and dedication to uplifting society. The altruism, philanthropy, and commitment of the Pioneers in SDGs are worthwhile in making our world a better place for all. You can learn more about this initiative at www.unga-conference.org.

> This year was a great success at Pioneers in SDGs as we received 30 project submissions from 19 countries. Our international jury evaluated the projects based on the criteria of innovation, stakeholders, scope, and impact with a focus on community service and dedication uplifting the society.

Keynote Speaker

Her Excellency Célia Parnes, Head of the Secretary of Social Development of the State of São Paulo | BRAZIL

H.E. Ms. Celia Parnes is the present head of the Secretary of Social Development of the State of São Paulo, and she is an active member of the FONSEAS (Social Assistance Secretaries National Forum) and of the Regional Development Inter-Secretarial Committee of the Racial Equity Center for the State of São Paulo Social-Economic Development. Her Excellency graduated in Administration by the School of Economy, Administration, Accounts of University of São Paulo. She has been appointed as the Woman of the Year by São Paulo Municipal Chamber and "Mulher Nota 10" (Top Woman) by VEJA magazine. (H.E. Ms. Celia Parnes`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

As Albert Einstein indicated, in the midst of every crisis, lies a great opportunity. We are living in a critical time that requires our global community to change, to innovate, to think big and implement effective solutions. I am thankful for building my career upon social development issues. My efforts to minimize social inequality in Brazil gave me the professional experience to be prepared and motivated to be a leader as the Head of the Secretary of Social Development of the State of São Paulo.

I am truly grateful to His Excellency, Mr. João Doria, the Governor of São Paulo for his reliance, boldness and

support to execute new social programs and modernize public policies to comply with the present circumstances. The need to expand the government's role is growing in the regional and global arena. To foster the social development of the State of São Paulo, we have the commitment to conduct programs that promote access and protection of fundamental human rights in addition to co-financing monitoring, guiding, analyzing, and evaluating the results obtained by the municipalities in social assistance. Our vision of individual empowerment drives our strategies, enhancing social mobility, income generation, social integration, and digitalization. We believe that poverty, lack of opportunities, lack of employment and education make societies increasingly unequal. The solution to combat this cycle is to build social policies that respect the rights of the citizens.

As a global community, we need to incorporate sustainable development in all the practices that guarantee social justice, since there is none without equal opportunities, and access to education, health services and decent jobs. Furthermore, equality of opportunity refers to generating policies that are capable of developing strategies which minimize obstacles, whether caused by individual or social challenges. It is important to recognize inequalities in order to promote social justice.

As a government leader, I prioritize building solutions with the same purpose of eliminating injustices, which has been challenging. However, with a great passion,

I am continuously involved in this learning journey in which I question the status quo and consider every existing perspective in our social setting. I continue to take a good lesson or at least a reflection about each experience. It is very important to carry on partnerships to create inclusive societies. Therefore, under the leadership of Governor Mr. João Doria, we initiated collective efforts with companies, different actors in society and with fellow citizens playing an important role in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. We rapidly developed and implemented programs and projects related to zero hunger, emergency aid, social assistance in health security and other relevant matters.

Our vision of individual empowerment drives our strategies, enhancing social mobility, income generation, social integration, and digitalization. We believe that poverty, lack of opportunities, lack of employment and education make societies increasingly unequal.

The State of São Paulo Government is engaged to take robust issues in several fields, ensuring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly for the people who need the most social assistance in order to empower themselves. I believe that it is our shared responsibility to work and transform our society as active members. Hence, I take this honor to encourage everyone to take a step in the journey of challenging the status quo, involving in meaningful actions, and trying to transform every step on the way to create great opportunities for our community. Together, we can make the world a place where social mobility should be possible.

Keynote Speaker

The Hon. Verity Firth, Former NSW Minister for Education and Training, Executive Director, Social Justice at University of Technology Sydney | AUSTRALIA

The Hon. Verity Firth is the Executive Director of Social Justice at University of Technology Sydney. She served as NSW Minister for Education and Training and was previously NSW Minister for Women. After leaving office, Hon. Firth was the Chief Executive of the Public Education Foundation. Hon. Firth has over fifteen years' experience at the very highest levels of government and the not-for-profit sector in Australia. Hon. Firth was the Member for the state seat of Balmain from 2007 to 2011. Before her parliamentary career, Hon. Firth worked as a lawyer and was Deputy Lord Mayor of the City of Sydney. (The Hon. Verity Firth`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

COVID has been a big challenge for educators globally. The rapid shift to online learning has caught institutions and their teaching staff off guard, and never before have the inequalities around digital access been so stark, as some in our community are able to engage fully in learning and work - while others simply cannot.

COVID has particularly shone a light on the cleavages that exist in our education system in Australia. Even before COVID the issues driving educational performance in Australia were complex.

Our National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy or NAPLAN, is an annual assessment for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. Every year the results show us the gap in performance based on socioeconomic status.

Family socio-economic status (SES) strongly influences student performance, but school socio-economic status also plays a significant role. NAPLAN data analysed by our Department of Education, shows that students from low SES families score 39 points more in year 3 NAPLAN tests if they have high SES peers than if they have low SES peers. This effect has intensified by year 9. In other words, mixed cohorts matter.

Education outcomes are better for low SES kids in a school with a mix of SES profiles, therefore all of us should attend our local public school and help create that mix. But in Australia our system is becoming

increasingly segregated, we have a large non-government schooling sector – 34.4% of students in Australia go to a non-government school where their parents pay school fees.

There are schools with very high concentrations of advantage and schools with very high concentrations of disadvantage. This segregation is a big problem for Australia's overall education performance as we have what is termed a 'long equity tail.' The big concern about COVID is that we are in essence 'doubling down' on these existing educational inequalities.

COVID has brought into stark relief the digital divide that exists in Australia. While just 3 percent of high-income households don't have access to the internet, that rate increases to 33 per cent among the lowest income households – presenting a major barrier and risk for children who are learning remotely.

There are schools with very high concentrations of advantage and schools with very high concentrations of disadvantage. This segregation is a big problem for Australia's overall education performance as we have what is termed a 'long equity tail.'

Unequal distribution of access to, and ease of using, digital devices, is another growing issue that is only getting worse. At the Centre for Social Justice and inclusion we work with partner schools to create pathways to university for students from low SES backgrounds. At the beginning of COVID last year we had to shift to online learning. At that time, we were working with a cohort of 300 Year 11 students. To shift the students from face to face teaching the university needed to provide 100 laptops to our partner schools. That's 1 in 3 students without a device.

It's also about connectivity. Students either didn't have any internet access at home, or if they did, they didn't have sufficient data plans to allow for online learning. As long as our schools stay closed as they currently are in NSW, and there are obviously very good public health reasons for this to be the case, these cohort of students will be further disadvantaged.

So, what do we do post-COVID? A few years ago, I was in a conversation with a Harvard based educational ethicist called Meira Levinson. The conversation was hosted by the Sydney Policy Lab at Sydney. We were talking about the segregation of the schooling system and how this impacted on student outcomes and

perpetuated inequality. I asked her what we could do to change this dynamic. She said it was impossible to change this dynamic. "Elite capture, no system can defeat it," she said.

Her view was that parents will always play the system to separate their children from others. In the US they don't have a large non-government system (it's less than 10%) but they do have very strict schooling boundaries, boundaries that effectively segregate the local population along class and race lines. Her view is that whatever the system, the elites will capture the best resources. They will have the best schools, and they will find ways to separate themselves from populations with whom they don't feel they share a cultural affinity.

To me this is a profoundly depressing view of human nature, and a big problem for social cohesion in the future, but I would like to end my talk on a more upbeat take on the impact of COVID, which has made stark the existing inequalities in our society. But it has also created a sense of community and common purpose in a way I have not witnessed in my lifetime. Everything

Advanced technologies – including AI – have the potential to transform education. AI can give educators quicker and more precise analysis of data to understand what their students need, can offer greater personalized learning and support, and enable more engaging ways to learn.

from neighborhood 'giving boxes', to large scale food donation, to a conservative government in Australia guaranteeing the wages of workers forced to stay home during lockdown. A more community driven and collectivist understanding has emerged from COVID and now we need to bottle it and keep it.

In Australia a community driven response to education inequalities would see more families attend and contribute to their local school.

AND it would also see policy makers and educators turn their minds in real seriousness to the digital divide.

Most of all they can liberate teachers from rote administrative tasks, giving them more time to do what they do best – teach.

I am hoping that as the world emerges from COVID we will remember the lessons learnt. That inequality is magnified in a crisis, but so is the collective sense of social justice. Let's hold on to that lesson and create a better and more equal education system post COVID.

UNGA CONFERENCE PANEL SESSION 1
PROGRESS of SDG 17: PARTNERSHIPS for the SDGs
Keynote Speaker
Her Excellency Markova Concepción Jaramillo, Permanent Representative of Panama to the UN, Permanent Mission of Panama | PANAMA

Ambassador Markova Concepción presented her credentials in November 2020, as the Permanent Representative of Panama to the United Nations. Ms. Concepción Jaramillo had been the Minister for Social Development since 2019 and *presided over the National Council for Gender Parity. From 2014 to 2019, she served as Director of Social Development of the Business Association Sumarse-Pacto Global Panamá, which promotes corporate social responsibility. (Her Excellency Markova Concepción Jaramillo `s Full Biography and Video Remarks)*

It is very important to keep the following questions in mind as we work towards the implementation of the

Sustainable Development Goals: what kind of world are we trying to build and what is it going to take for us to get there?

SDG 17 "Partnerships for the Goals" aims to revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. Global partnerships within sectors are vehicles that will allow us to materialize the ambitious people-centered agenda in a timely manner. Sustainable Development Goals encourage the global community to imagine a world with no poverty, zero hunger, good health, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, decent work, economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, sustainable communities, a better balance with the environment, peace, justice, and stronger institutions and last but most certainly not least, partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals.

I invite everyone to envision this agenda; the world that SDGs describe is within our reach. However, we need to work together to build it. The SDGs are formulated through one of the most inclusive processes in the history of the United Nations involving online and in-person consultations with all kinds of stakeholders in more than 100 countries. It is therefore relevant to indicate that the 2030 Agenda sums up the global priorities.

SDG 17 marks a paradigm shift of paradigm of great importance; a shift from the traditional top-down approach to a more holistic understanding of development as a process involving all the relevant actors from down-up. This goal is an acknowledgment that the roadmap to achieving the SDGs must be as inclusive as the framework that produced them. Today, revitalizing the global partnerships for sustainable development is perhaps more important than ever.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought major challenges for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. In 2020, the global economy experienced the deepest recession since World War II. 255 million full-time jobs were lost. The economic crisis pushed over 119 million people into extreme poverty. The pandemic wiped out 20 years of progress in education impacting children, especially girls. Because of the pre-existing inequalities, women were disproportionately affected by the pandemic. With children out of school, increased need to care for older persons and overwhelmed health services, women have

taken on additional responsibilities at high costs to their careers, income, leisure time, and health.

However, the pandemic opened the possibilities to generate bigger opportunities for global partnerships. The development of vaccines is an example of this new global approach that involved research, production, and distribution around the world. Individuals` and communities` valuable contributions have been essential in combating the biggest humanitarian crisis in years.

Partnerships have played a key role in the recovery from the pandemic in Panama. Operational and financial partnerships within the private sector to understand the major areas of urgent needs and collaborations within the local communities to optimize costs and reach as many people as possible efficiently were very important. On the other hand, the Regional Logistics Center for Humanitarian Assistance, known as the "Humanitarian Hub" has been fundamental to generating a global response through cooperation and partnerships.

The main users of the Humanitarian Hub are the National System of Civil Protection, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent and the United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot. Panama`s Humanitarian Hus is now an example of a partnership committed to an effective response to humanitarian assistance through Latin America and the Caribbean. In the last two years, the Humanitarian Hub distributed over 2,000 tons of humanitarian aid shipments to 44 countries in the region. 38% of this aid was allocated to COVID-19 relief. In addition, Panama`s Humanitarian Hub has a Knowledge Transfer Center, a platform for training, capacity-building and sharing experience in order to generate knowledge to serve society.

Another biggest challenge in the middle of the pandemic has been the increased domestic violence during the lockdown implemented to stop the spread of the COVID-19. Technology allowed us to reach in a timely manner to almost 4 million people. The Government of Panama partnered with two phone service companies to send text messages with information to possible victims. I truly believe that materializing our aspirations on the Sustainable Development Goals will be possible as we strengthen partnerships between all sectors, with coordination and solidarity.

Governments, private companies, multilateral organizations, civil society, academia, communities, families, individuals are key to redirecting our actions through the generations of partnerships to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. If we could harness our resources by working in partnership, we could accomplish greater things together. We could avoid duplications and be more efficient. We could channel our resources, knowledge, and technologies. Most importantly, we could finally reach more people, generate well-being and guarantee their dignity as human beings. The 2030 Agenda is big and ambitious and so are our shared aspirations for the future. SDG 17 is our call to partner, to bring these goals into reality. Another biggest challenge in the middle of the pandemic has been the increased domestic violence during the lockdown implemented to stop the spread of the

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Keynote Speaker

Michelle Breslauer, Senior Manager, Governance and Peace, United Nations Global Compact | USA

Michelle Breslauer leads the governance and peace portfolio at the United Nations Global Compact, the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative that brings together nearly 13,000 companies in 163 countries and 70 local networks around the world. In this role, Ms. Breslauer manages the development of programs and engagement to advance corporate purpose and the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals in business operations and partnerships. (Michelle Breslauer `s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

The United Nations Global Compact was given its mandate by the UN General Assembly in the year 2000 and was established at a time when social tensions were on the rise in response to globalization. It was during this time that then-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan had the vision of world leaders coming together to create a "global compact" with the purpose of putting a human face to the global market. In essence, to promote responsible business conduct.

The UN Global Compact is now the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative with over 14,000 participants and 69 local networks around the world. The UN Global Compact calls on businesses to align their strategies and operations with our Ten Principles which are inspired by universal standards in the areas of human rights, labor rights, the environment and anti-corruption.

In addition to this call for businesses to respect the Ten Principles, the UN Global Compact also invites businesses to support efforts to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Once businesses make the commitment to join the Global Compact, they are required to report annually on their progress.

Agenda 2030 not only calls for the participation of the private sector, but the achievement of these ambitious Global Goals requires it. Businesses have an essential role in this process as holders of economic power, pioneers of innovation and technology and influencers of stakeholders including governments, consumers, investors, and suppliers.

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To give you just a few examples, these principles and goals translate into the UN Global Compact`s work by supporting companies to:

- Set emissions targets at 1.5 degrees, with support from the Science Based Target Initiative (600+ companies have already made this commitment)
- Join the Chief Financial Officers task force, which has committed to invest at least 400 billion dollars towards advancing the SDGs in the next three years
- Respect human rights and labour rights through providing living wages and decent work in global supply chains
- Set and reach ambitious corporate targets for women's representation and leadership

Across our participants and beyond, there is a heightened interest in ESG (the Environmental, Social, and Governance Dimensions of Corporate Sustainability) with more and more businesses committing to purpose-driven leadership and to stakeholder capitalism rather than the traditional notion of shareholder primacy.

Today's business leaders are acknowledging the need to find new ways of serving the interests of business while also serving the interests of the communities in which they operate. This has been

> Businesses have a critical role in promoting ethical leadership and building trust between public and private institutions, and trust in these institutions by civil society, which is consistent with the objectives of peace, justice, and strong institutions.

highlighted as we are at an inflexion point with the world in the midst of multiple crises: economic, social, humanitarian, political, technological, environmental, as well as a crisis of trust in multilateralism.

These crises call for strong partnerships, whether to tackle gender equality; climate action or water sanitation; decent work or responsible consumption. Sustainable Development Goal 17 demonstrates that this blueprint cannot be achieved by any government alone and that there is a need to bring businesses, civil society, and the international community together to realize this ambition. These partnerships required to achieve the SDGs cannot be implemented unless we set the foundation by focusing on Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

Why is Goal 16 important? Peace, justice, and strong institutions are fundamental conditions that are not only essential to the viability of businesses but to it brings together governments, civil society, and the private sector in a common interest. Responsible businesses want to operate and serve in communities where there are institutions, laws and systems that protect their rights and the rights of the individuals they employ and serve. At the same time, they recognize the need for their own

values, strategies, policies, and relationships to support them in respecting people and the planet and realizing purpose and prosperity.

Businesses have a critical role in promoting ethical leadership and building trust between public and private institutions, and trust in these institutions by civil society, which is consistent with the objectives of peace, justice, and strong institutions. Even with inconsistencies in how companies have performed and variations in how they have been perceived in recent years, the Edelman Trust Barometer found that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased trust in employers and businesses over other actors. Businesses are increasingly called upon by customers, employees, communities, and investors to speak up and to take action.

While this reflects on expectations that businesses could and should assume greater responsibility to address societal issues, socially responsible businesses cannot replace the role of governments. Governments and international institutions must regain trust and confidence in their competence.

So, the question is no longer if businesses should engage with social and political issues, but how they do so.

Sustainable Development Goal 16 is a roadmap for this engagement. To guide businesses in this journey, the UN Global Compact recently released the SDG 16 Business Framework I Inspiring Transformational Governance. This Framework demonstrates why and how businesses should support SDG 16 and strengthen transformational governance.

Transformational governance calls on businesses to provide greater accountability, integrity, and transparency in their own corporate governance but also stronger environmental and social protections and supporting efforts to create more inclusive institutions, laws, and systems as a complement to, not a substitute for, government action.

The journey to the development of this Framework included, among many other activities, interviews with 60 senior executives and the subsequent delivery to the UN Secretary-General of "A Statement from Business Leaders for Renewed Global Cooperation," signed by 1,300 CEOs. These interviews took place in the middle of 2020 and one theme stood out: with respect to ESG issues, many agreed that companies should pay special attention to the 'G,' or governance.

