



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Science policy interface including the briefing from the Independent Group of Scientists on the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR)

Thursday, 11 July 2019, 11:00 AM–1:00 PM, Conference Room 4

Background Note

Introduction

Since the United Nations first championed the concept of sustainable development in 1983, Member States have recognized the central role that science—natural and social science—must play in shaping policy if the world is to secure a sustainable future. The outcome document of Rio+20 (“The Future We want”) called for a strengthened science-policy interface, and the 2030 Agenda reconfirmed the importance of linking science, policy and society.

The 2030 Agenda cites science, technology and innovation as key means of implementing the SDGs—as sources of knowledge about the world *as it is*, to inform effective policy making, and as tools to transform the world into *what it must be* for the wellbeing of future generations. The call for strengthening science is imbedded in many individual SDGs—from the target in SDG 4 on increasing scholarships for students from developing countries including for higher-level study of science and engineering, to the SDG 7 target on enhancing access to clean energy research and technology to the target in SDG 14 on building ocean-related scientific knowledge. In addition, the Agenda calls for the global community to provide capacity-building support to developing countries in the collection and analysis of high-quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data. And, building on a mandate included in “The Future We Want,” the 2030 Agenda reaffirms in Paragraph 83 that the high-level political forum should be informed by the *Global Sustainable Development Report*, “which shall strengthen the science-policy interface and could





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provide a strong evidence-based instrument to support policymakers in promoting poverty eradication and sustainable development.”

In July 2016, in the Ministerial Declaration of the HLPF, UN Member States agreed that the *Global Sustainable Development Report* (GSDR) would become a quadrennial report drafted by an independent group of scientists (IGS) supported by a task team of six UN agencies (DESA, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, and the World Bank). The members of the IGS were appointed by then Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon in December 2016 (profiles of the 15 IGS members are [here](#)). The IGS is currently finalizing the 2019 GSDR, which will be formally launched at the HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly in September.

The 2019 GSDR takes stock of progress and obstacles in achieving the 2030 Agenda and offers a multi-disciplinary scientific perspective on the transformative pathways needed to make the Agenda a reality. The Report looks at sustainable development in terms of the systems that make up human society and the natural world, underscoring the interlinked nature of the SDGs and the need for an integrated, holistic and inclusive approach to policy making. It also assesses the current state of science for sustainable development and finds that by integrating science and evidence more fully into policy making, the international community will be able to mitigate the tradeoffs that are inevitable in pursuing the simultaneous economic, social and environmental objectives that the Agenda contains.

In the current session, the co-chairs of the IGS will present key findings and the Call to Action contained in the 2019 GSDR. Additional panelists will share their own experiences in working to strengthen the science-policy interface at all levels and from both sides of the equation—as a leader of a global scientific organization and as a municipal-level policy maker. The session is expected to be highly interactive, particularly because Member States and Major Groups and Other Stakeholders have had the opportunity to review and comment on an earlier draft of the GSDR.





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Guiding questions

- How can policy-makers open and amplify the lines of communication with the science community? How can they ensure that the messages received from the social and natural sciences notably are fully integrated into policies?
- How can the scientific community become a more effective partner in advancing progress toward the 2030 Agenda? What changes are needed in terms of institutional structures, approaches, and communication?
- How can the UN and partners increase engagement in the 2030 Agenda from science communities, funders, academia and private sector? In particular, what can the UN and other partners do to enlist science, technology and innovation as allies in the commitment to leave no one behind?
- How can the HLPF build on the findings of the GSDR in its follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda?

