

Stakeholder Forum

FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Vurehout 373 • 1507 EC Zaandam • NL & 2 The Links • Herne Bay • Kent • CT6 7GQ • UK
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**Concept Note for a Webinar on SDG 15, “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss”
&
SDG 16, “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”**

This webinar - in the countdown to the 2023 SDG Summit - is the eighth and last in SF’s series of webinars that have been reviewing two SDGs each month. They aim to determine where we are in their implementation, examine interdependencies across goals, and what that means for accelerating implementation.

The series, supported by UNEP, the EU, and in cooperation with UNDESA, brings together a wide range of experts, policymakers, and practitioners with knowledge of the SDGs’ interlinkages and insights on integrated approaches that can help to develop recommendations on transformative actions for the SDGs, with an emphasis on strengthening the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda.

Our focus will be on SDG 15, “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss”, and SDG 16, “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”.

The series will continue to explore different ways to enable integrated approaches to SDG implementation. A key aim of the series is to identify ways to exploit positive interactions and mitigate trade-offs, including by forging multistakeholder coalitions behind programmes of accelerated action. Good practices will be identified for empowering communities, sectoral actors, and cross-sectoral alliances at multiple levels. The intention is to promote the establishment of communities of practice that will continue to collaborate in the lead-up to the SDG Summit and beyond.

Biodiversity loss and terrestrial ecosystem degradation and destruction are urgent global crises that SDG 15 is meant to help all stakeholders address. Many of the targets under this Goal were framed in terms of the [Aichi Biodiversity Targets](#) of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which has now been largely superseded by the newly adopted (December 2022) [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) (GBF). Targets 2 and 3 are key advances on the Aichi targets, with target 2 reading: “Ensure that by 2030 at least 30 percent of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems are under effective restoration, in order to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity.”



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As reported in the 2022 Secretary-General's SDG Progress Report, "...human activities have profoundly altered most terrestrial ecosystems: around 40,000 species are documented to be at risk of extinction over the coming decades, 10 million hectares of forest (an area the size of Iceland) are being destroyed each year, and more than half of key biodiversity areas remain unprotected." Conversion of forested areas to agriculture and urban development have been the main drivers of ecosystem destruction or degradation. With continued growth in the world's population through mid-century at least, pressures for land conversion will continue unless and until human beings both alter our food consumption patterns and find ways to reconcile food production with biodiversity and ecosystem conservation. Without such progress, land degradation will continue as will land-use-related greenhouse gas emissions. More positively, nature-based interventions to enhance agro- and forestry ecosystems (sometimes dubbed 'nature-based solutions') can both contribute to long-term food security and help mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Emblazoned with the Dove of Peace, the abbreviated text of SDG 16 informs us that this goal is about peace, justice, and strong institutions. All three elements have suffered setbacks during the last few years. Global peace is in a precarious state since the attack by Russia on Ukraine last February with its ensuing unjust war raging with unabated intensity. This conflict is not the only one - more than 30 wars are being waged today. Socio-economic, political, cultural, and environmental conflicts are creating humanitarian emergencies displacing above 100 million people.

In addition, democracies have been dealt serious blows during the past three years. The global average democracy score, a survey taken by UNESCO and the Economist Intelligence Unit, fell to its lowest level since the index began in 2006. Last year's UNESCO report on "World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development" sounded strongly the alarm on the worrying decline of press freedom levels around the world: data and original analysis confirm that 85 percent of the world's population experienced a decline in press freedom in their country over the past five years.

Several leaders have recently expressed their renewed belief in multilateral institutions, and yet people everywhere seem to lose faith in their ability to move the world forward in improving the well-being of humankind. The well-respected civil society organisation CIVICUS states, in its 2022 annual report: "The international system is increasingly unfit for purpose when it comes to tackling the many challenges that cross borders and can't be addressed by single states - conflicts, climate change, disasters, and displacement, among others. It's held back by bureaucratic approaches and leaders unwilling to take courageous stances on contentious issues."



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On the other hand, the multilateral system can also note progress in areas that were unthinkable a few years ago. Last year, the UN General Assembly recognised the right to a clean and sustainable environment as a Human Right. In 2019 the Human Rights Council agreed to a resolution on Human Rights and transitional justice. Transitional justice is today a process of responding to massive human rights violations through judicial redress and promoting political reforms in a region or a country including other measures in order to prevent the recurrence of human rights abuse. The resolution emphasises that transitional justice is pivotal to implementing SDG 16 and key to establishing peace and justice.

This webinar would like to challenge stereotypical associations connected to the full implementation of SDG 16. In the words of CIVICUS, we would like to focus on, inter alia, the postulation that “[c]ivil society has a well-developed reform agenda. The failings of 2022 show that it still faces the challenge of having its proposals adopted by decision makers willing to take on the status quo.”

Will the upcoming SDG Summit be open to such an ambitious position expressed by civil society, in promoting peace, justice and strengthening the multilateral institutions and integrate this and the role of civil society in its outcome document?

This eighth webinar will take place on 29 June 2023 at 8 am EDT / 2 pm CEST and will last for up to 2-hours. The recording of the webinar and an audio podcast will be available soon after on the Stakeholder Forum website. A summary will also be produced and will serve as a contribution to the 2023 SDG Summit.

The following agenda is being proposed:

8:00 - 8:05 - Welcome and introduction: Charles Nouhan, Chair of the Board, Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future

8:05 - 8:15 - The interlinked challenge of the SDGs: Jan-Gustav Strandenaes, Senior Adviser, Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future

8:15 - 8:25 - Keynote address on interlinkages of SDGs 15, 16, and other SDGs, Dr. Elisa Morgera, Professor of Global Environmental Law and the Director of One Ocean Hub, University of Strathclyde Law School

8:25 - 8:30 - Introduction to the Panel, with Moderation by Dr. David O’Connor, Permanent Observer of IUCN at the United Nations

8:30 - 9:50 - Discussion on SDGs 15 and 16 with experts, followed by a Q&A session



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On SDG 15:

- **Dr. Emlyn Koster**, Director Emeritus, Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology, Alberta, Canada
- **Professor Anne Sverdrup-Thygeson**, University of Life Sciences, Norway (TBC)
- **Mark Halle**, Senior Fellow at the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) *or* **John Scanlon, AO**, former Secretary-General of CITES (TBC)

On SDG 16:

- **Dr. Marcos A. Orellana**, United Nations Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights; Professor, American University Washington School of Law (TBC)
- **Dr. Pooja Balasubramanian**, German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), Bonn
- **Ms. Lysa John Berna**, Secretary-General, Civicus: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, South Africa (TBC)

9:50 - 9:55 - Summary remarks by Irena Zubčević, Director, Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future

9:55 - 10:00 - Closing and thanks by Charles Nouhan, SF



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