These leaders believe that good governance is the foundation of good business. They say companies must not only ensure that their own houses are in order through enhanced corporate governance; businesses must also support enhanced global governance. That means modelling ethical leadership in their organizations. It means tackling systemic inequalities and injustices in their supply chains. And it means partnering with Government, civil society, and others to strengthen institutions, laws, and systems, nationally and internationally.

This vision of transformational governance is bold but necessary. It presents a challenge to all stakeholders to see governance through a prism of SDG 16 as a catalyst for systemic action. For the UN Global Compact, it is the 'how'. This is the beginning of an important journey. We invite you to join us in uniting business for a better world.

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Moderator
Prof. Patricia Kunrath, Knowledge Coordinator, Group of Institutes, Foundations and Enterprises | BRAZIL

Prof. Patricia Kunrath is the Knowledge Coordinator of the Group of Institutes, Foundations and Enterprises. She is the Former Executive Director of Finance for Good Brazil and is a Professor of Social Anthropology at ESPM Porto Alegre. Prof. Kunrath received her PhD in 2017 and was a visiting scholar at the University of California Irvine in connection with the Institute for Money Technology and Financial Inclusion. She is a member of various research groups and of the Movement for a Culture of Giving Brasil (Movimento pela Cultura de Doação). (Patricia Kunrath`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

I recently had a short-term experience working for Catalyst 2030, a global movement for collaboration to catalyze the achievement of the 17 SDGs. I remember

their message every so often as it is exposed on their website and we discussed in every meeting: "According to the Social Progress Index, at the current rate of progress, the Sustainable Development Goals will not be achieved until 2082, decades after the deadline set by the UN. The effects of this delay will be devastating for billions". In order to change this prognostic, we need to activate partnerships.

Brazil, as in other parts of the globe, has seen the emergence of initiatives such as the SDG Strategy (or Estratégia ODS) that brings together civil society, governments, the private sector, and academia to work towards the SDGs. Catalyst 2030 Brasil unites social entrepreneurs and social innovators targeting the SDGs. These initiatives highlight the opportunities and challenges of multi-stakeholder partnerships for the goals. It is not an easy task to align often divergent interests and even more diverse world conceptions to work towards common goals, but several initiatives

show that this is the most effective and sustainable way of paving the road for systemic change. Systemic change signifies a shift in power relations and an increase of collaborations, rather than sole competition in a world that is interconnected.

Some feminist philosophers such as Donna Haraway suggest that people have situated knowledge. For Haraway, "situated knowledge is about communities, not about isolated individuals. The only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular". What kinds of articulations and partnerships may I envision from the standpoint of a Latin American, Brazilian woman and scholar working with philanthropy and social investment?

In 2020, the Group of Institutes Foundations and Enterprises Brasil (GIFE) published a book titled "Collaborative Philanthropy," turning to the theory and practice of partnerships to address social issues and therefore the SDGs. In the formats of collaboration, one may find three scopes:

- First: Collaborative spaces of joint grants and/or co-investment among social investors focuse on coordination, allocation, or management of funds/ donations. Among these we may find giving circles; grant/investment coordination spaces; networks, coalitions, and alliances; joint grants/co-investment in projects, programs or organizations (new or existing); public-private partnerships; other inter-sector partnerships between philanthropy and

universities or international cooperation and collective impact.

- Second: Spaces for mobilizing and managing philanthropy resources: crowdfunding or collective financing; matching gifts; philanthropic resource management organizations

- Third: Philanthropic Funds created and managed by one or more organizations, formally constituted as an organization..

In Brazil, social justice philanthropy funds such as Brazil Human Rights Fund, Elas Fund and Baobá Fund make grants and build alliances towards human rights, gender justice and ethnic or racial equity and they have been counting with joint efforts and grants from organizations such as the Ford Foundation, Kellogg Foundation, public organs, and civil society.

The Lemann Institute and Humanize (later aggregating Fundação Brava and republica.org) partnered up to capacity-build and develop thought leadership both in the public sector and in the third sector.

These are just a few examples of what can be done and be achieved if forces and resources are put together. GIFE is also promoting discussions, pushing the agenda, and publishing information material to draw social investment and philanthropy closer to governments on various SDGs such as women's rights, sustainable cities, democracy, climate change, water security and ethnic or racial equity, among other issues.

Panelist

Sarmad Khan, Member of the ACUNS Board of Directors, Senior Fellow, Center for Global Affairs, New York University | CANADA & USA

Sarmad Khan is an international affairs professional with over 20 years' experience in United Nations development cooperation, international policy and programmes and executive leadership development. Mr. Khan has held several senior positions in the United Nations, most recently as the Head of the UN RC Office in the UAE, Senior Advisor on Planning and Partnerships, and Special Advisor on the UN's engagement in Expo 2020, Dubai. He was Head of leadership policy and programme development at the UN Development Operations Coordination Office and served as one of the lead authors of the UN's first Leadership Model promoting systems leadership. (Sarmad Khan`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

Overview of SDG17: Importance and Current Challenges of Multi-stakeholder Partnership for the Goals

During World War 2, the Allied Forces stormed the beaches of Normandy. Once the troops were there, there was an imperative to ensure that food, oil, gas, medical supplies constantly flowed into Normandy and onwards to the troops. This required the building of the Mulberry Piers to transport supplies from England across the channel to France. Winston Churchill wrote to Admiral Mountbatten on 30th May 1942: "Piers for use on the beaches. They must float up and down with the tide. The anchor problem must be mastered. Let me have the best solution worked out. Don't argue the matter, the difficulties of the matter will argue for themselves." This call for innovative and solutions-focused thinking is as essential now as it was then.

Tackling complex problems and achieving ambitious results requires collective actions that link diverse expertise, knowledge and ideas,

"All countries and stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want to heal and secure our planet."

and resources across all segments of society that are working together for a common cause, despite often being led by different motivations. One only has to turn to the Preamble of the 2030 Agenda to illustrate the critical importance of partnerships: "All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want to heal and secure our planet." The related SDG goal - SDG 17 - seeks specifically to strengthen the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology, and financial resources.

We simply have to glance back one year to draw an important example of global collaboration on an unprecedented scale involving governments, medical practitioners, researchers, vaccine companies, tech companies, philanthropists, foundations, businesses – and importantly citizens – to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The unprecedented impacts and consequential social, economic, and humanitarian needs introduced or exacerbated by COVID-19 drove the rapid development of vaccines and adoption of new digital technologies and at scale. These partnerships were harnessed to support the public health and education response worldwide, but also the trajectory of generating digital solutions was accelerated through greater innovation, investment, and access.

This is an exciting moment – a rather SDG 17 moment – to explore the kinds of transformations and collaborations, including adapting mindsets, capabilities and networked platforms that are needed to help us navigate uncertainty and achieve sustainable development impact.

Last year the world entered the 10-year countdown for the world to come together and deliver on the 17 SDGs. This Decade of Action began with the devastating COVID-19

pandemic that was a litmus test for multilateral cooperation across all sectors and domains. The fight against this global pandemic, which has taken so many lives and challenged our societies, will require breaking through barriers to enhance international cooperation and strengthen worldwide solidarity articulated in the UN Secretary-General's recently unveiled 'Our Common Agenda' report. A key message of this Agenda reads loud and clear: we must recognize that humanity's very future depends on solidarity, trust, and our ability to work together as a global family to achieve common goals. No community or country, however powerful, can solve its challenges alone. This requires new ideas, untapped partnerships, and future-focused thinking to take us beyond this inflection point in our common history.

SDG 17 should not be seen as a stand-alone Goal to be achieved itself. It exists as a crucial enabler to ensure the other 16 interconnected Goals can be met. It's the middle domino piece in an interdependent chain. And without it, progress can only go so far. To further accelerate action on the future-focused aims of "Our Common Agenda" and achieve the SDGs, it is important to broker the kinds of partnerships that have traditionally been overlooked and untapped. There is a need for innovative, inclusive, and adaptive means to effectively advance a sustainable development agenda. And there is no shortage of willing and well-meaning

stakeholders and partners. What is greatly needed is effective and efficient leadership at multiple levels, not just amongst Heads of State, but within the world's leading multilateral institutions as well as local level institutions such as academia and private sector that are leading transformations in knowledge and information exchange, impact driven entrepreneurial initiatives and right-sizing future focused solutions to address 21st century challenges and threats to human security and our planet, such as inequality, climate change, natural disasters, conflict and diseases that threaten our lives.

The essence of systems leadership is to be able to identify those dynamics, manage relationships among different groups and bring all key stakeholders to form a new commitment for whole-of-society change to drive the 2030 Agenda. Making this SDG-driven multi-stakeholder process successful requires a coalition, a common problem-driven approach, a platform, a shared language, and a "container" or "holding space" that allows stakeholders to work on complex and conflicting issues in constructive and co-creative ways.

The capability to form powerful coalitions to drive systemic change is essential. The process of forming such coalitions will rely heavily on individuals who share the commitment to deliver on the 2030 Agenda, yet in different ways. To gather a critical mass of individuals

who will advance the same narrative and who can translate promises into action calls for the creation of an enabling environment for collaboration, which in turn requires a shift in the way we inform and bring stakeholders together. One of the shortfalls of cross-sectoral collaboration is that it is often seen as mainly a matter of good intentions rather than requisite skills, which are equally important. Building the capacity for cross-sectoral collaboration is a long process and requires a high level of commitment, which can change based on emerging dynamics and conflicting group interests.

In 2018, in the United Nations, I field tested this approach to create "collaborative spaces" with UN Country Teams through "SDG Leadership Labs" that promoted systems thinking and cultivating a mindset of doing development differently through forms of multi-stakeholder engagement and co-creating solutions with them. I am delighted to see this work continue.

The key challenge of SDG 17 is the aspirations of the Goal itself: the call for new global and local actors, new areas of collaboration, new networks all involved in distributed problem-solving and putting solutions into action. Small network coalitions can connect with larger network hubs to amplify collaboration and solutions. The Global Compact is a critical example of success, demonstrating an efficient distributed network multilateralism working with the private sector under guiding principles.

Another example is the Academic Council on the United Nations System – ACUNS – established in 1987 by a group of concerned scholars at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, USA. These academics envisioned a professional association that would unite students, scholars, advisers, practitioners, and policy makers, representing a wide array of disciplines and sectors, focusing on the evidence-based analysis of the UN system. ACUNS continues to embrace the call for collaboration between academia and the United Nations. It fosters analysis and debate around major international challenges, increases the accessibility of the UN system to scholars and facilitates the development of new scholarship around the UN. The Council also fosters discussion on the challenges that multilateral organizations face and promotes ways to connect that knowledge with know-how that is critically important to overcome them.

To conclude, I would like to emphasize the importance of leadership around collaboration and multi-stakeholder coalitions. The SDGs have set up second-generation leadership challenges that all actors are individually and collectively involved in. These are not technical challenges that can be solved by improving current practices. These are challenges that require deeper questioning of the fundamental ways we collaborate. The global community recognized that the previous ways of thinking and collaborating are insufficient. We

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must decide what to conserve from past practices, what to discard from past practices, and invent new ways to build from the best of the past and rethink the future.

We can do so by cultivating capabilities to be multilevel systems thinkers, where collaboration not only creates opportunities but seeks possibilities. This is the essence of a future-focused mindset through which we can better adapt our thinking and behaviors that enhance exchange between larger and smaller systems in response to constantly changing environments; better collaborate to build a shared understanding of problems, enabling joined-up support for effective solutions to common challenges; and better transform our focus on positive change to create long-term impact and scaling of solutions.

Panelist

Nancy Mahon, Senior Vice President, Global Corporate Citizenship and Sustainability, The Estée Lauder Companies | USA

Nancy Mahon, Senior Vice President, Global Corporate Citizenship and Sustainability is a transformational, collaborative leader with deep global experience in enterprise-wide management as well as leading Environmental, Social and Governance strategy, operations, marketing, reporting and risk reduction. Ms. Mahon is committed to taking the long view on building sustainable and inclusive companies, teams, and communities. She oversees the enterprise-wide leadership initiative on sustainability at The Estée Lauder Companies and serves on the Inclusion and Diversity Council. (Nancy Mahon`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

Corporate Social Responsibility for Implementing the Global Agenda 2030

- A Holistic, Collaborative Approach to Addressing Social and Environmental Sustainability Agendas
- Social and Environmental Sustainability Agendas are Inextricably Connected

Sustainability and social issues that we face today are immense, and that they are also inextricably linked. At The Estée Lauder Companies (ELC), we are committed to continuing to build a more just, equitable society—one that serves the many, not the few. ELC has a long history of driving both social and environmental impact as well as giving back to the communities where we live, work and source. As a global business in an ever-changing world, it is important to acknowledge the intersectionality between social and environmental issues.

That is why our commitment to doing our part to tackle environmental issues like climate change is not separate from our efforts to build resilient communities and advance women and girls. These intersections have been proven more critical than ever during the pandemic—those most vulnerable to the pandemic are often those most affected by the climate crisis and climate change

disproportionately affects communities of color and women.

Companies like ours also have a global footprint and impact. We engage with a diverse group of women in over 150 countries, so we believe that it is a business imperative to make sure that women are treated fairly, equally and have the resources needed to be thriving participants in the global economy. And as a beauty company, we have a huge opportunity with our consumers – we can make sustainability aspirational, and we can reach them through the power of the portfolio of our brands. This understanding is underpinned by our investment and decisive action toward a low-carbon future whether it be through green energy solutions or through ELC's Charitable Foundation's support of nonprofits leading critical, on the groundwork in local communities. The priority for our teams is to build a holistic approach to addressing these intersecting global problems.

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Reaching the communities where we live, work and source

What really excites me is the innovation we're seeing as well as the incredible work of our partner organizations that are enabling communities to implement the solutions they want to see. At ELC, we've found there's tremendous potential to support nonprofit partners to help address challenges in the communities where we live, work and source.

The Estée Lauder Companies Charitable Foundation has been doing this work for many years in collaboration with grantee partners around the world and has been an invaluable resource in helping us move the needle on gender equality beyond the walls of our company. Our focus on girls' education and women's advancement is informed by the knowledge that there is great intersectionality between gender equality, the climate crisis and many of the social issues we are all trying to solve. When you look at how educating a girl creates ripple effects that can benefit an entire community, it becomes very clear that addressing the global gender disparity in education is a critical part of the just transition: More educated, empowered women tend to be healthier and contribute to increases in economic growth, while conflict and disasters further exacerbate gender disparity in education.

Most recently, The Estée Lauder Companies Charitable Foundation became the inaugural corporate sponsor of Co-Impact's new Gender Fund, which supports predominantly women-led organizations in the Global South. The fund is really focused on transforming systems and advancing women's agency and leadership at all levels.

The ambition of Co-Impact's Gender Fund is bold—more than 100 million people will have better healthcare, quality education, and opportunity to work and thrive—regardless of gender, ethnicity, caste, or race. There will be more women leading at all levels from the household and community to institutions and government, influencing decisions that affect their communities and society. Perceptions and norms about women's roles will be challenged and shifted.

We recognize this work would not be possible without movements and organizations that continue to play a significant role in achieving catalytic change for gender equality and holding institutions and governments accountable. The scale of the ambition of this Fund fits the scale of the challenge. It demonstrates the type of

> More educated, empowered women tend to be healthier and contribute to increases in economic growth, while conflict and disasters further exacerbate gender disparity in education.

collaboration and commitment essential to achieving gender equality and a more just and inclusive world for all people. By combining resources, expertise, and influence, we can achieve far more together than any donor could alone.

Driving a just transition through an intersectional approach

As The Estée Lauder Companies continue to build a better society, we also continue to invest in the technology and infrastructure needed to effectively tackle environmental challenges like climate change. As businesses, governments, and organizations develop and action their climate plans, it will be more important than ever to deploy a holistic and collaborative approach to addressing and solving these global problems, one that ensures a just and robust transition. Because we firmly believe that the benefits of a healthy climate and beautiful world should be shared by everyone and that the social and environmental sustainability agendas are inextricably connected.

The impacts of climate change are incredibly far-reaching. It touches so many people in very different ways. We all have a part to play which is why we believe championing meaningful climate action today requires an unprecedented collective response across diverse stakeholder groups. To ensure no one is left behind, we all need to be coming at the issue from different angles, bringing our strengths to the table and working together on scalable solutions.

At ELC, we see a tremendous opportunity to leverage our business to drive meaningful impact and accelerate collaboration across our value chains, as well as in partnership with new leaders within our industry, NGOs, youth, and government.

When taking action on climate, we are continuously exploring ways to work with partners across industries to further scale our renewable energy portfolio. For example, ELC became the first prestigious beauty

company to execute a Virtual Power Purchase Agreement (VPPA) for renewable energy from the Ponderosa wind farm in Oklahoma, United States. This partnership with NextGen Energy Resources represents our largest renewable energy agreement to date.

As we look to the future and achieve our Science Based Targets and particularly our commitment to reducing scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions, the partnership will become even more critical to achieving our climate ambitions. Addressing carbon impacts beyond our direct operations will depend on developing integrated solutions and fostering joint value creation with supply chain partners and third-party manufacturers. We know that the key to innovation and scale will require continued cross-sector collaboration.

I am here today knowing that we have much more work ahead of us than has been achieved. The increased dialogue on social and environmental issues is really promising, especially as we're seeing youth activists come into their own and demand more decisive action and more honest conversations. But when it comes to action, I think humility is perhaps even more important than optimism. Issues like climate change and gender equality are complex issues. We need to be able to admit when we don't have the answer or the solution at hand and be open to solutions from unexpected avenues and partners. At ELC, we are committed to continuing to advocate for and practice cross-sector collaboration as we tackle these challenges.

