

The Future We Choose

Declaration from the High-level Dialogue on Global Sustainability

17 June 2012, Rio de Janeiro

We are concerned. We are on the threshold of a future with unprecedented environmental risks. The scientific evidence is unequivocal. The combined effects of climate change, resource scarcity, loss of biodiversity and ecosystem resilience at a time of increased demand, poses a real threat to humanity's welfare. Such a future generates unacceptable risks of undermining the resilience of the Earth system including all its inhabitants. We have generated our own geological epoch, the *Anthropocene*. In this epoch, there is an unacceptable risk that human pressures on the planet, should they continue on a business as usual trajectory, will trigger abrupt and irreversible changes with catastrophic outcomes for human societies and life as we know it.

We believe. With bold and courageous leadership, and determined action, a transition to a safe and prosperous future is possible. But both will be essential and time is running critically short. Every delay now closes off opportunities for progress and increases the burden of inequity and poverty, not only for future generations, but for those who are alive today. Yet, our generation is the first to have the privilege of understanding the full complexity of the challenges that confront us and we already have at hand the knowledge, technology and finance required to ensure a sustainable future. Indeed, the application of these tools and with a focus on addressing social and economic inequalities, empowering women and ensuring good governance, is a prerequisite to living within safe planetary boundaries.

We Agree. A fully integrated science-based approach is necessary to tackle the very real risks that confront us. This approach must be built upon a partnership between the public and private sectors and with civil society. It will require the full use of humanity's capacity for innovation and creativity at both global and local level and within new economic pathways that explicitly recognize the ecological capacity of the planet. Such an integrated model, which reflects the scientific consensus and is guided by the principles of responsibility and equity will and must provide a systemic solution that ensures the wise stewardship of the planet and its peoples.

We need to make use of the new narrative emerging from the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability. We need to reconnect human societies with the biosphere. Prosperity and equity in the future depend on a transition to global sustainability, which is not only necessary and urgent, but for us to choose. The time to act is now!

We call upon world leaders to move beyond aspirational statements and exercise a collective responsibility, seizing the historic opportunity offered by Rio+20 to set our world on a sustainable path by:

- **Ensuring responsible planetary stewardship** by implementing multilateral agreements, strengthening integrated scientific assessments and institutions for sustainable development at all levels, from global to local, including all stakeholders, and taking an integrated approach to equity, the economy and the environment;
- **Taking urgent action to meet the global needs** for food, water and energy in a sustainable manner, avoiding dangerous climate change, safeguarding biodiversity on Earth, and managing the oceans sustainably;
- **Rethinking the economic model**, as well as patterns of production and consumption, by decoupling growth and prosperity from resource use, moving beyond GDP as a measure of society's progress, encouraging innovation and sustainable long-term investments, and putting a price on natural resources including carbon;
- **Starting a global transformation** - The year 2015 marks a critical juncture, and a roadmap of decisive action is now urgently required. We urge the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); the adoption of globally agreed upon Sustainable Development Goals; and the conclusion of an adequate climate agreement, which aligned with the latest science, offer the prospect of a viable and equitable future for humanity.

Signatories as of 18 June 2012:

Amina Az-Zubair, United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability

James Laurence Balsillie, Chairman of the Board of the Centre for International Governance Innovation, United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability

Lidia Brito, Director of Science Policy and Sustainable Development, UNESCO

Gro Harlem Brundtland, Former Prime Minister of Norway, United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability

Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Former President of Brazil; Founder of Fernando Henrique Cardoso Institute

Nitin Desai, Former United Nations Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs

José Goldemberg, Professor of Physics, Member of the Brazilian Academy of Sciences and of the Third World Academy of Science

Heide Hackmann, Secretary-General of the International Social Science Council (ISSC)

Tarja Halonen, former President, Republic of Finland, Co-Chair of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability

José-Maria Figueres, Former President of Costa Rica

Tim Jackson, Professor in Economics, Surrey University

Mattias Klum, Photographer and Filmmaker, National Geographic

Walter Kohn, Professor at University of California Santa Barbara; 1998 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry

