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Global Sustainability Strategy Forum



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MOTIVATION

- There are few leaders in business, politics, and civil society who do not acknowledge the need for a global transformation towards sustainability. And yet little progress has been made towards making this goal a reality. What can be done to close the gap between the current reality and the goal of a sustainable future?
- The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development marks an important step. Achieving its 17 Sustainable Development Goals will require the development of interlinking global and regional strategies to deliver lasting change.
- Many systems for measuring the state of sustainability produce results that can seem contradictory or conflicting to policymakers and other actors. What is needed are balanced, scientifically informed, and integrative judgements as to the meaning, significance, and implications of these findings.



APPROACH

- The Global Sustainability Strategy Forum provides vital input by making knowledge for sustainable development from diverse sources more accessible and actionable for effective policy decision-making.
- Every two years representatives from leading research institutes in the field of sustainable development will meet at a week-long summit to develop strategic solutions to the most pressing sustainability challenges by reconciling the effects of interdependencies across the SDG spectrum, and between sustainability, globalization, and digitalization.
- Many reports on the global situation aggregate data across multiple geographic and cultural boundaries. This project will attempt to develop a comprehensive perspective that reflects the differences in geographic and cultural contexts, yet provides effective strategies that are globally coherent.
- Interpretation rather than analysis is our main approach. The Forum will provide real guidance on implications for policymaking, business, and civil society, rather than reams of undifferentiated information. Prudent, reflective and balanced judgments about the situation are needed, providing recommendations about the most urgent challenges and effective strategies to improve the situation.
- Our guidance will be developed through the deliberative discourse of a small group of experts and published in (biannual) final reports.
- This approach seeks to initiate and inform learning processes that help various actors to improve their situation and make their lives and the world more sustainable.



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GOALS

- The project will bring together 15 leading international experts in the field of sustainability for at least two week-long retreats (the first retreat is scheduled for 4–8 March 2019) and translate the best available knowledge on sustainable development into actionable solutions and policy recommendations targeting global and regional levels.
- In preparation for these events, the IASS and its partners will analyse a host of relevant reports and literature covering key indicators of sustainability at the global and regional scales. A summary of these findings will underpin a catalogue of questions for the attending experts, help them to identify the key challenges for sustainable transformations, and support efforts to design globally and regionally adapted strategies to meet these challenges.
- During each summit, a draft synthesis report will be prepared, providing a summary of the discussions, and including interpretations and strategy recommendations.
- Following the summit, the report will be reviewed, finalized and disseminated through our partner institutions, who will develop the main conclusions into strategies at the regional scales and levels, including recommendations to regional actors in politics, business, and civil society.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUSTAINABILITY SCIENCE AND SCHOLARSHIP

- With planned publications in journals and reports, the “Global Sustainability Strategy Forum” will seek to bridge the gap between diverse sources and forms of knowledge and political action for sustainable development by generating the transformative knowledge needed to bring about change.
- This project gathers the best available knowledge from different regions of the world and synthesizes and transforms it into actionable solutions to address the biggest sustainability challenges.
- Research conducted within the scope of this project will explore interdependencies, synergies, and trade-offs between the 17 SDGs within the context of sustainability, globalization and digitalization.
- The findings of our research will inform the development of robust strategies tailored to address vital sustainability challenges and recommendations for further action at the global and regional levels.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO POLICY ADVICE

- Policy advice is a core focus of the “Global Sustainability Strategy Forum”.
- The project seeks to influence the current discourse and action on sustainability and the SDGs at the international and regional levels and to support the formulation of political solutions by providing critical syntheses for the most pressing sustainability challenges.
- One of the most important challenges is the development of strategies that are both aligned with the global issues and applicable at the regional level and at other scales and levels.
- These strategies must and will be designed with an acute awareness of the conflicting values and objectives involved – including among the SDGs.
- As a part of this project, the participating experts will engage in discussions with their particular networks of scientists, practitioners, and stakeholders in order to review and amend the synthesis report.
- The final reports will be disseminated by participating institutions within their networks. The recommendations contained in these reports will target policymakers and actors from the private sector and civil society. The report will also be made available to a wider audience.