Panelist

Prof. Chol Bunnag, Director of SDG Move, Thammasat University | THAILAND

Prof. Bunnag is responsible for coordinating research directions and various funding research related to the practical implementation of the SDGs and monitoring relevant international academic progress. He is also a member of the Monitoring and Driving Subcommittee Local Government Office of the National Economic and Social Advisory Council and Associate Dean for Student Affairs Pridi Banomyong International College and responsible for Sustainable College. Prof. Bunnag has a master's degree in Economics from the University of East Anglia, UK. After becoming a Professor on natural resources and environment economics, agricultural economics, and rural development, he conducted research on water management and policy processes to drive the Sustainable Development Goals. (Prof. Chol Bunnag`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

Capacity Building for the Socio-Economic Development

Since 2016, SDG Move has been working on the SDGs through knowledge creation, the utilization of knowledge and capacity-building. The organization tries to be the SDG knowledge hub in Thailand for policy research, building networks and supporting the knowledge of all stakeholders. At the moment, SDG Move is P a part of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, which is a global network of scholars working on SDGs. As the national hub of Thailand, the SDG Move is facilitating the SDSN Thailand.

The SDGs are not only goals and indicators: they are the development principles attached to these goals and they have become a shared development language, not only for governments but also the private sector, civil society, academia and even laypeople.

When the SDGs became a language, they also became a framework for planning, reporting impact, and tools for empowering, cooperating and negotiating with other stakeholders. Communicating with the widely used 16 or 17 icon boxes can mislead one to think that the boxes are not integrated and or linked. One can mistakenly conclude they can pick which box they want to work on without any care for the underlying development principles. Therefore, it is important for people to have the right understanding of the SDGs to use them in the correct way. Thus, they can become empowering tools for all stakeholders.

Thailand has this pinpoint: if we want people to contribute to the SDGs, they need to know what they are and how can they be utilized. Before 20216, Thailand had no capacity-building system or facilities, uh, for instance, in Thailand. There was no basic and comprehensive knowledge available on the SDGs in the Thai language. I don't think the government has found an effective way to communicate SDGs. Moreover, SDG Move found cases of misuse of the SDG by government agencies or some private companies to greenwash their proceedings.

SDG Move saw the gap in public knowledge and initiated something that can help to fill this gap. In the past five to six years, we developed mainly two projects: the first is the 'SDG 101 Content'. This project not only introduces

> SDG Watch is a platform that is increasingly being recognized by the public, but we have a lot more to do.

the SDGs, but it explains the rationale and the principles behind them, how they came about, how can people use them to empower themselves, and how can support the development agenda be supported. SDG Move explores the situation at the regional, national, and global levels in a simple and accessible way. Utilizing this content, SDG Move created the 'SDG 101+ Training Course', for organizations like universities that require training for SDG mapping, evaluating, and reporting.

The second project is the "SDG Watch" a sub-platform under the SDG Watch Europe. On the website, the organization shares SDG news and updates to follow SDGs related issues, share information with the public audience. There is also the SDG Insights, designed as a platform for scholars to share their ideas and insights regarding various SDG issues. SDG Move has been

The second lesson we learned is that the details are actually very useful. Sometimes communicators tend to be quite hesitant to talk about the complex details of the SDGs. But SDG Move found that for implementers, details are crucial for increasing effectiveness. I think we have to find a way to share more details with people so that they can connect with the SDGs.

working with several government agencies and NGOs, including the UN, EU and the Global Network Initiative. SDG Watch is a platform that is increasingly being recognized by the public, but we have a lot more to do.

As SDG Move, we learned much from the experience of communicating the SDGs and using them to empower different stakeholders to make them a contributor to the SDGs in Thailand. It is quite important to step further than the 17 Goals and give them a map and a compass. The SDGs are a complex set of goals and indicators; if one doesn't have a map, one doesn't know how to navigate them. Whereas the compass is the principles behind the SDGs, without which people cannot properly diagnose their problems and effectively address them. The main idea of 'SDG 101' is to create a map and a compass to help people navigate. The aim to leave no one behind transformative universal development requires basic principles that people need to know so that they have the right understanding of the SDGs.

The third lesson is that we need the right tools for communicating the SDGs with different demographics: cultures, languages, and age groups. We need a diversity of tools. Online tools might be appropriate to use when reaching out to the younger generations, but the older generations, and people in rural areas, require a more hands-on approach. Also, connecting the SDGs to what is close to people's hearts and hands makes communication more effective. For example, the advocacy of the Korean band BTS has been highly effective in reaching out to a young global audience.

Finally, we have to find a way to inform people that SDGs is an instrument to improve their existing efforts. They can be the starting point to further the transformation in their organizations and countries, working towards Agenda 2030.

Panelist

Dana Coppola, Public Relations and Media Specialist, Embrace Relief | USA

Dana Coppola is the Public Relations and Media Specialist at Embrace Relief. She is responsible for international communications, content creation, event/campaign planning and implementation, organizational development, and oversees social media platforms. Her ambition and passion drive her humanitarian work; she believes that through collaboration and education, the world can begin to transform. Ms. Coppola is currently pursuing her master's degree in Corporate and Organizational Communication with a concentration in Cross-Cultural Communication at Northeastern University. (Dana Coppola`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

Best Practices: Contributions of the CSOs Initiatives in Achieving the SDGs

Embrace Relief partnership delivers humanitarian assistance worldwide through volunteerism and collaboration, helping to advance towards the Sustainable Development Goals, and eventually achieving the 2030 Agenda. Embrace Relief is a small non-profit headquartered in Fairfield, New Jersey founded in 2008, dedicated to providing innovative, sustainable, research-based solutions to vulnerable communities worldwide to achieve lasting improvements. Since it is a small non-profit, it is very active in both local and international collaboration, partnership, and volunteer involvement.

Volunteer involvement in the SDGs and 2030 Agenda is a vital yet often underrepresented force behind the SDGs. Volunteer efforts truthfully drive Embrace Relief's 'First Bricks' program which is an educational program for refugee children addressing SDG 4, 'quality education.' It was started in late 2019 and is a completely free online platform for refugee children who have been forced to flee their homes and denied their right to a fair and equal education. Being a free online platform, it provides a safe and comfortable space for learning for students from all over the world. It also connects them with other refugee children who come from similar difficult situations, thus creating a thriving community.

The program is designed to allow these children to either resume where their educational journey left off or to start from scratch. Since late 2019, when the program started, it has seen rapid and exponential growth, due to the passion and altruism of its volunteers. The program now has over 400 volunteer teachers teaching over 4,000 refugee students currently enrolled in classes. The teachers teach 17 to 20 different subjects. The classes range from traditional to non-traditional: delivering lessons in mathematics, the sciences, literacy, language, and history, as well as social activities, such as cooking, music, puppet shows and storytime. The volunteers created this diverse curriculum to provide their students with a safe and comfortable space to just feel like children.

A very interesting and important aspect of this program is that most of the volunteer teachers are refugees themselves. This immediately gives the refugee children and teachers an understanding and deep connection when they meet each other. Additionally, we have witnessed the inspiration, motivation, and hope that these teachers are giving to these children through the path of education. It shows them that all the goals they set for themselves are achievable. It is a beautiful thing to see them and hear the stories of their parents. Moreover, this 'First Brick' program gives all these children a real sense of community, which is essential, especially for those children and teens who are feeling isolated and detached from the communities they find

FIRST BRICKS EDUCATION PROJECT

Join Embrace Relief and the First Bricks project to give child refugees a chance to learn and grow during the most vital developmental years of their lives.

Act Now! & Help Refugee Children

themselves in. Unfortunately, this is very common among young children because the gravity of the situation is just too much to bear. Some of these children spend months or years in hiding which can be very confusing for them. With the dedication of our volunteers, First Bricks gives these children routine stability and a sense of normalcy after all that uncertainty. This program approaches education holistically and fosters students' academic, social, and emotional development, helping them integrate into the new society they find themselves in.

Embrace Relief's Mali Medical Center Initiative, which addresses SDG 3, 'good health and wellbeing,' is another multi-stakeholder partnership program. This project also relies on the help of volunteers, but partnerships are also a big driving force behind its success.

The key players in this project are the team at Embrace Relief Project Care, which is the world's largest distributor of donated medical supplies and equipment worldwide. Embrace Relief also sponsors three health clinics in Mali, which are: Clinic Gaoussou Fofana, Planet Vision, and the Health Reference of Mali. Additionally, Embrace Relief partners with the Association of Young Volunteers for Health and Medical Aid. Almost all the doctors working at these clinics and the mobile units are volunteers. Interestingly, they all learn about Embrace Relief from word of mouth. For example, we just had a doctor left who was there for two years, and she heard about the opportunity from her professor while she was in medical school.

The aforementioned three medical clinics are all in or around the capital city of Bamako, serving a population of roughly 1.8 million people. This means that a lot of the health services are localized in Bamako. Therefore, a lot of the people who live outside the capital often do not have access to proper healthcare. Through all the collaboration efforts of all the partners involved, all three clinics have been renovated extensively, expanding department specializations, and improving physical facilities.

These renovations included the addition of new gynecology, urology, dentistry, ophthalmology, and orthopedics departments and ear, nose, and throat services. The facilities were expanded to have more accessible and up-to-date waiting rooms, emergency delivery and surgery rooms, doctor sleeping and living quarters as there is a big humanitarian mission of volunteer doctors coming from around the world.

In addition to the three clinics, we also have been able to acquire two mobile health units through the power of partnership. These operate out of the main clinics in Bamako. One of them is an 18-wheel truck that has been completely revamped to be a full-functioning health clinic with a waiting room, a dental procedure room, as well as a cataract surgery room. This truck can travel up to nine hours outside of the capital city. Embrace Relief also has a smaller mobile health unit that looks more like a utility van which has also been revamped and repurposed to be able to conduct health checkups. It travels roughly 30 minutes to one hour outside of the capital city. Therefore, these units reach people who are living in remote regions and rarely, if ever, get access to adequate healthcare. Moreover, when volunteer doctors go out on trips to visit remote villages, they can transfer a patient to a clinic if the patient presents symptoms of a medical problem that cannot be addressed on the mobile unit. Embrace Relief provides the correct sponsorship and transportation to receive the medical help that they need.

It is said that humanitarian work is deeply rooted in the belief that every person deserves the right to try and reach their full human potential. We see this in the daily operations of all our partners, collaborators, and volunteers. First Bricks and Mali Medical Centre Initiative are just two examples of how civil society organizations utilize SDG 17 to further the 2030 Agenda, in both education and healthcare which are two of the most disrupted institutions due to COVID-19. Yet, through partnership and volunteerism, we have seen that we can continue delivering humanitarian assistance to those who need it most, where and when they need it. Our partners and collaborators also help us track the success of the project. They help us understand both the emotional and the physical needs of the people we serve, and they help us refine, implement, and expand program operations. This is truly the miracle of partnership. It is that each individual effort contributes to the next, making the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

Panelist

Ashok Sajjanhar, Former Ambassador of India, President of Institute of Global Studies | INDIA

Ambassador Ashok Sajjanhar, a Postgraduate in Physics from Delhi University is a career diplomat and served as the Ambassador of India to Kazakhstan, Sweden, and Latvia as well as the Secretary/ Principal Executive Officer of the National Foundation for Communal Harmony, win the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. He has also held several significant positions in Indian Embassies in Washington, Moscow, Brussels, Geneva, Bangkok, Teheran, and Dhaka. Currently Ambassador Sajjanhar is President of the Institute of Global Studies in New Delhi. (Ashok Sajjanhar`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

The role of peace and security to facilitate global partnerships for the sustainable development

We are a little before the midterm point of the sustainable development goals is concerned, comes to an end. These were adopted in September 2015. They are to continue till 2030. The goals were adopted by 193 countries, which are members of the United Nations. Along with the 169 targets, it was a promise that we would be able to achieve most of them, if not all, by 2030. We are getting to the near midpoint and it's a good time to take stock of what has happened, where we are weighing how far we have progressed and what more needs to be done, the corrections that we might be required to take.

I think it will be useful to remind ourselves of the history of the SDGs. In 2015, we had gone through the MDGs, the Millennium Development Goals, which were adopted in 2000 at the Millennium Conference in the Millennium Declaration. Then it was thought that in 15 years we would be able to make significant progress on the MDGs. There were 8 MDGs and 21 targets identified that would be followed. They did make significant progress. They did make a considerable move forward, but still, there was a considerable amount of ground that needed to be covered. More thought needed to be to identify what are the goals that all the countries in the world need to be looking at and need to take them forward.

Peace, in a political context, refers to the freedom from conflict, disturbance and violence in the society.
Peace often brings about life security, wellbeing and prosperity in the society.
In a global context, peace is often seen as the common goal in which most societies in the world yearn to achieve.
Bringing the state to peace and prosperity is often the principle and aim of the ruling.

While the earlier MDGs all had issues, the 17 SDGs built upon their heritage, focusing on the removal of extreme poverty and hunger, ensuring universal education, promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality and improving physical and mental health conditions, combating diseases like HIV/Aids and malaria. Climate change and environmental sustainability were also included.

Finally, the development of global partnerships: what are the different ways in which all the countries could work together, could collaborate to see that the MDGs are achieved. The result at the end of the 15 years was rather uneven and uncertain.

Also, number of issues were raised during the implementation of the MDGs. In their aftermath, it was thought adequate to take into detailed consideration to identify what these MDGs should be. Secondly, all the owners and the responsibility of achieving the MDGs was put on the developing countries as if they were the ones who were required to make the changes. The developed countries were only providing funding and resources to the developing countries to be able to make the changes in education, health, and nutrition. The developed countries would not really be required to do anything much.

As far as the SDGs are concerned, it was sought to change many of these aspects. It was thought that not enough negotiations had been done with the various stakeholders with the different countries who were required to implement these goals. The whole exercise started about five years ago in 2010, and all 193 countries were involved in the process of deciding upon these 17 goals and 169 targets. Also, earlier it was thought that the SDGs were only the responsibility of the developing countries, but goal number 12, which is about consumption, is something that the developed countries are also required to implement. In many ways, the developed countries are also required to make changes when we are talking about the environment, sustainability, methods of, industrialization, modernization. There is a great deal the developed countries need to put forward to change their lifestyle and mindsets to reduce their use of fossil fuels.

The theme of this conference is the role of peace and security in facilitating global partnerships for development. The imperative need for peace and security is something we really need to be mindful of if any country is required to achieve the SDGs. The reason for that is that if there is, if there is a law-and-order problem, violence, and conflict in a particular country, then that is what the government of the day would be concentrating on. It will be spending all its money to ensure peace and security. It is essential that within the country, there should be an atmosphere of

peace and tranquility. There should be no conflict. There should be no tension. Even in democracies where the political system is much more inclusive, there is a need to ensure that most parties, entities, or communities are on the same page, working towards the national interest of taking it forward. Otherwise, the focus of the government will be on maintaining peace and law and order rather than achieving SDGs.

No country is an island in itself, no people are an island in themselves, so they need cooperation. They need global partnerships. We have seen that in achieving all these 17 SDGs, there is a great element of intercountry cooperation, collaboration, and the role of multilateral organizations, such as UN special agencies or bodies, and other regional bodies e.g., the EU and ASEAN. India has excellent relations with all of them. Security and global partnerships are absolutely crucial. Without global partnerships, we will not be able to go very far in achieving the SDGs.

Lastly, the world has become much more difficult today to achieve peace and security. The sort of developments that have been taking place in India's vicinity, in Afghanistan with the Taliban's interim government where there are no women or representatives of minorities, does not bode Moreover, all the major players whether it is the prime minister, the deputy prime ministers, the minister of interior, the minister of defense, are in the most wanted list of the United Nations and the United States. The world will really have to come together to ensure that Afghanistan does not become a haven for terrorists and that it is not used as a staging ground for terrorist attacks against neighboring countries.

the challenges are huge. The international community will have to work together. We have lost time because of the COVID-19 pandemic. the economies of most countries in the world have been adversely affected. Most countries have suffered in terms of health and infrastructure. Therefore, the challenges in front of the global community are huge. The only way in which they can be overcome is by getting all the countries on the same page and having them work together. Collaborating, cooperating, and ensuring that there is peace and security is the only way in which we can make progress and march towards achieving the SDGs over the next eight years that are left to us.

UNGA CONFERENCE PANEL SESSION 2
CLIMATE CHANGE and ECOLOGICAL THREATS

Moderator

Takahisa Taniguchi, Environmental Activist | JAPAN

Takahisa Taniguchi is an environmental activist from Japan. He established schools in Guinea, was a consultant at a global bank, M&A, and was director of a global IT company. In 2019, being aware of the rising climate crisis, he initiated a movement "Chikyu wo mamoro (Save the planet)" and started generating knowledge about the consequences of climate change and mobilized civil society organizations to take concrete actions. He has been invited to give lectures all over the world. (Takahisa Taniguchi`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

Climate change is one of the biggest problems that humans have ever confronted. It has already been causing severe impacts in our daily lives. There are more severe droughts than ever which are causing water shortages. Hurricanes and the heavy rain seasons are getting more intense. This summer, the rains have caused severe flooding in Japan, my own country, and record-breaking floods in Western Europe, which left more than 1,300 people missing.

Records of high-level temperature are breaking everywhere. In June, Beijing was hit by 49.6 degrees Celsius where the average temperature for these times should be 24 degrees Celsius. 48.8 degrees Celsius was recorded in Italy, in August, which is the highest temperature ever recorded in Europe. 54.4-degree Celsius hit Death Valley in California in July. These dry weather seasons and high temperatures are causing intense wildfires which release more and more carbon dioxide into the air. Antarctica and the Arctic are melting down due to record levels of high temperature. This is happening even faster than the scientific prediction causing sea level rise which is leaving people living in coastal areas with no choice but to leave their homelands.

