



Towards equitable scholarly publishing for SDGs and beyond

A side event at the 8th Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals
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Concept Note

Science is a crucial tool for advancing progress on the 2030 Agenda and achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is recognized in the 2030 Agenda which calls for the establishment of a technology facilitation mechanism to advance science, technology, and innovation for the SDGs including through knowledge-sharing in open access, online platforms.

UNESCO has identified that 70% of all humans live in countries with very weak science systems; the knowledge needed to transform innovation systems around the world cannot be accessed. This is a serious gap in global knowledge systems. As highlighted in the UN Open Science Conference by three of the scientists assigned by the UN Secretary-General to produce the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) 2023, Open Science can be a major contributor in closing this gap and expanding global knowledge. Open Science has the potential to be not just an accelerator of knowledge and innovation, but recovery, resilience, and inclusive sustainable development.

Currently, scientific [publishing remains market-based and serves the purpose of bringing profits to a small number of actors, particularly corporate publishers](#). The current set of rules in this market (journals, impact factors, H-index etc.) are designed to create and maintain hierarchies, force competition, and increase profit margins. COVID-19 highlighted how these rules hinder the sharing of scientific knowledge in service to humanity. The status quo had to be set aside in order to share knowledge and data, swiftly develop vaccines, and create life-saving evidence-based policies and practices that could be communicated globally. In this situation, where the urgent priority of service to humanity was clear, there was no place for the market-based rules and priorities of legacy publishing practices.

The UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science is the long-awaited, landmark instrument-setting agreement to move us away from current practices and into more equitable models. In a society that daily manifests the pathology of data misuse and allows the overconcentration of data-aggregating powers, there are steps that both institutions and researchers must take to ensure access to research production and dissemination is equitable, and data collection is more democratic and transparently participatory. A Global Science Commons, an infrastructure in service of the Sustainable Development Goals, can support and promote the global normalization of opening scientific outputs and processes, and the re-evaluation of research assessments and the academic rewards culture.

In the first Open Science Conference organized by the UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division of Sustainable Development Goals [a roadmap](#) for such a Commons was drawn through the consensus and agreement of 19 eminent personalities in academia and scholarly communications. The roadmap presented key principles for the creation of a Global Science Commons. In 2021, we looked at lessons learned from the pandemic which can be employed in climate action and concluded that open exchange of scientific data and information revealed the fundamental role of the open research scientific



process for a Commons. In February 2023, partnering with DESA and UNESCO, the 3rd United Nations Open Science Conference debated the challenges facing equitable open policies in pursuit of democratizing the record of science and will be putting forward recommendations in an upcoming publication of the “Key messages” from the Conference.

In this Session, attendees will hear concrete recommendations from experts for generating greater access to scientific knowledge in service of the SDGs and the need for a Global Science Commons. Speakers may choose to elaborate on risks towards opening the record of science, intellectual property and copyright regulations, a new research assessment ecosystem that will allow/serve citizen science (author access/reader access) with Creative Commons licensing, and the potential for a global, interoperable Open Science infrastructure of tools, services, hardware and software (including data).