ORGANIZATION AND TIMETABLE

The project is organized into several phases with concrete outputs at each step:

- The IASS will first collect and analyse reports and literature addressing relevant indicators and the state of sustainability both worldwide and for various global regions. The outputs of this phase are a synopsis of existing reports and a catalogue of questions. This phase runs from June 2018 through February 2019.
- In a second step, the IASS will invite experts to attend a week-long intensive retreat. During this meeting, the experts will deliberate the implications of the existing reports, assign priorities for the most urgent sustainability challenges and develop strategies for facilitating transformation processes. At the end of this second phase, the experts will produce a draft synthesis report of their interpretations and strategy recommendations. This phase runs from June 2018 to March 2019.
- In the third phase, the participating institutions will discuss and review the document within their networks of scientists, practitioners, and stakeholders. The resulting product is an amended summary report. This phase runs from March 2019 to December 2019.
- Dissemination and outreach are the focus of the fourth phase. Activities in this phase will aim to inject the report into international discourses on key issues relating to sustainable development. This phase runs from December 2019 to Mid-2020.
- The first three phases will be completed by early 2020. Preparations will then commence for the second round of the project and the experts will be invited to join the second retreat in autumn 2020. Following this retreat, a second synthesis report will be produced and published in fall 2021.
- Retreats will be held every second year in order to consolidate the Forum's knowledge base over time. Reports will be issued on a biannual basis, so that each report includes a monitoring section covering the progress made over the past two years. It is envisioned to organize these reports similar to the Club of Rome reports.

PUBLICATION STRATEGY

The project's major publications will be based upon preliminary work and the outcomes of the expert retreat:

- A synopsis covering existing reports on indicators and the state of sustainability both worldwide and in different regions.
- A synthesis report based on the findings of the first retreat, including priority-setting, an interpretation of findings, and strategic recommendations to facilitate transformation processes.
- A second synthesis report will be prepared following the second retreat.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- The “Global Sustainability Strategy Forum” will enable a group of experts to develop policy recommendations and guidance for transformations towards sustainability and to disseminate their findings to a wider audience.
- The synthesis reports based on expert findings will be disseminated to policymakers as well as actors in the private sector, civil society and to the general public.
- All publications and recommendations will be based on evidence, experience and familiarity with the geographic and cultural contexts.
- All reports and related communication activities will provide a solid foundation for public dialogue.
- All our products include not only global, but also geographically and culturally differentiated strategies.

TEAM

Professors Ortwin Renn (IASS), Ilan Chabay (IASS) and Sander van der Leeuw (Arizona State University) are the project leaders. Solene Droy (IASS) is the project coordinator.

The following experts will join the first summit from 4 to 8th March 2019 in Potsdam, Germany:

Prof. Xuemei Bai, Australian National University, Fenner School of Environment and Society, Australia

Dr Belay Begashaw, Sustainable Development Goals Centre for Africa, Rwanda

Prof. Marcel Bursztyn, University of Brasilia, Brazil

Prof. Carl Folke, Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University and Beijer Institute of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Sweden

Dr Heide Hackmann, International Science Council (ISC), France

Prof. Kensuke Fukushi, Integrated Research System for Sustainability Science (IR3S), The University of Tokyo Institutes for Advanced Studies (UTIAS), Japan

Prof. Joyeeta Gupta, Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam and UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education in Delft, the Netherlands

Prof. Carlo Jaeger, Potsdam University and Global Climate Forum, Berlin, Germany

Prof. Anand Patwardhan, University of Maryland, School of Public Policy, USA

Dr George Safonov, Centre for Environmental and Natural Resource Economics, Russia

Prof. Peter Schlosser, Arizona State University, USA

Elisabeth Hege, IDDRI Paris, France

Prof. Coleen Vogel, University of the Witwatersrand School of Geography, Archaeology, and Environmental Studies, South Africa

Prof. Dr Yongsheng Zhang, Development Research Center of the State Council, China

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