During natural disasters, it is reported that women are 14 times more likely to lose their lives when compared to men. What is even more terrifying is when people start losing places to leave, as well as the resources, then conflict starts over the remaining scarce resources. Therefore, climate change is not only an environmental issue, but it is a matter of peace. The first thing that we would lose because of climate change is not nature, it is peace. Some people may be indifferent to climate change, but there is nobody who can be irrelevant to the upcoming effects anymore.

Before I became more involved in mitigating climate change, I was running my own business in Germany, which is a plastic-free product trading company fighting against the plastic waste problem. When I was in Germany, I started mobilizing young children to act, to prevent climate change and save their future. When I met them, I was really shocked and ashamed because I had not taken any action beforehand. That was when I decided to become an activist and I started to

> During natural disasters, it is reported that women are 14 times more likely to lose their lives when compared to men.

concentrate on what is not being solved. My conclusion was that people simply did not have a well-informed opinion about climate change. I thought that is where the hope lies in educating people about climate change, especially in Japan, my home country. Once people are more knowledgeable about the climate crisis, I believe their behavior will change. That is the reason I decided to go around Japan, educating people about climate change. So far, I have been involved with 50,000 people.

On some occasions, people ask me why I do not get in touch with the government, private companies, or the

media outlets directly as it may be faster to disseminate information. There are surely important responsibilities that they should take; however, I think it is time to reconsider our own choices. Governments are chosen by the citizens' votes, private companies and media are empowered as we support and finance these institutions. Therefore, I ask the people, main stakeholders to change. No government, private companies or media can ever be more responsible, conscious than the citizens of their respective

Everyone speaks of changing the world, but no one really takes an action to change themselves to combat climate change

countries. That is an important reality that we should face. Everyone speaks of changing the world, but no one really takes an action to change themselves to combat climate change. That is why I continue to engage with individuals one by one. I believe this is the action that should be taken if you really want to transform society. We are the last and the best hope. We are the generation to be impacted by the climate crisis and the last generation to stop it.

Panelist

Lauren Herzer Risi, Project Director of Environmental Change and Security, Wilson Center | USA

Lauren Herzer Risi is the Project Director of the Environmental Change and Security Program at the Wilson Center. She works with policymakers, practitioners, donors, and researchers to generate innovative, transdisciplinary solutions to development and security challenges related to environmental change and natural resource management. Ms. Risi has authored, edited several reports and she is the managing editor of New Security Beat; co-producer of a series of podcasts exploring the unintended consequences of responses to climate change; and co-producer of a series on water, conflict, and peacebuilding. (Lauren Herzer Risi`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

Impact of Increasing Ecological Threats on Future Levels of Conflict, Migration and U.S. Perspective

HOW CLIMATE DRIVES MIGRATION

Climate change is anticipated to drive mass migration and spark new conflicts. The reality is indeed more complicated than the headlines would have you believe. The evidence is very clear: climate change is increasingly driving people to move. This increase in mobility takes many different shapes; internal or across borders, short term, or long term, planned or forced. Since 2010, the number of displaced people around the world has doubled. This impact is immense in Central America because of the sharp increase in the number of migrants coming to the USA from Central America, where the number of people facing hunger increased fourfold between 2018 and 2021, not to mention the devastation of back-to-back record-breaking hurricanes.

HOW CLIMATE DRIVES INSECURITY

At the same time, the evidence is also mounting that climate change acts as a risk multiplier not just for migration, but for conflict and human insecurity as well. Climate change does not just add to insecurity but compounds it. The risks that people are already facing in their day-to-day lives, including threats of instability, food insecurity, access to safe and clean water, are magnified in ways that create new threats, undermine governments' ability to respond, worsen existing conflicts, and have cascading impacts across societies.

HOW THESE RISKS PLAY OUT

The Sahel is an example case study, where in the last 2 years alone, the number of internally displaced people quadrupled. According to UNHCR, there are over 3.7 million people displaced in the region; 2 million of those are displaced within their home country. These internally displaced people often end up in situations that are not much better than the ones they left. There are over 870,000 refugees and asylum seekers in the region.

The crisis of forced displacement in the Sahel is driven by violent conflict and instability. However, the root causes go deeper to issues of extreme poverty, corruption, weak governance, and growing inequality. All these factors are further compounded by climate impacts.

Yet how these connections play out is complex and difficult to disaggregate. One of the challenges of climate change is the unpredictability of its specific impacts. We know that the frequency and severity of storms and droughts are increasing but what that means for specific locations and communities on the ground is harder to know. The knock-on effects of its impacts such as how those impacts interact with existing vulnerabilities, like social unrest, poverty, a pandemic, an economic crisis, are much harder to know. Thus, working out how, where, and to what degree climate change influences migration-conflict dynamics is complicated.

Why is looking at these connections even important? One does not need to look further than those headlines to understand that the need to address this intersection of issues is only growing. The World Bank recently launched a follow on to the Groundswell report, a significant body of research, in which they model the impacts of climate change on specific regions of the world. In this new report, they warn that without immediate action on climate, rising sea levels, extreme heat, water scarcity, agricultural declines, the climate could force 216 million people to migrate within their own countries by 2050. These climate impacts will be felt most acutely in the regions of the world least equipped to handle them.

This upcoming humanitarian crisis cannot be ignored. As we have seen over the last 18 months, our individual well-being is intimately and inextricably connected to our collective well-being, and to the health of our planet. To be effective in our responses, we need to understand the causal chains of why people move, how climate influences conflict, how conflict drives migration. But once you start pulling on the threads of peoples' decision to move, you find out that there is very rarely one factor at play. In most cases, it is a combination of social, political, economic, and demographic factors,

> Moving can be expensive, so it is often those who have relatively greater financial resources, skills, or social networks.

and environmental factors, with climate playing an increasingly influential role in ways that make the future less predictable.

Today, climate's most immediate impacts are being felt in parts of the world that are least ready to respond. We have seen this playing out in headlines over the last decade such as the crisis in Syria. This was one case where climate's connection to the conflict was boldly proclaimed in headlines. Those headlines caught a lot of people's attention, which was good for raising awareness. However, while the media outlets are great for getting attention, they are less great at helping the global citizens to understand what is really going on: how climate change is driving risk. A closer look at the sequence of events leading up to the uprising illustrates one-way climate change can interact with existing vulnerabilities and bad policy to the point of contributing to a major humanitarian crisis and violent conflict.

In 2007, a 3-year climate-induced drought in Syria led to the collapse of crops and livestock in the northeastern bread-basket region of the country. Coupled with the regime's poor governance of water access, the drought drove migration to cities that were already burdened by Iraqi refugees. In 2010, internally displaced persons and Iraqi refugees made up roughly 20 percent of Syria's urban population (a 50% increase in just 8 years) straining cities' limited resources and infrastructure. Against this backdrop of hardship and rural and urban discontent, the Arab Spring, which itself was sparked in part by a drought in Russia that led to sharp increases in global food prices, was beginning to sweep across the region. In March 2011, when peaceful protests broke out, Assad's regime responded by torturing youthful protesters, and anger spread. And what had previously been considered an unlikely uprising began to take shape.

Recognizing there is a connection between climate, migration, and conflict, what do we do?
First of all, migration is not bad. Long before climate change, migration was a proven strategy for resilience and adaptation. This fact has not changed. Migration can be an important, peaceful way to adapt to climate change

if enabled by responsible policymaking. It can act as a pressure relief valve that eases pressure on communities and provides remittances to people back home. Safe, well-managed migration for those who choose to move should be enabled instead of forced migration.

Second, despite what many headlines indicate, most migration is internal. Those who move across borders are more often moving from one developing country to another. Moving can be expensive, so it is often those who have relatively greater financial resources, skills, or social networks. Those left behind, sometimes referred to as trapped populations, are often overlooked.

Third, migration is more often a result of conflict, rather than a contributor. In fact, most migration is free of conflict. When people are displaced by natural disasters, they are even less likely to provoke tensions given their relative vulnerability compared to host communities.

Climate responses need to be conflict-proof and conflict responses need to be climate-proof. In and of itself, this is a no-brainer. Implementing it, however, requires a significant rethinking of how to organize institutions, government agencies, and decision-making as well as the kinds of funding streams used to support interventions. Climate change will present major challenges to governments and governance. We have already seen this playing out at different scales in every region of the world, including in the countries best equipped with functioning democracies, strong institutions, and financial resources. But climate change's impacts should not absolve leaders

of responsibility for how they manage their natural resources and do or do not respond to climate change. In fact, the decisions political leaders make regarding water resource management, agriculture, critical minerals, climate adaptation and mitigation strategies can be just as damaging as climate change itself.

Climate change is a challenge that requires working across the scales of decision-making, from the local up to the international and multilateral. In our research, we found that because most of the migration occurs within national borders, strengthening inclusive, local institutions and forms of resource management can help ease the transition for both migrants and receiving communities. This requires engaging with local communities from the outset of planning for climate responses, but also for understanding the community's perception of the risks they face. One does not want to provide a solution that, at a minimum, does not fix the problem, and could even potentially create new problems.

Finally, the future will probably not look like the past. The relationship between the environment and migration or conflict is based on recent history, and clearly, the trends are shifting. To be prepared for an uncertain future, we need to encourage better interdisciplinary thinking, we need to integrate climate change intentionally and meaningfully into decision-making, and we need to respond to climate with our eyes wide opening, recognizing that its impacts are interacting with systems in complicated ways that require better integration and coordination across traditionally siloed sectors.

Panelist

Prof. Will Steffen, Climate Change Expert at Australian National University, Climate Councillor, Climate Council of Australia | AUSTRALIA

Professor Will Steffen is a climate change expert and researcher at the Australian National University, Canberra. He was on the panel of experts supporting the Multi-Party Climate Change Committee, has served as the Science Adviser to the Australian Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, and was chair of the Antarctic Science Advisory Committee. From 1998 to 2004, Professor Steffen served as Executive Director of the International Geosphere- Biosphere Programme, Steffen has been active on the climate change science-policy interface for three decades and has played a leading role in the development of Earth System science internationally. He is the author of numerous publications on climate science, including contributing as an author and reviewer to five IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) assessments and special reports between 2000 and 2018. (Professor Will Steffen`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

Climate Crisis Calling for a Global Response

Why are we facing a climate emergency? Climate change is taking place more rapidly than anticipated and it is becoming more dangerous. All the scientific evidence indicates that we are indeed facing an emergency, and we have to act urgently.

Enormous wildfires destroyed 500 homes, killed many people in Canberra, Australia. Fortunately, because of the wind shift, a vast crisis was partially avoided this year in Australia. Still, Eastern Australia recorded the worst bushfires of history in late 2019 and January 2020. 20% of the forest of entire Eastern Australia was burned with 450 people being killed because of the fire or due to the smoke. It was an unprecedented event and there is no doubt that climate change was the main reason for these events.

We had record high temperatures in 2019 which was the driest season on record in Southeast Australia.

2021 included many extreme weather events with a massive heatwave in North America, mainly hitting the western part of Canada. Early in 2021, massive floods swept through part of Germany, Belgium and killed people or left them with great damages to their homes or other infrastructures. Indeed, it is not just the scientific data, which is telling that we have a climate emergency. Millions of people experience it with events on the ground that are happening around the world. This is a global message that we must act swiftly and traumatically.

If we want to get the climate system back under control, we should analyze the data behind those extreme weather events that we're experiencing around the world. This is a temperature record for the earth. It's the earth's surface temperature averaged over land-ocean ice that starts in 1850. During that time reach about 1.2 degrees above the pre-industrial average by 2020. These types of temperature records are unheard of for many centuries. So, the 2020 average was a full 1.2 degrees above pre-industrial. It was one of the three hottest years on record. Since the world meteorological organization has kept records, but even more dramatic is if we look at that temperature rise in a much longer timescale.

Earth temperature has been very steady around the industrial revolution. Temperature records through that

time only vary by about one or two-tenths of a degree, hardly noticeable, but the huge spike at the end is the human-driven change to temperature. That is due to the burning of fossil fuels, coal oil, and gas. And again, the increasing spike only begins around the middle of the 20th century. When it is compared to the past, one can understand why we are experiencing such extreme weather events like the fires in Australia and California, it is the heat in Canada, and floods around the world.

We can also see the devastation these incidents are causing for the natural world. The fact that there are many animals and ecosystems, which are suffering because they simply are not adapted to temperature rise this much. And this fast change is dramatic when it is analyzed from an even longer point of view. So, if we look at how fast carbon dioxide is increasing in the atmosphere, and that is the main driver of these temperature increases over the past two decades, it is increasing at about 100 times the maximum rate during the last time, the years came out of an ice age. The temperature rise that I underlined from 1970, is about 200 times faster than the very slow cooling of the climate from about 7,000 years ago.

Considering the middle period of the Holocene, the

geological E-box that we have been in up until recently, the recent comment of the Geological Society of London is the most dramatic. These rates at which temperature and CO2 are rising, are almost unprecedented in the entire 4.5-billion-year history of the earth. So, these are incredible changes to Earth's climate system, and there is absolutely no doubt that they are driven by human activities. That is a real concern. In addition to all the extreme weather events that I've talked about, the heat, the floods, the fires, behind those events are some other features of the Euro system, which could cause a lot of problems. These are so-called tipping points. They are parts of the eras system such as ice sheets and sea ice, ocean circulation, big ecosystems, like the rainforest.

These are starting to change being driven by climate change. We are losing ice at an accelerating rate. The Atlantic Ocean is slowing down permafrost. We have had massive die-offs of coral reefs on the great barrier reef here in Australia. It is about 50% dead already. Additionally, the Amazon is suffering increasing droughts and therefore more prone to burning all of these so-called tipping points are being activated because the climate is shifting, but I think even more dangerous than they are on their own is the fact that they are linked. For

example, as the Arctic sea ice is melted, that uncovers darker water in the Northern hemisphere summer and absorbs more sunlight increases. The heating increases the ice melting in Greenland, pouring more freshwater onto the Atlantic, slowing the Atlantic circulation, and creating more drought in the Amazon.

The reason this is dangerous is since these processes themselves warm the climate; as Arctic sea ice melts, it heats the planet because it uncovers more ocean water and so on. The problem here is that once this cascade gets going, it takes the climate system out of human control, and we can get our emissions down. However, the climate will continue to warm, continue to change. Extreme events will continue to get worse, and there will be nothing we can do that is going to slow or stop this process. So, this is the most dangerous part of climate change; if we activate this, we will lose control of the system.

Where might this occur? We do not know, but we know that the risk that it will escalate sharply the further above two degrees warming. Why is all this happening? This is happening because we are emitting carbon dioxide from our use of fossil fuels. Primarily, about 90% of our emissions come from coal oil, and gas, about 10% from land-use change deforestation. So going back to 1850, emissions were very low, but then we notice a sweeping

upward. These are observed emissions to the point where we are now over 40 billion tons of carbon dioxide in our annual emissions, and that is growing year by year. There are slight changes from time to time and COVID is creating a narrow difference right now.

Even as we are talking in 2021, emissions are going back up compared to 2020. So that is the dilemma we face. We must get emissions back down to zero within the next two or three decades to have a chance of stabilizing the system. That means we must have an extremely steep reduction curve in terms of the magnitude and to get our fossil fuel emissions out of our economic systems. That is required to stabilize the climate system to a level that we can survive or thrive in.

This is a climate emergency requiring an enormous and fast effort, but we must cut our emissions very deeply. It is an emergency that we need to act now; the climate evidence is absolutely clear. The system is moving at rates that are unprecedented in virtually all of the history of the earth. We know why they are occurring because we are emitting CO2 from the burning of fossil fuels. We have the alternatives now, renewables and other new technologies. However, we must take urgent action today. We must start moving immediately to get our emissions moving towards zero as fast as we can.

Panelist

Jonathan Sury, Project Director for Communications and Field Operations, National Center for Disaster Preparedness, The Earth Institute | USA

Jonathan Sury is the Project Director for Communications and Field Operations at the National Center for Disaster Preparedness. He has a keen interest in Geographic Information Systems and their use in disaster preparedness and recovery. He contributes to a variety of disaster-related research at NCDP, including community resilience and child-focused preparedness, evaluating the unanticipated consequences of pandemic flu, determining racially and ethnically appropriate emergency messaging, analyzing the long-term disaster resiliency and recovery issues in the Gulf Coast following Hurricane Katrina, and the measurement and mapping of social vulnerability and

the role of place and space in disaster recovery. (Jonathan Sury`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

Climate Change, Community Resilience and Gender Equality

The National Center for Disaster Preparedness (NCDP) is an academically based research center at Columbia University at the Earth Institute, which is the Columbia Climate School. NCDP focuses all its work on research policy and practice, providing an evidence-based to inform policy and public health practitioners and emergency managers around the world. We have done a lot of work around long-term disaster recovery, primarily starting during Hurricane Katrina, in 2005, and moving forward through Superstorm Sandy and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, as a technological

disaster. NCDP`s work has also been focused on the specific needs of various vulnerable populations, in particular children. One of the projects that NCDP leads in this respect is the Resilient Children/ Resilient Communities (RCRC Initiative), which is developing a model of child-focused community resilience and preparedness.

Dr. Stephen Morse has been raising awareness about the lack of overall preparedness and planning to adequately address some of the biothreats such as extreme weather events and corresponding emergency infectious diseases. There is an increasing frequency and severity of technological and manmade disasters that are becoming more common in addition to the pre-existing issues of exacerbation of disaster by climate change. We are also individually, collectively, organizations and as nation states dealing with an information overload and grappling with almost too much information and not enough information at the same time. We are constantly trying to access quality data and good information. Communicating the information about climate change to the public and ensuring that individuals comprehend it and translate that into meaningful action requires more attention.

In the disaster management life cycle, there is preparedness, response, and recovery, a cyclical response. However, ideally, we are always preparing for and always mitigating disasters. COVID-19 has raised a new level of awareness of the complexity of the cascading and compounding hazards and disasters further exacerbated by climate change. At this stage, we are not just planning for one event but getting ready for two types of events. There have been a lot of very rapid changes in disaster planning and policies that had to be initiated beforehand because of COVID-19, particularly around emergency sheltering and any kind of congregate facility, where people are going to be together in the event of a displacement during a disaster. It is a planning paradigm and requires a new way of thinking about some of these current environmental problems.

