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Chapeau

The *Summit of the Future* (SOTF) presents a unique opportunity to reunite member states and societies in a global consensus for sustainability to accelerate progress towards the *2030 Agenda* and the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs). Following the midway-point of the *2030 Agenda* with the rather modest results in achieving the SDGs, the breakthroughs from the *SDG Summit* with an agreement on six transitionary investment pathways to deliver the SDGs and building on the outcomes from the 2022 *Transforming Education Summit*, the **crucial role of quality education as a cross-cutting accelerator for all 17 SDGs** needs to be further elevated.

Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education (SDG 4) that gives learners of all ages the knowledge, skills, values, and agency to address interconnected global challenges including climate change, loss of biodiversity, unsustainable use of resources, and inequality is more than an investment pathway and more than a means of implementation but an overarching priority touching upon all SOTF themes.

An **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)** can empower learners of all ages to make informed decisions and take individual and collective action to change society and care for the planet. ESD is an integral part of quality education as aimed for in SDG 4 yet addresses a broader scope including all aspects of education, public awareness, and training and in all learning dimensions: socio-emotional,

cognitive, and behavioral. Grounded in transdisciplinarity, ESD engages learners with diverse knowledges to work towards desirable futures in response to pressing challenges of our times. Therefore, – when transformative and with sustainability as a purpose – education has unique potential for the individual and for societies to achieve a more just and equitable world. Formally recognized as a **key enabler of all SDGs** in 2017/2019/2021 and most recently in December 2023, quality education with ESD at the core deserves mentioning in each chapter of the Pact for the Future.

Higher education can be a facilitator, bringing together various stakeholders and combining teaching and learning, research, community engagement and collaborative partnerships. Participatory knowledge building, sharing, mobilization and transfer are at the core of all streams of its mandate. Thus, higher education is well positioned in society and at the science-policy interface to support societal change with evidence-based recommendations and to model sustainable development in practice at the global and local level.

One specific example of creating a shared vision for ESD from the perspective of higher education is the *ESD Statement* developed by the *UNITWIN Network on ESD & Societal Transformation*.

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Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development

Between member states and across societies, the understanding of sustainable development can vary depending on the regional, cultural, and political context. While the concept of '*sustainable development*' as outlined in the Brundtland Report (1987), provides the most-cited source, it might still be (mis-) understood as primarily a financial, economic, or solely environmental concern. In addition, the development paradigm, deeply rooted in the previous *Millennium Development Goals*, is still reflected, and remains contested in the SDG framework for its market-oriented understanding of growth. Therefore, sustainable development must be continuously questioned, examined, re-envisioned and contextualized.

As an example, the **Sejahtera Academic Framework** (SAF) was adopted by the *International Islamic University Malaysia* (IIUM) as an overarching approach within the Malaysian eco-system. The term *Sejahtera* is organically understood to mirror the SDGs while also addressing balance and harmonious co-existence that is micro- and macrocosmically relevant to the realm of development in a holistic way. The *SAF* aims towards collaborative relationships and embraces compassion, empathy, and the uncompromising spirit of oneness, to transcend differences for harmonious coexistence and interdependency. It covers ten dimensions, consisting of the spiritual, physio-psychological, intellectual, cognitive, cultural, economic, ecological, ethical, emotional, and lastly the societal (esp. Indigenous) dimension. With the acronym **SPICES**, these dimensions contribute to realizing the 2030 Agenda.

In putting the SDGs into action at *IIUM*, the principles of *Sejahtera* have seamlessly permeated every facet of the university's operation: education, conscientious research, community involvement, and their governance, all serving as avenues to localize sustainable development. Consequently, the learning experiences of students are now predominantly rooted in the local community. Research and innovation endeavors are purposefully directed towards meeting the needs of the community. The engagements are crafted not merely to showcase the university's knowledge dominance but to genuinely assist and fortify the resilience of community members.