Ashok Khosla, President of IUCN and Chair of the Club of Rome

Niclas Kjellström Matseke, CEO, PostKodLotteriet

Johan Kuylenstierna, Director, Stockholm Environment Institute

Jim Leape, Director General, WWF International

Yuan Tseh Lee, President of the International Council of Science, 1986 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry

Melissa Leach, Professorial Fellow at the Institute for Development Studies

Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Director General of IUCN

Israel Klabin, President of the Fundação Brasileira para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável

Diana Liverman, Professor and Co-Director of the Institute of the Environment, Arizona

Thomas Lovejoy, Professor, George Mason University.

Jacqueline McGlade, Head of European Environment Agency

Justin Mundy, Director, The Prince's Charities' International Sustainability Unit

Cristina Narbona, Member of the Spanish Parliament and United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability

Carlos Nobre, Professor in Earth Science and Administrator of Science & Technology at INPE

Douglas Osheroff, Professor at Stanford University, 1996 Nobel Laureate in Physics

Janos Pasztor, Executive Secretary, United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability

Rajendra Pachauri, Chairperson of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that received the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize.

Aloísio Pessoa de Araujo, Professor in Mathematics at the Brazilian Academy of Sciences

Carlo Rubbia, Scientific Director of the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies; 1984 Nobel Laureate in Physics

Katherine Richardson, Professor at Copenhagen University

Johan Rockström, Director of the Stockholm Resilience Centre

Roberto Schaeffer, Associate Professor in Energy Economics at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

John Schellnhuber, Director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research

Youba Sokona, Coordinator of the African Climate Policy Centre

Maurice Strong, Secretary General of the 1972 Stockholm Conference and the 1992 Rio Conference.

Adriana Soto, Vice Minister of the Environment, Colombia

Will Steffen, Professor and Executive Director of the Australia National University

Izabella Monica Vieira Teixeira, Minister of the Environment, Brazil

Sir Robert Watson CMG, Professor, FRSn Chief Scientific Advisor, DEFRA, Strategic Director of the Tyndall center, University of East Anglia.

**RESILIENT PEOPLE
RESILIENT PLANET**
A Future Worth Choosing

THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL'S HIGH-LEVEL PANEL ON GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY

Summary of the High-level dialogue on Global Sustainability

Prepared by the Chairs:

Johan Rockström and Janos Pasztor

The following contains the summary of key discussion point during the dialogue. It reflects the chairs understanding of deliberations.

The need for a great transformation

Humanity's trajectories of development and environmental change, for too long perceived as disconnected, now present unprecedented, interlinked challenges. The three Nobel Laureate Symposia on Global Sustainability give a clear diagnosis of the situation. Accelerating human activity is now the most significant driver of global change. Transgressing planetary boundaries risks moving our Earth out of the climatically and ecologically stable state that has sustained human development over the past 10,000 years. In the *Anthropocene*, tipping points with severe consequences for societies cannot be excluded.

Comprehensive scientific assessments show that we are already committed to unwanted future climate impacts, currently moving towards more than 3°C of global warming. Meanwhile, human welfare and the planet's capacity to buffer itself against shocks are being eroded by rapid biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation.

Economic development and resource use have brought great benefits to many people, but we face serious social and environmental challenges, driven by wasteful production and consumption, skewed trading and subsidy systems, and persistent and recurring financial crises. Gross inequities persist within and between nations. Unemployment is endemic and rising, particularly among the young giving rise to tensions and unrest. The financial system has failed to generate appropriate levels of investment into sustainable wealth creation.

The United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability clearly recognizes this predicament. Full and rapid implementation of the recommendations in the Panel's report will take us well on our way towards a more sustainable world.

Towards planetary stewardship - This is the first generation with scientific understanding and foresight of the risks facing humanity, now and for future generations. We are interconnected and interdependent. The problems we face require fundamental transformations to reverse global environmental change and move towards fair and lasting prosperity.