The exacerbation of many of the issues due to climate change is becoming clearer. There are many types of disasters and climatic events that will be seen in more severity. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports that there will be an increase in certain events overwhelmingly for extreme heat, mean precipitation, average precipitation, flooding, heavy precipitation, atmospheric CO_2, sea-level rise and coastal flooding. All these events will have human impacts. There is a direct intersection with the livelihoods and well-being of individuals, households, and families.

Post-disaster vulnerability is increased in a variety of different ways. We lose control over natural resources, including water and access to, control over the production of resources. When it comes to information and decision-making, there is increased energy, both individually and organizationally, to develop new strategies and find new ways to generate income, especially

in the event of displacement. There is a shortage of basic services, a gap in production capacity to provide those services that can be due to workforce shortages, people being sick, or being worried about being sick. The shortage of basic services can hit the education sector, healthcare sector, and in general, employment as we experienced during COVID-19. There is added stress and reduced ability to support children in the education systems. The difficulty of providing sustainable income in the short-term immediately after a disaster is a serious obstacle, as various aid systems are either in place or not in place or are not functional. Therefore, the natural disaster itself creates vulnerability.

There is a distinct correlation between climate change, gender, and vulnerability. Intersectionality refers to an overlapping of different types of risks together that has an individual level effect on how an individual accesses services, resources, and has the power within a system. We must consider gender and intersection with socio-economic and social determinants. Gender has its effect in addition to poverty, job status, education status, caste system, and other socio-ecological factors that affect an individual and the way they interact with society. Gender can also interact with institutions and systems. These are the economic systems, legal systems, business systems with extensive structures that are operating on their own that automatically include or exclude certain genders in different ways, as well as behaviors. Every culture and society have different gender norms, different roles, expectations, and abilities to influence decision-making as well as an individual`s agency. Women are more likely to be living in poverty. They are less likely to own land and resources that may be assets in a disaster and provide places to go or assets to sell. They are less likely to have control and production of household income. They may be less likely to have education and training, have institutional support and access to information, have less freedom of association to move between different circles and social groups, and are more likely to have fewer positions on decision-making bodies. Considering all these factors there must be more women decision-makers and are women leading some of these discussions

Post-disaster vulnerability is increased in a variety of different ways. We lose control over natural resources, including water and access to, control over the production of resources.

and priority settings for how communities might better adapt to climate change in particular the specific vulnerabilities of women and girls.

There is a disproportionate impact of the disaster on women and girls. Neumayer and Plümper, in 2007, wrote an article that covered about 20 years of disaster. The researchers looked at the expected life expectancy, death rates, and the total number of people that were impacted. They found that natural disasters result in more deaths of women than men. It essentially shortens women's life expectancy. This is further exacerbated by those having low economic status and socioeconomic status. Therefore, a greater number of women with low socioeconomic status (SES) died. However, this effect can be ended by having a high SES, where it can become almost equivalent to males. It is important to note that the stronger the disaster is the stronger the effect is. As these climatic events are making disasters worse, we are going to document more disproportionate deaths. This indicates that the social construction of gender, not necessarily the disaster itself, can be responsible for these excess deaths. In general, women have more responsibility in the household for preparing, and responding to disasters from getting organized, preparing go-kits, and taking care of children along with their own needs. Therefore, climate change will continue to exacerbate some of these underlying vulnerabilities that have been set by the social construction of gender. Many climate change impacts are gendered, but the policies that address them are not necessarily gender-sensitive and are not addressing the vulnerabilities that are different for males and females.

There are a variety of different ecological threats. I have elaborated on some of those from the Ecological Threat Registry and would like to highlight more potential health impacts leading to gender inequities. For example, the health impacts of food insecurity are going to be poor nutrition, conflict due to access to food, as well as household stress that may occur. In such cases, women are more likely to give up their food to share for nutritional access for their children or other family

members which put them at a disadvantage. During wildfires, which are occurring frequently, there is more displacement and exposure to poor air quality. Females are responsible for those household preparations and evacuations. In some of our research, we found that female-headed households were more likely to evacuate than others, and that was after Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Gustav. During cyclones and hurricanes, there is potential exposure to debris to damage and loss of the home, exposure to mold in the home, depending on the type of construction materials that are used in the home. Our research at NCDP shows that there is an increased risk for mental health impacts on female-headed households. They are more likely to indicate that they were experiencing mental health distress after a disaster. Additionally, there is also an increased potential for mental health effects on children, which has a cascading effect up into the parental units and caregivers. With the rising temperatures, we are going to see these extreme heat events` stress on power infrastructure, the spread of zoonotic disease, water-related and others, as well as respiratory illness. All these events can also increase the care-taking burden on women and girls in the household. It is not just women but sometimes siblings of sick family members, which we certainly experienced, during the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone.

I would like to present my recommendations and ideas to address some of these climate change-related challenges. The first one is exploring participatory research and design methods working directly with community members to define research questions, to divide the objectives, and to conduct a gender analysis. The mission is to ensure that as policies are initiated, as strategies are being made, they are gender-sensitive to the context in which implementation will occur. To create local opportunities for improved community-wide disaster planning and climate change, mitigation and adaptation activities are important which requires new partnerships built upon solid relationships. They require the stakeholders to be aware of their communities. They require having personal relations with people to build a connection so that when there is a need for help, it can be there, as well as formal partnerships. In terms of monitoring and surveilling, some of these issues do not rely solely on large-scale data. There are many different issues that require a new approach. Utilizing ethnographic techniques ensures that there is a nuanced and deeper understanding of the gender-related impacts

of climate change and disasters. Policymakers should be in touch with communities directly that are being affected and the organizations that work with them to make relevant policies and to ensure that data monitoring activities are indeed representative of the whole society.

Accountability ensures that gender is incorporated into any existing partnerships and the development of new policies. UN Women had done an analysis of SDG 17 and found that there was not enough reference to gender within any of the partnerships that were being implemented. We also need to excel in communication and understanding how climate change affects the social structures within communities. It is essential to analyze how gender roles, power dynamics, and decision-making powers affect individuals` daily lives, health, and well-being.

There is also a need to foster community-based risk reduction strategies to understand gender norms, social systems, vulnerabilities, and ensure that the mitigation and adaptation programs factor in the effect on child marriage. There is evidence that climatic events are increasing child marriage, which was an important issue raised by the Resilient Children, Resilient Communities Initiative. There is an undercurrent of intimate partner

> Our research at NCDP shows that there is an increased risk for mental health impacts on female-headed households.

violence that is invisible. In fact, the misleading data shows that there was a decrease in intimate partner violence only because people were afraid to reach out for assistance or due to lockdowns, they were unable to access and request help. There will be potential long-term issues for women and girls as they encounter some of the trauma that they have been experiencing during the pandemic. It is important to continue building mental health and psychosocial response structures that are gender sensitive. We must also include women and girls as agents of change in the mitigation and adaptation strategies as well as decision-making mechanisms.

Panelist

Aleandra Scafati, Founder and President, Ecomujeres Foundation | ARGENTINA

Aleandra Scafacti has specialized in sustainability, climate change and green finance, with more than 50 projects implemented, for mitigation, adaptation, and compensation. She is the Founder and President of Ecomujeres Foundation, a space for education and information to empower women to lead the change towards sustainability. Ms. Scafacti leads the development of the Argentinian National Environmental Information Data Center. She led the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency of the City of Buenos Aires. Academically, Ms. Scafacti is a member of LEAP, a global academic network for research and education for sustainability, and of the Expert Review Committee of the International Academy of Management. She is a PRME Professor (Principles for Responsible Management Education by the United Nations). (Aleandra Scafati`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

The Role of Women in Combating Climate Crisis: Best Practices

EcoMujeres believes that climate change is a problem of excessive consumption, accelerated since 1950 with the advent of the prêt-a-porter fashion, tourism, globalization of trade, commercial air navigation, massive marketing strategies, massive home appliances offers and planned obsolescence, among other developments.

In order to stop the negative effects, it requires changes in daily habits and new developments in products and services. The last IPCC publication[1] shows that there is no more time. Humanity's survival depends on a rapid migration into a circular and low-carbon economy. Women are the natural candidates to lead a sustainable transition which requires:

- Modifying consumption and production patterns
- Thinking in circular holistic business models
- Having empathic, supportive and cooperative

The Role of Women in Climate Change

- Today, women make up more than half the population, therefore they have the volume to enact change

- Control or influence 85% of consumer spending, therefore they can redefine consumption patterns and reduce the global carbon footprint;

- Dominate world food production (50-80%), therefore, they can reduce world hunger and change production patterns;

- Cccupy more key positions in power than they used to, there are female heads of state, ministers, parliamentarians and CEOS, therefore they can demonstrate there is a new type of leadership flourishing;

- Spend 90% of their spare income in their communities and homes, men allocate only 10%.

Women also represent 70% of the poor; therefore, they are the most vulnerable to climate change.

1 https://www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar6/

Women have characteristics that define the ideal type of leadership needed to exercise climate actions. Those characteristics are:

- Biological (nurturing and giving birth)
- Women are creators of life and therefore, instinctively care for and protect it in all its forms.
- Psychological (empathizing and sharing with the community and family) - women are natural communicators and spokespersons for daily habits.
- Intellectual (lateral thinking capacity and multitasking) - women have a holistic view and can attend to several issues at the same time; therefore, they can think as the circular systems need.

However, women are still out of the picture in the Climate Change Negotiations.

How does ECOMUJERES Empower Women to be Active Players?

ECOMUJERES FOUNDATION originated on the basis that hyper consumption is the cause of climate change and that women are the perfect leaders for advocacy towards this matter.

Under this belief, our goals are to:

- Promoting sustainable consumption and production
- Educating on sustainable forms of behavior
- Disseminating good environmental practices
- Raising awareness about individual environmental impacts with the personal carbon footprint tool accessible, FREE to anyone, from our website

ECOMUJERES FOUNDATION has different working areas:

- Fashion: supporting sustainable fashion and designers with parades, fairs, training, and export opportunities as fashion are the second-largest polluter industry after oil and gas
- Food: supporting organic and family farming practices with the training, technical publications, and credit assistance as almost 30% of global greenhouse emissions come from the food system.
- Construction: promoting sustainable construction technology and new materials with technical publications and training as almost 40% of global greenhouse emissions come from the buildings.

- Entrepreneurship: supporting the development of a sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem, with fairs, export opportunities, training, and special awards as we believe that the transition to a carbon-neutral economy needs sustainable and innovative businesses.

Some results from ECOMUJERES FOUNDATION's sctions:

- + 2 million carbon footprint tests done.
- + 300 sustainable entrepreneurs assisted.
- + 10.000 people trained.
- + 50 net-zero events organized and measured.
- + 20 meaningful campaigns, such as promoting the use of ecological bags, banning the use of plastic bags by law, leading the Argentinean overshoot day advocacy campaign or promoting the sustainable girl effect, encouraging girls to stay in schools until they are adults fostering a positive effect on them, their families and their communities.

Lastly, I would like to highlight some exemplary women leaders combating climate change:

- Rachel Carson, a biologist, with her publication in 1962 of "Silent Spring" promoted the concept of environmental education for regular people.
- Gro Harlem Brundtland, being the Prime Minister of Norway a couple of times, with her publication of "Our Common Future" in 1987, defined the concept of sustainable development for the first time which is still valid today.
- Marina Silva, a Brazilian politician known as the Voice of the Amazon, was the first presidential candidate for the Green Party in 2011.
- Greta Thunberg, a young environmental activist, named by *Time Magazine* in 2019 as the leader for the next generation, has hacked the global leaders with her voice demanding Climate Change Action Now.

Young Professional

Anne Eta, High School Senior, The Childville, Ogudu GRA and Cage Free Voices Ambassador Program | NIGERIA

Anne Eta is an active changemaker and Cage Free Voices Ambassador looking who hopes to use her skills and talents to change the world for the better. She is a 15-year-old high school senior, an alumna of the Yale Young African Scholars (YYAS) program, and former co-host of Leading Youth to Foster Transformation in Africa (LYFT Africa). Anne is currently the head girl of her high school, a platform she uses to take up the role of a problem solver to address issues in her school. Anne has also facilitated menstrual education for young teenage girls, while striving to remove the stigma around menstruation in her community. (Anne Eta`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

Youth Leadership in Establishing Community Resilience and Combating Climate Change

Michael Rutter once said, "Resilience is our ability to bounce back from life's challenges and unforeseen difficulties, providing mental protection from emotional and mental disorders." At the end of the day, it all boils down to how strong our mental protection is. Emotional health has proven to be a significant factor in an individual's growth and ability to create robust coping mechanisms. Individuals who control their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors form a community capable of effectively conquering obstacles. They're capable of dealing with the challenges of life and can put problems in perspective and bounce back from setbacks.

As youths, we play a major role in the development of our countries. The sooner we realize that the power to aid a country's development and growth is in our hands and take charge of promoting social transformation to our countries, the more secure our future is. Promoting youth leadership by encouraging our adolescents in our community to exercise authority the right way over themselves and others pushes us closer to our main goal:

Combating Climate Change.

Youths these days are more eager to deal with society's issues as most of us are becoming more emotionally sensitive to problems around us. As trendsetters and agents of change, it is high time we put our growing spheres of influence and energy to better use. It is also crucial that we understand the power of relationships and proper communication and how common help urges us to accomplish objectives we might not have acknowledged alone and recognize that we need to be able to put thoughts of our own accomplishments aside to work for the benefit of the team. I am on fire for my community and making the lives of the people around me better as I understand that as long as I affect their lives, I am responsible for positively affecting them.

I have always believed in creating that in which I would like to be a part. So, I work with the Richbol Environmental Services to collect, sort, and transport plastic bottles to the recycling facility. The materials are processed, broken down, and repurposed into new products. I also collaborated on a unique initiative with my friend to pilot a test project that creates bricks from a mixture of plastics and sand. After the bricks were made, we took on a floor surfacing project at our community's police station (Ogudu Police Station, Kosofe Local Government Area, Lagos State, Nigeria) to improve our society's infrastructure. We all can play a role in actively combating the ecological threats as we all work towards being the change we want to see and bounce back from life's challenges and unforeseen difficulties with the right state of mind to be resilient and make a difference.

UNGA CONFERENCE PANEL SESSION 3
QUALITY EDUCATION IN THE POST-COVID ERA AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Moderator

Dr. Rajendran Govender, Executive Director of Mzansi Empowerment Enterprise, Social Cohesion Advocate at the Department of Arts and Culture | SOUTH AFRICA

Dr. Rajendran Govender is the Executive Director of Mzansi Empowerment Enterprise, a consultancy that focuses on skills development and training, research development, diversity management, mediation and reconciliation, and project management. Dr. Govender also serves as a Social Cohesion Advocate with the Department of Arts and Culture, Republic of South Africa and have been tasked to head a Rapid Response Task Team to address issues related to racism, xenophobia, gender-based violence and other social ills that confront society. Dr. Govender was the past Chairperson of the Ford Foundation International Alumni Association for three terms where he was responsible for developing leadership for over 450 Ford Foundation Masters and PhD graduates. He regularly features on National TV and radio as a cultural commentator and a newspaper columnist. (Dr. Rajendran Govender`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

One of the critical areas that the COVID-19 Pandemic has caused a substantial setback is access to quality education. The progress report of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on sustainable development identifies the long-term implications of unequal access to education. During the pandemic, as a generational catastrophe, crowded public places, schools were among the institutions that were closed for in-person access all around the world due to health measures and precautions. However, this created unprecedented consequences for the social wellbeing of children and impacted their learning trends. It also increased the number of children who may never have a chance of returning to school, which may have a negative effect in all spheres of life.