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Chapter II. International peace and security

Partnerships (SDG 17) need to be at the center of the discussions at the Summit of the Future or any future roadmap for a sustainable transformation. Global challenges and crises can best be addressed through cooperation, not isolation. Specifically, higher education institutions work across borders and navigating intercultural contexts is more frequent in academia. The benefits of bringing different approaches, disciplines, and cultures together are reflected in the innovative output from research, the creation of new knowledge and practice from universities. Due to their strong commitment to institutional autonomy, they are in some cases uniquely placed to also advise governments and foster dialogue.

Following the example of the UNFCCC Paris Agreement in adding educational tools as well as the arts as forms of implementation and expression (e.g. *Youth Climate Report* recognized under Article 6) and addressing Indigenous/traditional perspectives and/or broader spirituality/faith as thematic dimensions to the discussion might make shared values more explicit and strengthen the understanding of unity in diversity.

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Chapter III. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation

Member states are hoped to support partnerships for the enhancement and application of open educational resources globally, such as the *Joint Committee on UNESCO OER Recommendation*, hosted by the SDG Academy. In addition, enhancing the understanding and application of open science efforts could be crucial to create new transdisciplinary knowledge, e. g., *IAU´s Expert Group on Open Science*.

Addressing youth perspectives in the conversation, especially on the potential of artificial intelligence, its ethical dimensions, with artificial intimacy fundamentally changing future human relationships, is crucial, e.g., with the *SDG Student Hub* at *York University*.

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Chapter IV. Youth and future generations

Students of higher education have a considerable potential to become formal/informal leaders and influencers in societies. With a gross enrolment ratio of 40% in tertiary education globally in 2020, this number will likely increase over the next years and decades. With this trend, higher education's relevance is further on the rise, with access and equity playing a predominant role in the discussions. Students are crucial actors in the movement for change. Educational institutions facilitate the integration of student and youth voices by creating student offices and other supporting mechanisms. When addressing student participation in sustainable development, the issue of access to (higher) education, in general, should be recalled and a conversation on a potential right to higher education added to the Pact for the Future.

Making opportunities for globally networked learning a new reality for students at all ages would foster intercultural understanding and enhance moments of global compassion, e.g. *Sustainable on the Go* and *SDGs in Action Student Challenge* at *York University*.

At *IIUM*, compulsory learning for all students about ESD, followed by community service *Usrah in Action* facilitates breaking down siloes and engaging in co-learning between the university and community.

Facilitated by the *UNITWIN Network on ESD & Societal Transformation*, another approach *Politics4Future* addresses the perceived gap between knowledge and ability for active SDG engagement for future teachers and community activists contributing to the conversation.

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York SDGs in Action Student Challenge. (2023). https://yorkinternational.yorku.ca/sdgaction/

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Chapter V. Transforming global governance

To transform our governance sustainably and appropriately in global and local systems, it is crucial to reconsider a shared understanding of leadership going beyond known management theories. Establishing a working group at the UN level could enhance such understanding and build on the knowledge from the upcoming *UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2024* on leadership in education systems.

Aiming to transform future generations, *IIUM* takes its *Sejahtera Framework* a step further from the whole-institution approach towards a **communiversity model** in repurposing education to serve sustainable development, in particular the 2030 Agenda and beyond. The **communiversity** concept rests upon five pillars:

- Integrating transdisciplinary wisdom involves not just the introduction of courses about sustainable development but also the infusion of sustainable development principles into the existing curriculum.
- Cultivating leadership and transformation whereby students undergo training geared towards spearheading transformative change within their communities.
- Fostering sustainable entrepreneurship whereby activities are strategically designed to ensure the financial sustainability of both the university and the surrounding community.
- Championing responsible research and innovation directly serving the community, meticulously analyzing its needs to ensures a tangible and meaningful impact.
- Facilitating institutional collaboration emphasizing on the engagement of diverse stakeholders within the quadruple helix model - academia, government agencies, industry partners, and civil society and NGOs. This cohesive involvement is to ensures a holistic and inclusive approach towards community development and progress.

To embed communiversity at the student level is **Usrah in Action**. Students engage in flagship projects, serving the local (often Indigenous) community with research and activities, operationalizing *sejahtera* and leading to a whole-community approach over time. All courses are credited and compulsory, becoming a tool and implementation platform of the *communiversity*.

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