Global governance requires a focus on economic and social development within boundaries that respect Earth's fundamental behaviour. This governance requires closer collaboration between science, policy, the public and private sectors and civil society. Institutions must be developed and strengthened at all levels – from the local to the global. These need to integrate the climate, biodiversity and development agendas.

To meet humanity's needs in a complex world, a new contract between science and society is required. Strongly integrated Earth-system research, co-designed by science and its stakeholders, can inform robust solutions for the transformation to global sustainability. Sustainability should be a central part of all curricula, to nurture the trans-disciplinary cooperation and innovation required to resolve the multifaceted problems we face.

Decisive action for a more equitable world – Humanity must now move very fast on several fronts. Our assessment is that the most urgent priorities for immediate action are meeting the global needs for food, water and energy in a sustainable manner, avoiding dangerous climate change, safeguarding biodiversity on Earth, and managing the oceans sustainably. All these challenges must be addressed simultaneously. Greenhouse gas emissions must peak no later than 2015 to keep global warming below 2°C. Multiple co-benefits can be achieved by combining major investments in reducing short-lived climate pollutants with concerted investments in technologies and policies for universal access to renewable energy and elimination of climate-damaging subsidies; decisively supporting a low-carbon transition, providing major health benefits and security, and promoting development. Often, action on these fronts is portrayed as a cost or burden. Growing evidence shows that societies and businesses can benefit from early action on sustainable solutions. Energy illustrates well the large benefits across the three dimensions of sustainability.

Equal rights and opportunities are essential not only for achieving social justice and equality but also for economic growth and prosperity. Poverty remains one of the world's largest challenges. We should strive to achieve the MDG's, adopt a new global contract between and within all countries to scale up investments in poverty eradication, climate stabilization, clean technology and ecosystem management, as well as scale up investments in education, reproductive health services and provide financial services aiming at empowering women and youth around the world. As always, those most at risk are people in low-income countries, and the poorest segments in middle- and high-income countries.

Rethinking the economic model – Earth's capacity to buffer the expansion of human activities has allowed continuing economic growth despite serious ecological decline. However a 'business as usual' trajectory of activities will no longer yield the historic pattern of economic growth. Global sustainability is a prerequisite for human welfare and prosperity. It is vitally important to decouple growth from unsustainable resource use, while simultaneously generating new employment opportunities. We should move beyond GDP as a measure of society's progress, apply the 'polluter pays' principle including a price on carbon reflecting the true costs, ensure the full accounting of natural capital and ecosystem services in all economic decisions and greatly enhance resource efficiency by moving production systems towards a "circular economy" that is regenerative by design. Shifting consumption from goods to services will enhance employment and wellbeing. Innovation and sustainable long-term investments should be supported by a clear and more ambitious framework, including regulations and incentives.

A great transformation guided by Sustainable Development Goals – Our current development path is simply too risky for humanity. In the *Anthropocene*, all nations must accept the inviolable necessity of living within the safe operating space of planetary boundaries. This requires an agreement between the world's governments for a fair and sustainable use of Earth's natural capital, a mandate for action with clear targets and timetables. The year 2015 marks a critical juncture. We urge the fulfillment of the MDGs; the adoption of globally agreed Sustainable Development Goals; and the conclusion of an adequate climate agreement, which aligned with the latest science, offer the prospect of a viable and equitable future for humanity.

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The Nobel Laureate Symposium Series on Global Sustainability was initiated in 2007 in Potsdam, continued in London 2009 with the St James's Palace Nobel Laureate Symposium and in Stockholm in 2011. The series unites Nobel Laureates of various disciplines, top-level representatives from politics and civil society, and renowned experts on sustainability. The UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability was established in 2010 to formulate a new blueprint for sustainable development and low-carbon prosperity. It issued its report and recommendations in January 2012. At the 3rd Nobel Laureate Symposium in Stockholm, the Stockholm Memorandum was signed by Nobel Laureates and handed over in person to the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability in preparation for the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro.

On 17 June 2012 the Nobel Laureate Symposium Series on Global Sustainability was continued in Rio de Janeiro focusing on the scientific support for policy action and in particular for the actions contained the report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability, entitled "Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A Future Worth Choosing".