There is an urgent need to develop new conceptual frameworks for effective teaching and learning strategies to support active, engaged, and meaningful student learning that will lead to better learning outcomes. Teachers need to move away from the conventional teaching styles that were wholly chalkboard orientated to using digital technologies like interactive whiteboards and one-to-one tablets and laptops. It is incumbent on the education departments in all parts of the world to start transforming, to meet the new demands brought about by COVID-19.
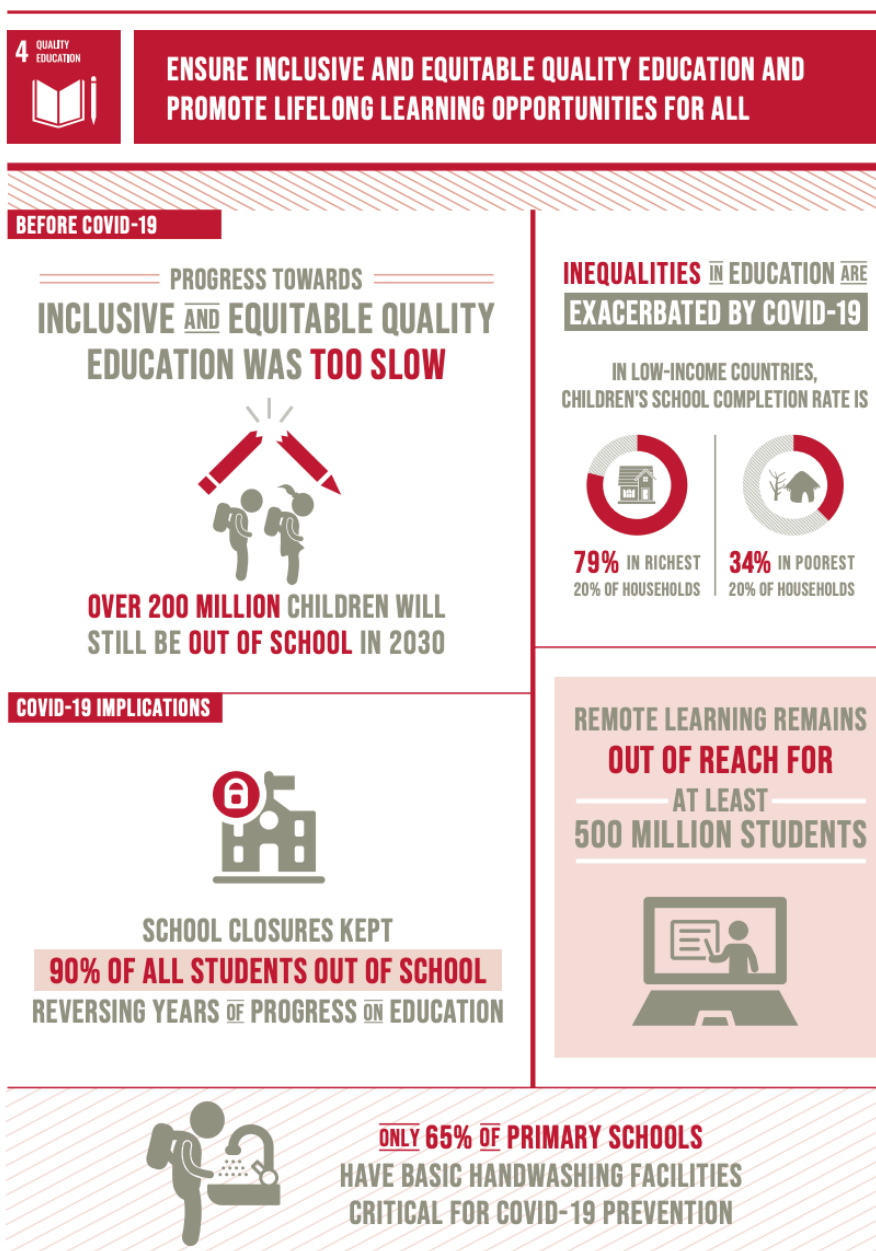
Studying online is rapidly becoming popular in most parts of the world. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, as lockdowns were imposed in various parts of the world, many parents switched to remote learning for health and safety reasons, and to ensure the children did not fall behind. September 15, 2021, was celebrated as the Online Learning Day to cultivate awareness and support the ever-growing community of online learners, celebrating the vast potential of digital technology and what online learning can offer to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on the education of learners.

> Teachers need to move away from the conventional teaching styles that were wholly chalkboard orientated to using digital technologies like interactive whiteboards and one-to-one tablets and laptops.

Online learning is also aimed at preparing students of tertiary education for the modern workplace. It accelerates the individuals' need to think critically, solve problems, and become confident thinkers that the 21st century needs without compromising on the quality of education. The ongoing development of powerful digital technologies is undoubtedly one of the defining

features of the last few years. Digital technology is a powerful tool that is globally transforming numerous established practices and industries, including the educational system. COVID-19 has made it even more important for a radical transformation in the digital space. The pace and scale of digital innovation, in particular, the growth of computing, the internet and mobile telephony, has prompted many commentators to describe digital technology as a key driver of societal development around the world.

Despite the globalist explanations, it is difficult to gauge any association with digital technology. It would be fair to conclude that educational technology is certainly not a straightforward force for equal change around the world against this backdrop. There is an urgent need for radical transformation so that all countries in the world can benefit from digital technology. One of the first steps in developing a more realistic account is to recognize the poor range of involved interests which include all the familiar components of education: community schools, universities, teachers, students, parents, and academic researchers. Equally important role players are national and state governments; educational unions; educational service providers, such as publishers; multinational mobile and data telecommunication providers. Partnerships are key to the successful implementation of digital technology in education. As a global community, we need to help one another to find creative solutions so that we can save the future of our children who are our future leaders.

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

BEFORE COVID-19

PROGRESS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION WAS TOO SLOW

OVER 200 MILLION CHILDREN WILL STILL BE OUT OF SCHOOL IN 2030

INEQUALITIES IN EDUCATION ARE EXACERBATED BY COVID-19

IN LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES, CHILDREN'S SCHOOL COMPLETION RATE IS

79% IN RICHEST 20% OF HOUSEHOLDS

34% IN POOREST 20% OF HOUSEHOLDS

COVID-19 IMPLICATIONS

SCHOOL CLOSURES KEPT 90% OF ALL STUDENTS OUT OF SCHOOL REVERSING YEARS OF PROGRESS ON EDUCATION

REMOTE LEARNING REMAINS OUT OF REACH FOR AT LEAST 500 MILLION STUDENTS

ONLY 65% OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS HAVE BASIC HANDWASHING FACILITIES CRITICAL FOR COVID-19 PREVENTION

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

ACCESS MORE DATA AND INFORMATION ON THE INDICATORS AT HTTPS://UNSTATS.UN.ORG/SDGS/REPORT/2020/

Panelist

Prof. Modesto Seara Vázquez, Rector of the Oaxaca State University System, Honorary President of the Mexican Association of International Studies | MEXICO

Prof. Seara-Vazquez studied law at the University of Madrid and took his doctorate in International Law of the Université de Paris (Sorbonne) with a pioneering thesis on the law of outer space. Modesto Seara-Vázquez has dedicated 72 years of his life to academia in UNAM and in the State University program in Oaxaca. He was also a professor at the University of Utah and El Colegio de México, and he has created and presided over numerous academic institutions and has an extensive written output, disseminated in several countries and languages. He is considered one of the founders of outer space law in the late 1950s and has contributed original ideas to the development of the disciplines of international law and international relations. (Prof. Modesto Seara Vázquez' Full Biography and Video Remarks)

social, political, and ideological crisis, in a profoundly deteriorated planet with a population that already exceeds the limits of sustainability. I do not mean by this that the Planet does not have enough resources to sustain a population of 8 billion inhabitants. What I mean is that resource management has been so irrational, especially in recent decades, that human survival is now at stake, because of the impossibility of sustaining the levels of consumption to which we have become unduly accustomed.[3] The hard data is there, and no one can deny it.

The epidemic did not cause the crisis, but it was its trigger, which served to show the limits of the supposed wisdom of humans, who should not only struggle to increase their income or to get out of poverty, but now the fight is for survival, for food, for water, for air and for land. The biosphere is in an accelerated process of destruction. No more, no less.

Long Term Implications of an Unequal Access to Education During COVID-19

Epidemics and pandemics are catastrophic events that mankind has suffered and overcome on several occasions in the past. They have always been of a conjunctural nature and mankind has been able to overcome them completely.

> We start from the idea that distance learning can be used for professional training, but true university education is not simply professional training but also personality formation and this requires physical presence and interaction.

On this occasion, the COVID-19 Pandemic has essentially different characteristics, because it is a medical crisis that occurs in a context of multiple simultaneous crises that give it a systemic and multidimensional character.[2] It is a generalized and profound environmental crisis, of which climate change is only a symptom; it is also an economic,

Human relations have always been set in terms of confrontation, of interests, of beliefs, of ambitions, of power. The countries divert enormous amounts of resources towards the construction of armaments,[4] which in the best of cases, will be wasted and in the worst of hypotheses, would precipitate the end of humanity.

We do not yet have the capacity to destroy the Planet, but

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2 I have defined this crisis as "systemic and multidimensional"; it could also be said that it is progressive, in acceleration and perhaps irreversible. See, Modesto Seara-Vázquez (Editor), Pandemics. The Catastrophic Crisis,

3 There is nothing new about this crisis, for it has been in the making for many years. Since the early 1980s, I have been drawing attention to the seriousness of the crisis that humanity was entering, in my book "La Hora Decisiva", Joaquín Mortiz/Planeta, Mexico 1986. An English translation of the Third (1995) Spanish Edition, "The Decisive Hour", UMAR: Huatulco, 2020. There is also a digital (Kindle) edition in German, "Die Entsheidende Stunde", 2020, in Amazon. In 1985 I was invited to offer a series of lectures at the Universidad del Pais Vasco (VItoria-Gasteiz), later published as "La Crisis Mundial y los Modelos de Sociedad Internacional", Universidad del País Vasco, Cursos de Derecho Internacional de Vitoria Gasteiz, 1985, pp.15-78.

4 Estimated at close to 2 trillion $USA, according to SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute).

we have long had the possibility of destroying humanity. In this physical and social environment, it is urgent to realistically consider the objectives to be pursued by the peoples of the world in order to ensure the viability of human society. The problem is extremely complex, and it is not certain that the majority can understand it, nor is it that we have the necessary institutions and leadership to solve it. I turn now to a topic contemplated among the In this physical and social environment, it is urgent to realistically consider the objectives to be pursued by the peoples of the world in order to ensure the viability of human society. The problem is extremely complex, and it is not certain that the majority can understand it, nor is it that we have the necessary institutions and leadership to solve it. I turn now to a topic contemplated among the sustainable objectives of the United Nations Organization, and expressed in point 4 of these goals, related to education.

Education is the key to all social life: to economic growth, to social development, to the construction of the culture that gives identity to peoples and must serve to affirm the basic unity of human beings, to the knowledge of the physical environment that allows us to see the limits of our possibilities of using it. Education must also serve to imbue the positive values of coexistence. For all these reasons, education should not be seen, in any of its stages, as a simple mechanism of professional training, but as the only procedure that allows us to form citizens.

At this point it is essential to stress that education as an instrument of mobility and social progress is only effective if it is of quality.[5] If, with a misunderstood sense of equity, we limit ourselves to facilitating the access and transit of young people in the educational system, so that they can obtain a degree that is not backed by knowledge, the result would be the creation of permanent invalids. It is true that young people from disadvantaged social sectors arrive at the university level in disadvantaged conditions and require special attention, but this can be solved with free higher education. We must remember that education is not an expense, but the most profitable investment of society. Students must also receive the necessary economic support so that they can concentrate on their studies. It is also essential the organization of tutorials to help them overcome the deficiencies in their education.

Finally, the educational system must be very effective, which basically means work discipline and multiple parallel activities, of a cultural nature in general, which will favor the absorption of positive values, so that they can later become motors of transformation in the communities from which they come.

It is important to share with you a unique case of a university project,[6] initiated 33 years ago, in particularly complicated conditions, geographically, economically,

5   This is valid for all levels of education. In what regards the university, there are all kinds of positions reflected in a large number of publications. For me, the university is much more than an educational institution: it is an instrument, the most important one, for the development of human society. A short list of books on various problems of the contemporary university: Karl Jaspers, Die Idee der Universität. Berlin/ New York: Springer, 1980; David Riesman, The Academic Enterprise in an Era of Rising Student Consumerism. On Higher Education, New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1988; OCED, Universities under Scrutiny, Paris: OCED, 1987; Roberto Rodríguez Gómez y Hugo Casanova Cardiel, (Coordinadores), Universidad Contemporánea. Racionalidad Política y Vinculación Social,   UNAM: México, 1994; Bill Readings, The University in Ruins, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass. 1996; Leif Edvinsson and Michael S. Malone, Intellectual Capital, New York: Harper, 1997; Jaume Porta and Manuel Lladonosa, La Universidad en el cambio de siglo, Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1998; John S. Levin, Globalizing the Community College. Strategies for Change in the Twenty-First Century, New York: Palgrave, 2001; Alain Renaut, Que faire des universités?, Montrouge: Bayard:, 2002; Noam Chomsky (trad. de l'anglais), Réflexions sur l'université: suivies d'un entretien inédit, Ivry-sur-Seine, Paris: Raisons d'agir, 2010; Michael Grüttner u. a. (Hrsg.): Gebrochene Wissenschaftskulturen. Universität und Politik im 20. Jahrhundert, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010; Modesto Seara-Vázquez, Un Nuevo Modelo de Universidad, 3rd. Edition, Universidad Tecnológica de la Mixteca: Huajuapan de León, Oaxaca, 2020; Michael Segre, Higher Education and the Growth of Knowledge: A Historical Outline of Aims and Tensions. New York: Routledge, 2015; Office of Science and Technology Policy, Progress Report on the Implementation of the Federal STEM Education Strategic Plan, Washington, December 2020. See, https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Progress-Report-Federal-Implementation-STEM-Education-Strategic-Plan-Dec-2020.pdf. Latest access on September 28, 2021; Katie Leone (Editor), Simeon Komisar (Editor), Edwin M. Everham III (Editor) Making the Sustainable University: Trials and Tribulations (Education for Sustainability) 1st ed. New York: Springer, 2021.

6 About this project and, in a more general way, my conception of the university, see Modesto Seara-Vázquez, Un Nuevo Modelo… An English translation of the 2nd, Spanish Edition, A New Model of University. Universities for Development, was published in 2010, by the Universidad Tecnológica de la Mixteca; it can also be found in Amazon.

socially, culturally, and even linguistically. It is important to share it because it has achieved results of excellence in all aspects of university activity.

The quality of OSUS´s education is very high, according to the results of the National Council for Educational Evaluation (CENEVAL), which compares the knowledge of the graduates of the country's universities, in the so-called General Knowledge Exams (EGEL). The State Universities of Oaxaca comply with many of the Sustainable Objectives of the United Nations: all the campuses are strategically located to cover the entire territory, outside the cities and are covered by forests.

The Oaxaca State University System

They maintain an energy saving policy and are in the process of developing solar electricity production, with one university already running entirely on solar energy (Universidad Tecnológica de la Mixteca). All wastewater is treated and reused for irrigation, and the campuses maintain a very diverse flora and fauna. In the cultural aspect, the development and updating of indigenous cultures is encouraged, to keep them alive and prevent them from becoming museum objects. To this end, seven weeks of cultures are celebrated with activities of various kinds and the two most complete dictionaries of indigenous languages have been elaborated and published: one of the Mixtec language (about 1,000 pages) and another on the Zapotec language. More than one hundred books have been published, many of which are about the cultures of Oaxaca. In the field of social and gender equality, it should be noted that 60 percent of the students are women and 57 percent of the students in STEM careers are also women.

Within OSUS we have developed a different subsystem, by the name of Nova Universitas, which is designed to offer quality university education, at a lower cost and in small and isolated communities, where it is difficult to bring and to keep quality professors. We start from the idea that distance learning can be used for professional training, but true university education is not simply professional training but also personality formation and this requires physical presence and interaction, so we designed a project using the tools that current technology offers us: the teachers reside in a central campus, work full time and give their classes virtually at a distance and in real time, and the students attend full time at the peripheral campuses where they receive these classes, interacting in real time with the teachers, with the support of university technicians, for their practical work.

Our university model is replicable and scalable and within the reach of any country. If the administration is honest and efficient, the system can operate on a very

low budget. In the case of OSUS, the budget for 2021 is 900 million pesos, or about US$45 million, for the whole system of 10 universities.

The epidemic forced most education systems to adopt the virtual modality, but this model can no longer be continued. The social costs are very high, and we must now return to the face-to-face modality, in the full knowledge that this implies a risk.

It remains to be seen now, if society understands that this is a deep, systemic crisis, which cannot be solved by simply eliminating an epidemic, if we can achieve that goal. The crisis is multidimensional and accelerating. Understanding it or not will make the difference between prolonging humanity's existence on the planet or accelerating its extinction. We must be realistic, to understand the necessity to radically change our behavior. Universal solidarity is no longer a question of ethics, but

a problem of survival. And we must rectify the idea, frequently proclaimed, that we must save the Planet. Sorry to tell everybody: The Planet is not in danger, what we must save is ourselves. We are in the middle of the greatest extinction in the history of the Earth and most of mankind does not seem to understand that simple truth. To try to do that, we need new more functional institutions, effective leadership, and a new mentality to understand that there is no individual solution to our predicament. We must reform and reinforce the global institutions, beginning with the United Nations Organization.

The inevitable question is: will the pathetic leadership we currently have in the world raise to the level of intelligence needed for such an endeavor? I very much doubt it. Not even when our very survival is at stake will they abandon their petty ambitions. Today it may already be too late; tomorrow it will absolutely be too late.

Panelist
Vivian Heyl, an Expert from the Minister of Education | CHILE
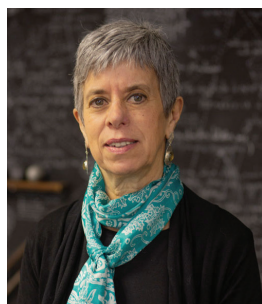
Vivian Heyl is Economist from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, where she also completed a Master's in Sociology with a major in Planning and Development. She holds a Master's in Education, Administration, Planning and Social Policies from the Harvard University – Graduate School of Education. Between 2006 and 2009, she was president of the National Scientific and Technological Commission, CONICYT. Ms. Heyl was Director of Research and Postgraduate Studies, and Vice Dean of the Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences of the Central University of Chile. (Vivian Heyl`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

Remote Learning: Opportunities and Challenges
COVID-19 has led to the closure of schools in most countries in the world and has interrupted the school attendance of students in 2020 and 2021. In-class education and teaching have been replaced and continue through online teaching with several and important challenges and impacts on students, teachers, and parents. Online teaching needs a virtual curriculum,

effective teacher support, and technological tools.

Another main factor for effective virtual education is family support. Not attending school has an impact on learning, on dropout rate, and access to higher education. Schools in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) countries have been closed, on average, for longer periods than in OECD countries.

In Chile (2020), 56% of households had internet access and 30% had access only through mobile phones; there is less connectivity in low-income homes and rural areas; family support is less for students whose parents have limited education and resources; for more vulnerable students, schools are important for education and for the integral development of students; and suspension of classes for long periods have an impact on increasing social issues and the inequalities on learning.

In Chile, an estimation in 2020 reflects that students would lose, on average, 88% of learning in a year; students from low socio-economic status (SES) would lose 95% of learning, and from high SES, 64%. Virtual education can only mitigate the 12% effect of loss in learning, 6% for low SES students. There is an increase in the dropout rate by 43% related to the previous year.

Direct effects of COVID-19 on quality education

- Lower learning, effects on social aspects and school stimulus, difficulties in the development of practical and soft competencies.

- Increase in the dropout rate and school exclusion.

- Decrease in-school support for the integral development of students such as access to nutrition, psychological support, and social assistance.

- Effects on the mental health of students.

- Teacher difficulties: lack of previous competencies for virtual education and relations, strong feelings of overwhelmed/stress, long hours of work, need to prepare appropriate material, and need to communicate and cooperate with parents (not only children).

Indirect effects of COVID-19 on quality education

- Family impact for various-different situations with effects on children and youth: families don't have time or resources for supporting remote learning.

- Economic effect: parents, mainly mothers, have to stop working and take care of their children.

- Increase in child labor.

- Increase in violence/abuse situations: children and youth might be more exposed to violence and gender violence (improving probability for leaving school. UNICEF, UNESCO, UN).

- Increase in social inequalities: leaving school has an impact on future income, negative effect on future economic and labor opportunities, increases the risk of poverty and social exclusion in the future, and there is a higher effect for vulnerable sectors (low SES).

- Decrease in labor productivity and economic growth.

Context (OECD 2021)

Return to in-school and in-presence teaching varies across countries. Countries should be prepared to alternate between 3 types of schooling in the near future: i) in-school teaching with appropriate health measures; ii) hybrid schooling with a mix of in-presence and remote schooling; iii) remote schooling through a variety of means.

The recovery of education systems will be vital to the future recovery of societies. The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequities in education as it has in wider society. Addressing inequities in students' access to educational provision and learning during and after the pandemic should be a central principle of education systems' successful recovery. Providing equitable opportunities for cognitive, social, and emotional development is a fundamental obligation for all students to succeed in their learning.

Students' cognitive, social, and emotional educational needs are at the core, during and after the pandemic, with the need for the help of their families and the active support of teachers, educational institutions, and the wider community.

Teachers are more effective when their needs for health, safety and wellbeing are recognized and addressed. The best conditions for achieving these goals occur when all partners involved in education recovery work in collaboration. Principles for a recovery towards effective and equitable education:

- Provide targeted support to meet students' learning and social and emotional needs

- Educational recovery provides countries with the opportunity to develop strategies to make sure that students' socio-economic background, gender, ethnicity, immigration background, ability and location do not determine their access to quality education and their learning outcomes.

- Co-design a robust digital learning infrastructure with teachers and stakeholders

- The pandemic has shown that education systems need to have a strong digital learning infrastructure. This infrastructure needs to be developed and implemented in collaboration with teachers. Effective and inclusive digital platforms should offer resources for in-school and out-of-school learning experiences to address the inequity that blights many learners' experience of education and improve learning effectiveness for all.

Challenges and opportunities for an effective and equitable educational recovery:
Empower teachers to exercise their professionalism and benefit from professional learning opportunities.

- Many teachers responded to the pandemic by creating their just-in-time professional

development. Many innovative and creative learning engagements have been created, highlighting the future potential of IT-based pedagogical approaches. A lesson of the pandemic is that teachers need to feel empowered to exert their professionalism in the use of technology as part of their teaching. This also involves the integration of technology in all teacher training courses.

Encourage a collaborative culture of innovation

- Some aspects to be considered: new ways of combining in-school and remote teaching and learning, new approaches to organizing schooling and envisioning teachers' roles, new ways of embracing technology to free teachers' time so they can better support their students' cognitive and socio-emotional learning, effective ways to foster social interactions remotely, and new ways to engage parents in supporting their children's learning.

Learn from national and international evidence

- Successful educational recovery will only occur if the lessons of the pandemic are applied. It is critical to building on what has worked and not to repeat what has failed. Recovery should be responsive to the new context of education in the post-

pandemic world, building on a good understanding of the opportunities and challenges in the time following the health crisis. These lessons should be derived from evidence coming from diverse sources, including students, parents, teachers, and policymakers. While educational research can provide practitioners and policymakers with relevant and robust evidence about what works or is likely to work, one lesson from the pandemic is that education systems should strengthen and diversify their data collection and analysis processes to have quicker feedback on student learning, students and teachers' well-being, and better information about students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Special attention and challenges for inclusion and equity in education

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, defined 17 SDG and stated a new vision for Education:

- To transform lives through education, recognizing its important role as the main driver for development and for all SDGs.

- This new vision is reflected in SDG 4: guaranteeing an inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

- The vision is inspired by a humanistic conception of education and development based on human rights and dignity, social justice, inclusion, protection, cultural-linguistic and ethnic diversity, and responsibility.

- Inclusion and equity in education and through it, are key for a transformation´ education, there is a compromise on facing any form of exclusion and marginality, disparities and unequal access, participation and learning outcomes.

- In SDG 5, there is a recognition of the importance of gender equality for reaching the right of education for all.

COVID-19 Recovery Response (UNESCO 2020)

"To protect the well-being of children and ensure they have access to continued learning, UNESCO in March 2020 launched the COVID-19 Global Education Coalition to help countries tackle content and connectivity gaps and facilitate inclusive learning opportunities for children and youth during this period of sudden and unprecedented educational disruption"

Specifically, the Global Education Coalition aims to:
- Help countries in mobilizing resources and implementing innovative and context-appropriate solutions to provide education remotely, leveraging hi-tech, low-tech and no-tech approaches

- Seek equitable solutions and universal access
- Ensure coordinated responses and avoid overlapping efforts
- Facilitate the return of students to school when they reopen to avoid an upsurge in dropout rates.

Advancing education institutions that constitute inclusive and equitable spaces for students; provide quality education and facilitate lifelong learning; facilitate professional, academic, and social development; eliminate visible and invisible barriers; ensure the participation and compromise of the whole education community for an effective right to education for all.

Panelist

Dr. William C. Schulz, Director of Academic Outcomes Research and Founder of Center for Social Change, Walden University | USA

Dr. William Schulz is the Director of Academic Outcomes Research and Founding Director of Walden University's Center for Social Change. He was previously an Associate Dean of Walden's School of Management and was founding Director of the Tagliatela School of Business and Leadership at Albertus Magnus College. Dr. Schulz is an award-winning scholar in the fields of Strategic Management and Entrepreneurship. He earned a Ph.D. in Strategic Management from The University of Georgia, and a Master's degree in Political Science & Public Policy from Indiana University. As a scholar with practical and doctoral training in both business and public policy contexts, Will has spent over two decades exploring, consulting, and teaching about how servant leaders can improve the world through entrepreneurial leadership. (Dr. William C. Schulz`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

Overview of Global Access to Digital Technologies, Resources, and Disparities

Walden University's mission is to serve a diverse

community of career professionals so they can create a positive social change through education. Walden designs programs and serves motivated adults or working professional learners. Walden desires to see its over 160,000 alumni in the world helping to create positive social change.

Walden University has been doing distance work at the doctoral level for over 50 years. It is a certified benefits corporation. Walden currently has 55,000 students from nearly 120 nations, 80% of which are women, and most of the students are from minority backgrounds. There are lots of people throughout the world learning with Walden, many of whom are researching at the doctoral level.

My research has led to thinking about the SDGs as a recursive series of cause and effect, inputs, and outcomes. To achieve these ambitious goals of clean environment and climate change improvement, among the others, there is a need for an effective baseline from which to work. This baseline is access to, and the ability to benefit from quality education, which is the main institution itself that needs to be working with other core institutions. This framework provides a basis for having skilled people who help build our economies.

COVID-19 pandemic has really exposed weaknesses in our systems, and we have adapted the best we could in many instances. However, it is important to note that there is an opportunity for moving into effective ways of offering online and hybrid education. The global experience that this emergency created does not relate to the proper online education as it is practiced on a regular basis. The online learning that we witnessed during the pandemic is a traditional emergency response.

To move forward with effective online learning, integrated classroom designs are needed. There is a strong need for purposeful engagements and expectations for learning with the right technologies to deploy.

Unfortunately, effective online learning raises the standards of access to education. The digital division is an important reality, which becomes even more widespread over time. Research by Van Dyke presents a way to think about accessing the world of digital learning. First, there needs to be motivated to be online. Clearly, in a perverse way, the pandemic has increased the need and the motivation for people to be online and to get into the digital world as a matter of pure survival. In that respect, the three-plus signs indicate a positive can come out of that. It has also exposed a real weakness in many areas for physical access. We need physical access either through wireless or satellite. Those infrastructures do not exist in many parts of the world, surprisingly including 25% of the United States that has no physical access to broadband connectivity to the internet.

Likewise, skills are needed at a strategic, informational, and operational level to operate. Finally, access to appropriate kinds of scalable applications and tools is as important as the rest of the factors. All of these must be in action effectively in the online world and digital education. Educators need to think not just in one mode, but in three modes: online, hybrid, and on the ground. I would suggest that in the near Post-COVID Era, the hybrid will probably be the most interesting approach.

Thus, there are two identified bottlenecks: the disparity that exists across the globe with respect to access and having skilled online educators who are working outside and beyond the emergency remote education perspective. These exist at all levels of education from the earliest to the doctoral level.

How is it possible to address the bottleneck?

The access bottleneck related to bandwidth is to go mobile, skip wires, tables and begin to leverage satellite and 5G. There is an initiative led by Intel with many corporations which seek to leverage and get the infrastructure for 5G moving globally.

The Group Special Mobile Association, which is an international cooperative group whose responsibility

and goals are to help bring these infrastructures of all kinds to the world has already begun to concentrate on this issue. Already in 2020, 5G started to penetrate much of the world with opportunities to move forward. They offer recommendations to help expand the streamlining regulations, releasing spectrum, and collaborating to find financial resources to support. Such incentives in building the economy are those which also can help education. When the investment interests increase in countries with fewer infrastructures, it is possible to achieve developments in diverse areas.

Finally, approaches that we might be able to take in breaking the bottleneck related to skilled educators apply at all levels. I would propose that we leverage the power of specialization, cooperation and build public and private hybrid cooperatives. Those that have

COVID-19 pandemic has really exposed weaknesses in our systems, and we have adapted the best we could in many instances.

experience in the online world began to work with people on the ground who have local experience with their students, thus splitting the tasks. Instructional design teams and experts can bring the curriculum to the world, such as Khan Academy, and train the on-ground teachers to facilitate the partnership with the experts as they begin to develop professionally. This requires a new model of thinking about teaching at all levels in which team teaching across distance becomes a reality. Through this kind of specialization, the pressure of somebody in a local classroom having to be an expert at all things can be relieved. There are many online learning opportunities for team instruction and team teaching, which indeed help reduce the bottleneck for skilled educators, proliferate and grow the skill of others. The holy grail is getting that teaching staff and those teams to build together to support the students.

Panelist

Mirabela Amarandei, Director of Strategic Orientation and Public Policies, University of Bucharest | ROMANIA
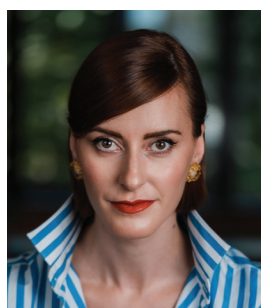
Mirabela Amarandei has considerable experience in the field of educational policies, being involved, as personal adviser of the Romanian Minister of Education and the Secretary of State for Preuniversity Education, in different projects and processes regarding the national educational and research systems. Mirabela Amarandei coordinates the Strategic Governance, Evaluation, Monitoring and Public Policies Direction of the University of Bucharest, with responsibilities in developing strategic projects aiming to increase the inclusiveness and quality of higher education and the academic community. She is currently a doctoral researcher in Educational Sciences. (Mirabela Amarandei`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

Girls` Education and Women's Empowerment in the Era of Digital Technologies

The world cannot be imagined without our mothers, our sisters, or our friends. It cannot be imagined without Marie Curie, two times Nobel Laureate with enormous contribution to chemistry and medicine; without Rosalind Franklin, who contributed to the discovery of the structure of DNA; or Grace Hopper, a pioneering computer programmer, and one of the first women to achieve a PhD in mathematics. The world cannot be imagined without Dorothy Hodgkin, the woman scientist who discovered the structure of insulin; or without Ozlem Tureci, the woman scientist who gave us hope to come back to normality by the vaccine. We all need women, and we need educated women in our lives.

Investing in girls` education creates the future. It transforms families, communities, countries and shapes the entire world into a better and prosperous place as girls and women are real agents of change. Girls` education

goes beyond the simple fact of going to school. It means proper conditions of ensuring a safe and meaningful space for learning; promoting, creating, and maintaining equal opportunities to inclusive quality education for girls as for boys so that all the girls have the chance to complete their education and to fulfill their dreams and their potentials into the society. Educating a girl may mean more now than ever; providing her the knowledge, the skills, and the strength to decide for herself and her future, the power to stand by her own choices and contribute to the world.

According to UNESCO, around 130 million girls are out of school from primary to upper secondary school. In countries affected by poverty and conflict, girls are more than twice as affected by such conditions. It might be considered that there is a very easy answer for a girl to be out of school, but the complexity of the cultural and socioeconomic dynamic of our world can only give complex answers and complex solutions. Living in poverty with insufficient food for proper growth, lacking sanitary conditions strongly affect girls' chances for a better future. Nowadays, about a billion children across the world are multidimensionally poor, without access to education, housing, health, proper nutrition, or water.

Even though our governments have made efforts to stop the circle of poverty, children are dying of hunger, or they are hungry at school. Households with many children may often choose to invest in boys' education, depriving girls of their fundamental right to receive an education. Many international studies show that girls living in disadvantaged situations are far behind in terms of access to school and completion of education. According to UNESCO, 15 million primary school-aged girls will

likely never enter a classroom in their lifetime. In such circumstances, what is their chance for a better future?

For some girls, school is the only safe place to be because domestic violence is a constant in their lives, hurting not only their fragile bodies but also their souls. For others, going long distances to school might place them at an increased risk for gender-based violence. Sexual exploitation, abuse, sexual harassment, or any other kind of violence cannot be ignored.

While at school, adolescent pregnancies come with unimaginable struggles for these girls who suddenly become mothers. It comes with social stigma, discrimination at school and in society. How can teenage mothers offer a good life for their children?

Some families and cultures stop girls from attending school. It does not matter if they want to learn and grow through knowledge. For many adolescent girls, the only option they have is to marry or to work for the household; but never to go to school, which might be either too expensive for the family or considered only for the boys. Besides the moral and ethical grounds, child marriage has a huge impact on the education, health, economic conditions of young mothers and their children. Providing a real chance to girls

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It transforms families, communities, countries and shapes the entire world into a better and prosperous place as girls and women are real agents of change.

for education and personal fulfillment means breaking the cycle of poverty, giving them equal access to good teachers, technology and fighting against gender discrimination in our society.

These are only a few of the main barriers that hundreds of millions of girls around the world must encounter from early childhood to the other foot. Overall, these difficulties have been worsening in the last two years. The pandemic crisis has widened the inequalities for millions of girls. Where there was poverty already in existence, people became poorer; where there was a lack of education, the schools closed their doors for enlightenment; where there was violence, women and girls faced more violence, more often. Most of the time, challenges related to this health crisis are often extensively discussed but not the struggles, fights, or anxieties. The pandemic crisis caused an unprecedented disruption of education worldwide. According to the National Authority in Education, the measures taken by school closures had the most significant impact on girls' education and it will also have a long-term impact. A prediction made by UNESCO in 2021 indicates that 11 million girls worldwide might not return to school. The improvements in girls' education in the latest years might be strongly affected by this global health crisis. There might have already been significant steps back.

Meanwhile, the technology advances with high-speed and the digital revolution comes with so many challenges in our lives: in the way we live, work, conduct business, communicate, and interconnect worldwide. The 21st-century economy, which is profoundly digitized, needs individuals with high skills and advanced technology literacy. Many jobs will disappear, some will be transformed, and others will be relatively new to everyone. The experts often discuss the competencies and skills required for the near future, such as analytical thinking and innovation, complex problem solving, leadership or resilience. In this context, the cleavage is even more obvious: almost two-thirds of all adults who are unable to read are women. How can they learn if they cannot read? How could they ever be digitally literate if they cannot read? In this era, equitable access to technology is essential for girls and women.

If the pandemic impacts even more girls to access quality education, the systems are required to take immediate measures to make education accessible for every child, girl or boy, in an equitable manner. Building on the culture of inclusiveness and value for diversity, bridging the gaps, investing in good and dedicated teachers, understanding that the digital era requires not only knowledge and information, but also socio-economic factors and emotional skills, and strengthening the

community circle around the school and university, are some of the actions that we owe to our children.

I was born in Romania in a middle-class family, and I could consider myself lucky for having parents who could support me in going to school and following my dreams. But I live in a country in which almost half of our children still live in poverty. This strongly affects their participation in school and their academic progress. Some of them never leave their villages. Unfortunately, many girls or women are victims of human trafficking. Romania remains predominantly a country of origin for the victims of trafficking in human beings.

I had the chance to follow my dreams, and I am now part of the community of the University of Bucharest, which is an academic organization that prioritizes all these challenges, needs, and takes an action to build an inclusive and open environment for all students, teachers and non-academic staff. This is not enough, but there are steps into this.

I would like to underline two strategic projects that we are developing: SEED or Support for the Disadvantaged Children, dedicated to breaking the walls for the youngest and expanding their horizons through education. We are providing academic mentors and financial support

starting from secondary school to upper secondary, trying to improve their chances for a better future.

In particular, for women empowerment and gender parity in academia, together with our stakeholders, we are co-creating a strategic gender balance action plan to integrate into the institutional agenda to ensure equity and gender balance at all levels. To analyze the gender discrimination in our society, especially at work, the metaphor of a glass ceiling is often used to describe the situation, but in some ways, this metaphor is wrong. I would extend the field of discussion, by pointing out that the glass ceiling assumption designs scenarios in which men and women have equal access to leadership positions. However, this is not a correct fact. Women do not have access to the same opportunities. Many women disappear silently at so many points in their journey. Therefore, their path is more like a labyrinth with so many obstacles that require determination, persistence, and resilience. Due to the second-generation gender bias that coexists in our organizations, communities and societies is more subtle and effective in gender discrimination. Girls and women do not lack ambition, the know-how, the dedication, or the courage to fulfill themselves, to bring their intellectual, moral and material contribution to a prosperous, peaceful world. What girls and women need is an inclusive and supportive society.

Panelist

Feyzullah Bilgin, Managing Director, Nigerian Tulip International Colleges | NIGERIA

Feyzullah Bilgin is the Managing Director of the Nigerian Tulip International College. He completed his teacher training education at the Anatolian Teacher Training High School in Turkey. Mr. Bilgin studied English Language at the Bogazici University in Turkey. Feyzullah proceeded to Westminster University to acquire the PGCE qualification. On his arrival in Nigeria, he received his master's degree in Educational Administration from Nassarawa University and completed his Master of Business Administration from the Nile University of Nigeria. Mr. Bilgin started his career in Tashkent Ulugbek International School, Uzbekistan. In Nigeria, he worked as the Head of the English Language Department, School

Principal, Deputy Managing Director (Academics). He is currently working as Managing Director of the Nigerian Tulip International College. (Feyzullah Bilgin`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

Best Practices of Right to Education During COVID-19

2020 was not a good year for students and teachers in Nigeria. Schools were closed for an extended period and education was negatively impacted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. A year ago, online learning was not popular amongst educators and students, and many didn't believe that it was possible to learn properly in a virtual class. But with the pandemic still intense, virtual classes have become commonplace and will remain so for a long time.

Nigerian Tulip International Colleges is an educational hub established in 1998, situated in Nigeria with 16 branches spread across Abuja, Lagos, Kano, Kaduna, Yobe and Ogun state. We seek to provide quality education for all, irrespective of socio-economic background, religion, or ethnicity. Our Mission at NTIC is to create a dynamic, favourable, modern, and conducive environment for teaching and learning, to produce intelligent, enlightened, and highly socialized (youths) who are fit to pursue higher education and become effective, integrated, and productive members of the society.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, schools were closed for eight months, from March to October 2020. During this period, online classes were not allowed to officially offer education. We could offer virtual education for our students only to keep them engaged and revise their studies. Our online experience started at the end of April 2020. Through this medium, we have offered live classes while online learning materials and assessments have also been put in place to support and monitor the learning and teaching of our students. During that period, the teachers used online classes to cover their curriculum, but they had less interaction with their students which has resulted in actual learning losses.

According to the statistics, 65% of our students were able to benefit from the online classes. In detail, the percentage goes up to 90-95% in southern regions like Lagos and Ogun, while this has radically dropped to 30% in Yobe, the northern part of Nigeria. The students in Yobe state are from rural backgrounds as they are on government sponsorship. These students at NTIC Yobe were faced with difficulty accessing the quality education available due to the lack of computers and internet access. We could not provide internet access and online resources in the school to our students due to Covid restrictions.

In Nigeria, the supply of power is a problem. There is no constant power supply in general in Nigeria, which negatively affects the use of online education. Internet access and other basic necessary equipment seem to be the biggest challenge for online education in Nigeria. Even though all these necessary tools are available, the students and teachers are in need of training, online resources and guidance.

Fortunately, in the last session, the schools in Nigeria had physical education again and the teachers and students enjoyed normal education in line with Covid protocol. Right now, the schools are about to start the new session face-to-face in classes. Since the Covid situation is volatile and, recently on an increase; the resumptions and closures sometimes become unpredictable which affects educational and administrative planning in our schools.

Apart from Covid 19 issues, I wish to inform you about what NTIC does to contribute to society and local communities in Nigeria.

Following the United Nations Goal 17 - Partnership to Achieve the Goals, Nigerian Tulip International Colleges has a collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Sports which started in 2020 to award 20 young athletes from different geopolitical zone across Nigeria 100% scholarship at NTIC. The scholarship is scheduled to cover the secondary school education of the beneficiaries, starting from their current class. The scholarship scheme aims to give voice to the voiceless. Ensuring these athletes realize their dreams is part of our corporate vision.

Besides, NTIC is the organizer of the Annual National Mathematics Competition in conjunction with the National Mathematical Centre since 2003 for Primary 5 and 6 pupils. It is organized yearly to eradicate the phobia of mathematics in primary school pupils. Twenty-four exceptional pupils, 144 totals, are awarded

100% tuition fee scholarships annually, covering their entire secondary school year at NTIC school branches.

Our collaboration and partnership with the Federal Ministry of Sports and National Mathematical Center towards giving outstanding students in academics and sporting activities scholarships from different geo-political zones are put in place to strengthen the goals of the United Nations through cordial relationships and partnerships.

Having access to quality education irrespective of gender is also very important to us, as emphasized in Sustainable Development Goal 5, gender equality. According to UNICEF, one in every five of the world's out-of-school children is in Nigeria; here, about 10.5 million children are not in schools. The states in the northeast and northwest have female primary net attendance rates of 47.7 per cent and 47.3 percent, respectively, meaning that more than half of the girls are not in school. In line with SDG 4, we are educating around 1500 girls in our schools, which are mostly located in the northern zone of Nigeria. NTIC scholarship scheme has also been extended to 40 Dapchi girls who were kidnapped in 2014 after their release in 2016. For us at NTIC, education is for all, irrespective of gender. These Dapchi girls are currently studying at Nigerian Tulip International Colleges Yobe with access to quality education in the right environment like every other student studying around the world.

We have realized the 9th Goal- Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure through the Annual Science and Arts Fair. It is a platform that encourages students to showcase their creativity. Science and Arts Fair brings out different innovations and creativity in sciences and Arts in young minds. NTIC Science and Arts Fair is an excellent educational fair of its kind where young scientists and mathematicians present unique projects, exhibitions, experiments, and activities. It is a platform for scientific invention, innovation, and exhibitions, mainly by our students. We also allow other students from different schools to participate and showcase their scientific inventions.

In line with the Sustainable Development Goal 4, which is quality education, NTIC is known for its standard education system given to students who attend NTIC from primary to the secondary school level. Access to quality education has been made available to students through different platforms and opportunities.

In line with SDG 13, NTIC management has launched a new subject in the school curriculum, which is tagged Life Skills, where climate and environment issues are discussed and put into action. Since the commencement of the Life Skill Projects, NTIC students have been actively engaged in contributing their quota to mitigate the effect of climate change by active involvement. Our students have taken part in several environmental activities like tree plantings, recycling exercises, clean environment projects, awareness-raising and consciousness gatherings, etc. NTIC students have organized a sensitization program for the rural community, educating members of the communities they visit about the causes and effects of global warming and environmental changes.

Considering the need to constantly maintain peace, love and unity in every group, community, state, nation, and the world at large, the Nigerian Tulip International Colleges has also included the Peace Lesson into the school curriculum. We have constantly organized various training and seminar sessions for our students during the Peace Lesson. NTIC Peace Lesson is in alignment with Goal 16 - Peace, Justice, and strong institutions. The students are enlightened about their identity, fundamental human rights, the national rules and regulations, diversity, dialogue, and peaceful

> Having access to quality education irrespective of gender is also very important to us, as emphasized in Sustainable Development Goal 5, gender equality.

coexistence. They also have discussions about the harmful effects of radicalism and violent conflict while trying to come up with ways of promoting peaceful diversity and tolerance. The Peace Lesson has been put in place to help them prepare for the world outside the classroom and how to live, work and relate with other people in peace and harmony.

At NTIC, it is essential that our students excel in their careers and academics within Nigeria and across the world. We envision a world where everyone has access to the best and quality education without gender disparity

Clubs

and with the focus to create, invent and inspire. Building an academic world that everyone can live in without fear is our goal.

Nigerian Tulip International Colleges has made it a point of duty to share in the vision of the United Nations with a focus on the Sustaining Development Goals and taking a holistic approach towards achieving them.

Young Professional

Rares Voicu, Board member of Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions | ROMANIA

Rareș Voicu is studying Global Law at Tilburg University in the Netherlands. For the past 5 years, he has been an active advocate for school students' and children's rights, fighting for their access to quality education for all and for the right to make their voices heard in all matters that affect them directly. Mr. Voicu has been a Vice President and President of the Romanian National School Student's Council, a position through which he has had, along with his teammates, numerous victories for Romanian school students. Rareș believes that good communication between students and teachers lies at the base of quality education. Currently, he is a Board member of OBESSU (Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions). (Rares Voicu`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

Overview of SDG 4: Right to Access Quality Education in the Post-COVID Era

The pandemic has wiped out 20 years of educational progress for children and young people worldwide. There are many reports and available data on this topic. At this moment, it is relevant to say that we are indeed facing or approaching an educational catastrophe. The past year has profoundly impacted educational systems all over the world. The most vulnerable and often unrepresented stakeholders are school students who are the main beneficiaries. According to a 2020 UN report, more than 94% of the world's student population has been affected by lockdowns, especially students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds or with some form of disability.

Besides, the pandemic has exacerbated the disparities when it comes to the learning opportunities available for students. It has drastically limited the access to quality education for a great segment of school populations. That is the reality we live in. Yet, I closely followed

the speeches delivered by world leaders at the United Nations General Assembly. I could not help but notice that for most of the countries, education, which is one of the core elements of SDGs, is still pending to become a priority among the high-level decision-making authorities. All leaders elaborated about the future and the great opportunities it holds for all of us, the young generation. However, the leaders of Member States did not address how young people can achieve this great future which should be through inclusive and accessible quality education.

When discussing post-COVID education, we often hear individuals talking about going back to normal. On the other hand, we have to question what kind of normal it is that we want to go back to. More and more countries at the beginning of this school year have chosen to implement hybrid education. There are several good examples of schools that have implemented hybrid education and are continuing to do so, even in communities where the infection rates are under control. This is not only for the reasons related to the pandemic but rather the states and schools have finally realized that digitalization is an inevitable process, which will penetrate every single aspect of our lives at some point.

Usually, adults may speak negatively about young people, thinking that we are always on our phones browsing the internet. On the contrary, I think that we should as well use the internet and the digital world to which we are constantly connected to our best educational interest. However, we cannot look away from the fact that online education poses an important issue: the challenges of having access to the internet. Infrastructure problems, lack of support from national governments and financial struggles make it almost impossible for a significant segment of children to take part in online education, regardless of how well delivered it is.

I am a Board Member of the Organizing Bureau of European School Student

Unions. The Bureau has conducted research on the topic of COVID-19 and post-COVID education. The results indicate that students from all over the world have lost their motivation to learn during the pandemic. What is maybe even more tragic is the fact that some students have even lost some of their key competencies, which they had acquired before the pandemic. Thus, we are not only talking about stalling when it comes to learning but also decreasing in terms of key competencies. For most of these young people, there is no going back. There is no revising the knowledge they have lost, no repeating of the educational steps they have missed. For most of them, this year will be known as the year in which their education ended. I want all of us to be fully aware of the fact that for most of the students this end is permanent. They will not be going back to school unless an impactful support mechanism is provided.

The international community admits that we are facing a significant problem in terms of facilitating access to quality education. However, this is not enough; not for us, the young generation. Acknowledging the disparities, injustices will never be enough. Children and young people need urgent actions from politicians, business leaders, scientists, activists, and everyone else. I believe students must be considered at the core of the decisions when it comes to education and making policies for our future.

If young people are not involved in decision-making processes, the SDGs will remain incomplete; the Global Goals will never be achieved. Young people do not want promises, we want to see inclusive actions. Therefore, I would urge the international community with all my heart to listen to children and to involve them in decision-making processes at the earliest stage, and as often as possible. Young people are claimed to be the future, but most of the time we are not only not asked, but almost ignored when it comes to designing our own future.

REMOTE LEARNING REMAINS OUT OF REACH FOR AT LEAST 500 MILLION STUDENTS

UNGA CONFERENCE CLOSING SESSION

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Swadesh Rana, Former Chief of the Conventional Arms Branch, Department of Disarmament Affairs at the United Nations | USA

Dr. Swadesh Rana is a Senior Fellow at the World Policy Institute in New York and the UN Representative of the Academic Council of the UN System. Dr. Rana is the former Chief of the Conventional Arms Branch at the Department of Disarmament Affairs at the United Nations. She designed the Gramsh Pilot Project for Albania, the UN's first ever undertaking to offer community development incentives for the recovery of wrongfully acquired weapons. During her two decades career at the United Nations, Dr. Rana directed research for the groups of inter- governmental experts appointed by the Secretary-General on issues ripening for the conventional disarmament agenda. (Dr. Swadesh Rana`s Full Biography and Video Remarks)

I would like to emphasize that SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals is the most cross-sectoral target, including all the 17 goals, the 169 targets and the 222 indicators of progress. There is still almost a decade to accomplish this ambitious agenda; as the UN Secretary-General António Guterres indicated, the decade of the 2020s will be the decade of action on sustainable development.

In response to a questionnaire posed by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs at the United Nations, a focal point for the implementation of the SDGs, all the 193 Member States submitted their voluntary national reviews. There are three overarching goals: removal of poverty, elimination of hunger, protection of health and wellbeing. The major stakeholders to achieve this agenda are the 1,533 civil society organizations, 5,967 multiple stakeholder partnerships and increasing by the rate of 10% for the last three years, the open society of academia, and the scientific community that bridge the gap between knowledge and informed decision-making.

Finally, the important question that should be addressed is how to achieve the maximum impact on the implementation of Agenda 2030. I would request the stakeholders to consider utilizing the so far overlooked potential of the world: the largest youth population in history. If one could identify the youth, their collective energy, would be an incredible investment in reaching these goals to leave no one behind as we strive. The international community has no energy to go the farthest to reach the one that is farthest removed. However, the youth are in a position to do so. In the last two years, UNGA devoted special attention to gender equality, removing gender discrimination. Youth is gender-neutral including both men and women. Collectively, they can make the difference as the monitors, as the conscience keepers to see that Agenda 2030 reaches its goal.

There are three overarching goals:

1. removal of poverty

2. elimination of hunger

3. protection of health and well-being

Closing Remarks
Mehmet Kilic, President, Journalists and Writers Foundation | USA

Mehmet Kilic is the President of the Journalists and Writers Foundation which is dedicated to the culture of peace, human rights, and sustainable development. Prior to his current position, Mr. Kilic served as the JWF's Representative at the UN ECOSOC from 2012 to 2017. To raise awareness on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, he has mobilized civil society organizations across the globe by organizing international conferences, panel discussions, international trips, and youth projects. Mr. Kilic also creates platforms for intellectual and social engagement that aims to promote peace, diversity, and inclusion for positive social change.

With over 20 years of experience in global affairs, public relations, and non-profit sector, Mr. Kilic pioneered educational and social responsibility projects. Mr. Kilic organized Ambassadors Series discussions hosting ambassadors and diplomats accredited to the United Nations with a focus on Africa, South Asia, and the Balkans. He initiated the Young Peace Ambassadors Academy that offers free global studies programs for high school students to inspire young leaders and responsible global citizens. Mr. Kilic has a Master's degree in Education from Mercy College and is a doctoral candidate at Walden University, pursuing his PhD in Global and Comparative Education.

This year, the UNGA Conference 2021: Transforming Our World has hosted 25 distinguished Keynote Speakers, moderators, and panelists from 14 countries with outstanding presentations, reflections, remarks, and substantial analysis of information on the Progress of SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals, Climate Change and Ecological Threats, and Quality Education during the Post-Covid Era and Digital Technologies.

We believe that youth empowerment, leadership, and participation play an important role to offer sustainable solutions to social, economic, and environmental challenges. There are amazing young people around the world with the most up-to-date knowledge, skills, and determination to make a difference in society.

Greta Thunberg is a renowned environmental activist who has inspired millions of young people across the globe to act on climate change. Malala Yousafzai is another young activist who is known for girls' education, women's empowerment, and human rights advocacy. There are tens of thousands of young leaders in our communities who are dedicated to making a long-lasting change in society, and passionate to express their ideas on sustainable peace, climate change, gender equality, social justice, and equality.

Since 2019, we have witnessed an unprecedented global health crisis in history: Coronavirus and its variants. It still poses an important challenge; however, we must remember that there are many other existing problems such as climate change, and ongoing environmental crisis that impacts our living environments, eco-systems, social and economic development worldwide waiting for the global community's attention.

> There are tens of thousands of young leaders in our communities who are dedicated to making a long-lasting change in society, and passionate to express their ideas on sustainable peace, climate change, gender equality, social justice, and equality.

The COVID-19 taught us at least one lesson that crises do not discriminate by race, religion, ethnicity, or gender. Likewise, climate change is a global threat and environmental crisis that require partnerships, collective efforts, and actions. We, as governments, the private sector, and the civil society, must work in collaboration and cooperation to overcome its social, economic, and environmental challenges.

As the Journalists and Writers Foundation and the Global Partners, we are committed to an inclusive, transformative, and achievable UN Development Agenda for humanity and the planet that will help achieve our global mission of "Leaving No One Behind."

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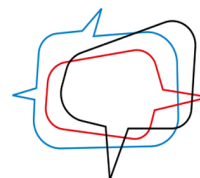
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Australian Intercultural Society

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Affinity Intercultural Foundation

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BRAZIL
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GERMANY
Forum fur Interkulturellen Dialog

EGYPT
Hira Magazine

INDIA
Green Mentors

INDIA
Indialogue Foundation

IRAQ
Dialogue MiddleEast

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KENYA
Harmony Institute

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USA
Cage Free Voices

USA
Changing Destinations

ZAMBIA
Rainbow Harmony Institute

ROMANIA
Asociatia Pentru Dialog si Valori Universale

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

1 NO POVERTY

2 ZERO HUNGER

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

5 GENDER EQUALITY

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

13 CLIMATE ACTION

14 LIFE BELOW WATER

15 LIFE ON LAND

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS