



WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT (2001–2026)

25 Editions of Driving Ambition and Action
on Sustainable Development

An Archival Pocketbook





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Message from the Chairman, TERI

The idea of sustainable development has moved far beyond balancing environment and growth. Today, it reflects a more integrated vision rooted in equity, resilience, and human well-being. It is no longer seen as a fixed destination or a checklist of targets, but as a continuous process of adaptation to evolving social priorities, economic realities, and scientific knowledge. This pocketbook captures how the World Sustainable Development Summit has engaged with this evolving agenda over time. By complementing formal multilateral processes, WSDS has convened diverse voices to address global challenges through the lenses of science, equity, and implementation. Anchored in the Global South, it highlights the Summit's role in strengthening multilateralism and translating the Sustainable Development Goals from global ambition into practical action.

Mr Nitin Desai

Chairman, The Energy and Resources Institute



Message from the Director-General, TERI

Instituted in 2001 as the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit, the World Sustainable Development Summit made its proposition clear from the outset: sustainability and climate change, then peripheral to global policy, must advance alongside development and equity. It asserted that these debates needed to be informed by diverse national contexts and grounded in the priorities and lived realities of the Global South. Across successive editions, the Summit contributed to key global milestones, offering intellectual leadership ahead of the Johannesburg Summit, engaging with the Rio+20 process, and serving as a trusted preparatory and bridging platform in the lead-up to COPs and outcomes such as the Paris Agreement and Agenda 2030. This Pocketbook traces the institutional journey of the Summit across twenty-five editions, documenting how sustained dialogue, and evidence-based engagement have shaped global sustainability discourse. As the Summit enters its Silver Jubilee year, the volume stands as both a record of collective progress and a call to translate ambition into action for a more equitable and sustainable future.

Dr Vibha Dhawan

Director-General, The Energy and Resources Institute



Preface from the Summit Curator

This pocketbook chronicles the collective achievement of the World Sustainable Development Summit across twenty-five editions, tracing its evolution into a globally recognized multistakeholder platform. On behalf of the organizing team, it is in order to record deep appreciation for the visionary foundations laid by Dr Rajendra Kumar Pachauri, the first Director-General of TERI; the leadership of Dr Ajay Mathur, former Director-General; the guidance of Chairman, Mr Nitin Desai; and the stewardship of the current Director-General, Dr Vibha Dhawan. Special recognition is due to Dr Annapurna Vancheswaran, who led the Summit for two decades, alongside the International Steering Committee, the Silver Jubilee Committee, and the wider TERI family, whose collective commitment has shaped the Summit into what it is today.

Dr Shailly Kedia

Director, The Energy and Resources Institute



Acknowledgements

As the World Sustainable Development Summit completes twenty-five editions, we acknowledge with gratitude the many individuals whose guidance and commitment have shaped this journey.

We thank the members of the Silver Jubilee Committee – Dr Vibha Dhawan, Mr Sanjay Seth, Dr Dipankar Saharia, Dr Shailly Kedia, Dr Manish Kumar Shrivastava, and Mr Arupendra Nath Mullick – for providing direction and oversight in bringing together this commemorative volume and in marking this milestone edition.

We are grateful to the Distinguished Fellows of TERI for their continued intellectual guidance over the years, which has strengthened the Summit's academic rigour and policy relevance. We also acknowledge Mr Nitin Desai, Chairman, TERI, and the Members of the Governing Council for their steady guidance and institutional support.

This volume draws on archival material built and preserved over decades. We sincerely thank Dr Abhilash Kolekar for compiling and consolidating information for this publication, and Dr Mithu Dey from the Knowledge Resource Centre for her work in developing and curating the Summit archives.

The successful organization of the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit and the World Sustainable Development Summit has always depended on collective effort. We acknowledge the contributions of colleagues in the Sustainable Development and Outreach Division – Dr Shailly Kedia, Ms Chandralim Phukan, Ms Taruna Idnani,



Ms Ishita Srivastava, Ms Anuradha Mathur, Mr Ravi Nair, Mr John Andruse, and Ms Praveen Sharma – as well as the core organizing team across past and present editions.

Our appreciation extends to the events, communications, IT, and Secretariat teams; the Director-General's Office; facilitators and rapporteurs; floor managers and masters of ceremony; and all those who work behind the scenes, including technical support teams, designers, printers, publishers, service providers, and venue, hotel, accommodation, and travel partners.

The Summit's continuity and impact over twenty-five years reflect the dedication of this extended community. We record our sincere thanks to all who have contributed to sustaining and advancing this platform.



Introduction to WSDS

The World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) is the annual flagship multistakeholder convening organized by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). Instituted in 2001, as Delhi Sustainable Development Summit, (DSDS) the Summit series has a legacy in making 'sustainable development' a globally shared goal. Over the years, the Summit platform has brought together thought leaders, heads of state and government, scholars, corporates, youth groups, and civil society representatives from across the world. The Summit series has established itself as a responsible and effective platform for mobilizing opinion-makers to drive ambition and advance pioneering actions to address some of the most pressing issues concerning sustainable development and climate change.

As the only independently convened international summit on sustainable development and the environment based in the Global South, WSDS strives to provide long-term solutions for the benefit of global communities by assembling the world's most enlightened leaders and thinkers on a single platform. In its previous editions, it has involved speakers, delegates, and participants in addressing several key issues pertaining to climate change and environmental protection. As a result, the Summit has witnessed numerous partnerships that have promised to strengthen our collective endeavours towards imagining a sustainable and environmentally secure future.

The platform has reached out to the global community through features such as High-level Ministerial Sessions, Plenary Sessions, Thematic Tracks, the Youth Plenary, the



Women Leadership Session, International Dialogues, the CEO Forum, Colloquiums, and various exhibitions on clean and green innovations. Since its inception, WSDS has convened 59 Heads of State and Government, 149 Ministers, 13 Nobel Laureates, 2,158 Business Leaders, 3,730 Speakers, and more than 41,000 Delegates representing a diverse base of ecosystem actors from around the globe.

TERI launched the Act4Earth initiative at the 21st edition of WSDS, focusing on climate action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The two components of Act4Earth include the COP30 Compass and the SDG Charter. The Summit series aims to extend its reach through closer engagement with stakeholders to collectively advance policy research and dialogue through the Act4Earth initiative.



WSDS as a Multistakeholder Platform

The World Sustainable Development Summit plays a significant role by convening governmental and non-governmental actors, complementing official negotiations, and strengthening long-term diplomatic understanding in support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The WSDS also strengthens the science–policy interface by translating scientific evidence on interconnected challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, and pollution, into actionable policy discourse. Through evidence-based dialogue among policymakers, scientists, civil society, industry, and international organizations, the Summit supports coherent and integrated environmental governance.

From a constructivist perspective, WSDS facilitates socialization processes through which actors co-construct shared meanings, norms, and expectations. Sustained interaction enables norm diffusion and the internalization of standards of appropriate action. Building on this, the Summit's theory of change prioritizes continuous research, dialogue, and multistakeholder engagement to align preferences, reinforce commitments, and translates shared knowledge into coordinated action, thereby advancing global sustainability governance.



2001



“
A narrowly focused economic model
can neither remove global poverty
nor yield sustainable development.

- Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

”

**Dates**

7–9 February 2001, New Delhi

**Umbrella Theme**

Poverty: The Global Challenge for Governments, Industry, Scientists, and Civil Society

**Inaugural Address**

Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

**Achievement**

Provided intellectual input and consensus-building ahead of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002), and COP8 of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

**Flagship Announcement**

INSTEP - Initiative for Sustainable Technologies and Energy Platforms



2002



“

We only have this one planet, and we must either succeed together in making it work for everyone, most essentially for the poor.

- Ms Margaret Beckett

Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Government of United Kingdom

”

**Dates**

8–11 February 2002, New Delhi

**Umbrella Theme**

Ensuring Sustainable Livelihoods: Challenges for Governments, Corporates, and Civil Society at Rio+10

**Inaugural Address**

Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

**Achievement**

Contributed to the dialogue on Rio+10 priorities and livelihood security, reinforcing the Agenda 21 framework

**Flagship Announcement**

Launch of 'Integrated Energy Policy for India'



2003



“

Environmental needs and concerns must be integrated in national development areas such as biodiversity, agriculture, food production, and rural development.

- Dr A P J Abdul Kalam
Hon'ble President of India

”

**Dates**

6–9 February 2003, New Delhi

**Umbrella Theme**

Translating Resolve into Action for a Sustainable Future

**Inaugural Address**

Dr A P J Abdul Kalam, Hon'ble President of India

**Achievement**

Advanced the Johannesburg 'Type II initiatives' approach by stressing partnership-driven projects

**Flagship Announcement**

Green India 2047



2004



“

I have coined a new geological term, namely the Anthropocene. Humankind has become very involved in changing the environment, thus making us a geological force as well.

- **Professor Paul Crutzen**
Director Emeritus, Max Planck Institute
for Chemistry and Nobel Laureate

”



Dates

4–7 February 2004, New Delhi



Umbrella Theme

Partnerships for Sustainable Development:
Addressing the WEHAB agenda (Water, Energy,
Health, Agriculture, Biodiversity)



Inaugural Address

Shri Yashwant Sinha, Hon'ble Minister for
External Affairs



Achievement

Advanced the WEHAB agenda through
partnership-driven initiatives of the UN
Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)



Flagship Announcement

Story-telling event at the Summit



2005



“

We are brought together by the acknowledgement that we share a common responsibility, that our fate is the fate of every nation, and that our future is a joint enterprise.

- HE Mr Olafur Ragnar Grimsson
Hon'ble President of the Republic of Iceland

”

**Dates**

3–5 February 2005, New Delhi

**Umbrella Theme**

Beyond Universal Goals: Steering Development Towards Global Sustainability

**Inaugural Address**

H.E. Olafur Ragnar Grimsson, President of the Republic of Iceland

**Achievement**

Strengthened linkages between the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and sustainability debates, especially on energy access

**Flagship Announcement**

Launch of the Sustainable Development Leadership Award, with its inaugural conferment on Dr Shoichiro Toyoda, Honorary Chairman of Toyota Motor Corporation



2006



“

Only through meaningful partnerships with governments, like-minded corporates, and panchayati institutions can we achieve the desired goals.

- Mrs Rajashree Birla
Chairperson, Aditya Birla Group

”

**Dates**

2–4 February 2006, New Delhi

**Umbrella Theme**

Linking Across MDGs: Towards Innovative Partnerships and Governance

**Inaugural Address**

Professor Ernesto Zedillo, 61st President of Mexico and Director, Yale Center for the Study of Globalization

**Achievement**

Strengthened linkages on policy–practice interface, addressing energy, climate change, water, agriculture, and technology in the MDG context

**Flagship Announcement**

Delhi Declaration as a call to action to change agents



2007



“

Sustainable development means human security, democracy, respect for human rights, and well-being for both mankind and nature.

- HE Ms Tarja Halonen
Hon'ble President of Finland

”

**Dates**

22–24 January 2007, New Delhi

**Umbrella Theme**

Meeting the MDGs: Exploring the Natural Resource Dimensions

**Inaugural Address**

HE Tarja Halonen, President of Finland

**Achievement**

Strengthened the role of business in sustainability through the CEO Forum

**Flagship Announcement**

State Awards to Gujarat, Uttarakhand, and Andaman & Nicobar Islands for innovative sustainable development initiatives



2008

7 - 9 Februar



“

Climate justice must inform all efforts at international collaboration in act of human solidarity. This then becomes an opportunity for a new global compact.

- Dr Manmohan Singh
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

”



Dates

7–9 February 2008, New Delhi



Umbrella Theme

Sustainable Development and Climate Change



Inaugural Address

Dr Manmohan Singh, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India



Achievement

Took place immediately after the Bali Action Plan (COP 13, December 2007), positioning DSDS as a forum to advance the climate negotiations towards Copenhagen 2009



Flagship Announcement

TERI announced the Lighting a Billion Lives campaign, promoting solar devices in rural areas



2009



“

Each of us has the responsibility to act on our own. However, different countries have different roles and responsibilities.

- HE Ms Connie Hedegaard
Hon'ble Minister for Climate and Energy, Denmark

”



Dates

5–7 February 2009, New Delhi



Umbrella Theme

Towards Copenhagen: An Equitable and Ethical Approach



Inaugural Address

Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs, Government of India



Achievement

Reinforced India's leadership role in climate negotiations by linking the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) to international processes



Flagship Announcement

Green Globe Foundation Awards, recognizing contributions from youth, business, media, and architecture



2010



“

Global climate policy must be shaped by the realities of resource constraints, geographical contexts and scientific uncertainty.

- H.E. Ms Teresa Ribera Rodríguez
Secretary of State for Climate Change,
Ministry of the Environment and Rural and
Marine Affairs, Government of Spain

”



Dates

5–7 February 2010, New Delhi



Umbrella Theme

Beyond Copenhagen: New Pathways to Sustainable Development



Inaugural Address

Dr Manmohan Singh, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India



Achievement

Reinforced DSDS as a go to non-UN convening platform for candid discussions on global climate politics by bringing together leaders from Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas, thereby bridging North–South divides



Flagship Announcement

A white paper on roadmap to Mexico (COP16) with participation from UNFCCC Executive Secretary Yvo de Boer, Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Gro Harlem Brundtland, Ricardo Lagos, and others



2011



“

An integrated approach is essential to tackling interconnected global challenges such as poverty, inequity, climate change, and sustainable development.

- **HE Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland**

Hon'ble Prime Minister of Norway and Member of the UN Secretary-General's Global Sustainability Panel, Norway

”



Dates

3-5 February 2011, New Delhi



Umbrella Theme

Tapping Local Initiatives and Tackling Global Inertia



Inaugural Address

Dr Manmohan Singh, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India



Achievement

Enhanced focus on Africa and Asia's local innovations, making DSDS a bridge between vulnerable regions and global processes



Flagship Announcement

ADB President released a book titled 'Tackling Climate Change and Energy Poverty'



2012



“

The problem with the global change is that everyone wants to focus only on the international level; but we actually need to look regionally and locally at policies to enhance possibilities.

- Dr Elinor Ostrom
Professor, Indiana University and Nobel Laureate

”



Dates

2–4 February 2012, New Delhi



Umbrella Theme

Protecting the Global Commons: 20 Years Post Rio



Inaugural Address

Dr Manmohan Singh, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India



Achievement

Served as a forum for Rio+20, ensuring that Indian and Global South perspectives were reflected in preparatory debates



Flagship Announcement

Launch of the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability Report



2013



“

Development organizations and government departments are today functioning in thought-based silos.

- **Professor Carlo Rubbia**
Scientific Director, Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies, Germany and Nobel Laureate

”



Dates

31 January—2 February 2013, New Delhi



Umbrella Theme

The Global Challenge of Resource-Efficient Growth and Development



Inaugural Address

Dr Manmohan Singh, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India



Achievement

Served as the first independent forum after Rio+20 in 2012, focused on operationalizing 'The Future We Want' declaration, while acting as a global bridge between UN processes and regional and national action, particularly in the follow up on the SDGs

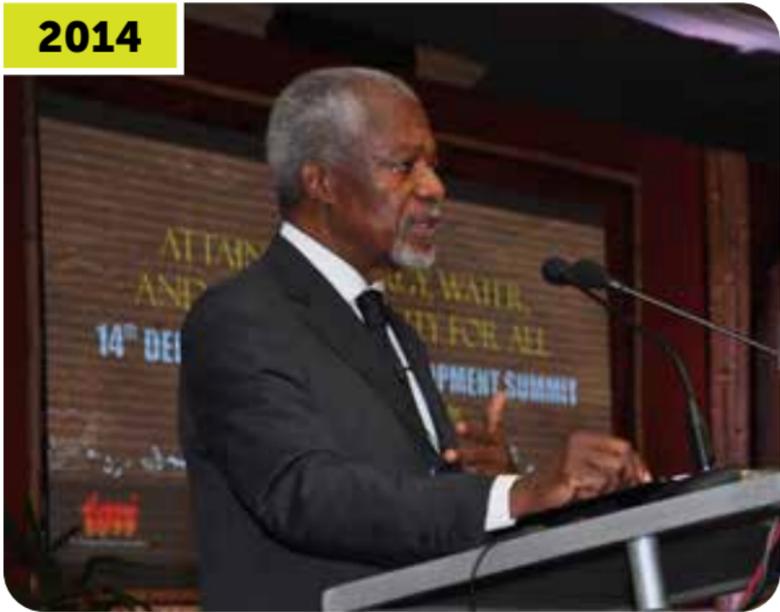


Flagship Announcement

Presentation of the First Georgescu-Roegen Awards



2014



“

Interlinked challenges cannot be solved by tinkering merely on the edges.

- HE Mr Kofi Annan
Seventh Secretary-General of
the United Nations and Nobel Laureate

”



Dates

6–8 February 2014, New Delhi



Umbrella Theme

Attaining Energy, Water, and Food Security for All



Inaugural Address

HE Mr Kofi Annan, Seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations and Nobel Laureate



Achievement

Positioned DSDS in the UN-led post-2015 SDG process, feeding directly into the shaping of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2015 climate agreement

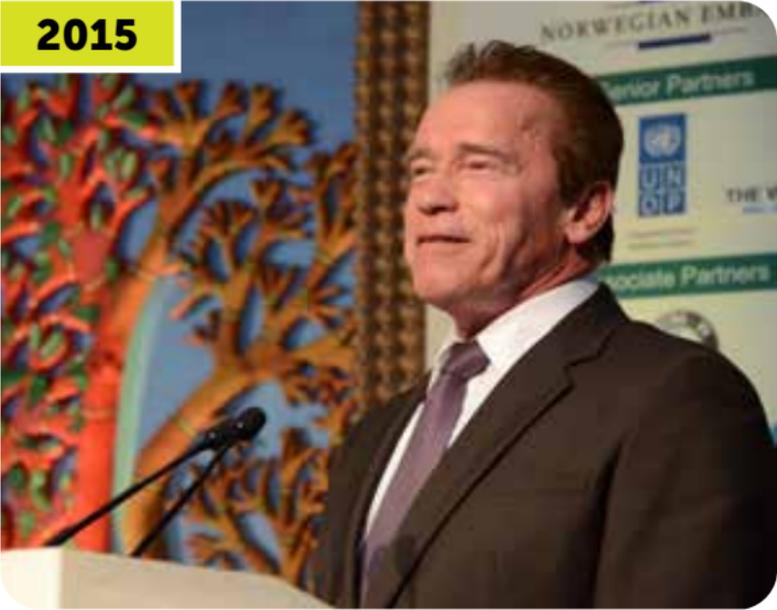


Flagship Announcement

South Asian Regional Hub for the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)



2015



“

Climate change is not science fiction, and it is impacting us right now. This is bigger than a movie and this is the biggest challenge of our times.

- Mr Arnold Schwarzenegger
Former Governor, California & Founding Chair,
R20: Regions of Climate Action

”



Dates

5–7 February 2015, New Delhi



Umbrella Theme

Sustainable Development Goals and Dealing with Climate Change



Inaugural Address

HE Mr Laurent Fabius, Minister of Foreign Affairs & International Development of France and President of COP21



Achievement

Enhanced India's global profile as a bridge-builder in climate diplomacy before COP21 and the adoption of the Paris Agreement



Flagship Announcement

Global Sustainable Development Report 2015, assessing climate risks and progress across 193 UN member states



2016



“

We are only trustees of resources, and we don't have a right to waste them.

- Shri Pranab Mukherjee
Hon'ble President of India

”

**Dates**

5–8 October 2016, New Delhi

**Umbrella Theme**

Sustainable Development Goals and Dealing with Climate Change

**Inaugural Address**

Shri Pranab Mukherjee, President of India

Achievement

Marked the first WSDS after the adoption of the SDGs in 2015 and the Paris Agreement at COP21, aligning its agenda with implementation pathways while consolidating its role as a distinctive South led platform shaping debates in the SDG era

**Flagship Announcement**

'Greenovation 2016 Exhibition', a showcase on energy innovation



2018



“

This Summit is a reinforcement of India's commitment to a sustainable planet, for ourselves and for future generations.

- **Shri Narendra Modi**
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

”

**Dates**

15–17 February 2018, New Delhi

**Umbrella Theme**

Partnerships for a Resilient Planet

**Inaugural Address**

Shri Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

**Achievement**

Contributed to momentum building around the Talanoa Dialogue and COP24 in Katowice, by providing a credible platform for constructive engagement

**Flagship Announcement**

Partnership signed between Government of Fiji and TERI



2019



“

Women's full participation in the global economy is not only a matter of equity, but a powerful driver of economic growth.

- Ms Naina Lal Kidwai
Chairman, Advent International Private Equity,
India Advisory Board

”



Dates

11–13 February 2019, New Delhi



Umbrella Theme

Attaining the 2030 Agenda: Delivering on Our Promise



Inaugural Address

Shri M Venkaiah Naidu, Hon'ble Vice President of India



Achievement

Integrated five mega-themes—climate, environment, energy, habitat, and resource efficiency—aligning them with the SDGs



Flagship Announcement

India–Norway marine pollution initiative and India–EU water partnership



2020



“

Innovation and transformation are the key pillars of sustainability

- **Professor Kazuhiko Takeuchi**
President, Institute for
Global Environmental Strategies, Japan

”



Dates

29–31 January 2020, New Delhi



Umbrella Theme

Towards 2030 Goals: Making the Decade Count



Inaugural Address

Shri Prakash Javadekar, Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India



Achievement

Served as a preparatory platform for COP26 Glasgow (2021) and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030)



Flagship Announcement

IFAT Delhi Trade Fair, on clean technologies



2021



“

The road to fighting climate change is through climate justice and this requires us to be large-hearted by thinking of the bigger and the long-term picture.

- Shri Narendra Modi
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

”

**Dates**

10–12 February 2021 (Virtual Edition)

**Umbrella Theme**

Redefining Our Common Future: Safe and Secure Environment for All

**Inaugural Address**

Shri Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

**Achievement**

Discourse on green recovery in a post-pandemic world

**Flagship Announcement**

TERI's Industry Charter for Near Zero Emissions



2022



“

Sustainability requires coordinated action for the global commons. Our efforts have recognized this interdependence.

- Shri Narendra Modi
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

”





Dates

16–18 February 2022 (Virtual Edition)



Umbrella Theme

Towards a Resilient Planet: Ensuring a Sustainable and Equitable Future



Inaugural Address

Shri Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India



Achievement

First major global sustainability forum after COP26 Glasgow (2021), setting the tone towards COP27 Sharm el-Sheikh (2022), in a post-COVID world



Flagship Announcement

Act4Earth Policy Briefs and Dialogues, including the COP27 Compass and SDG Charter



2023



“

The principles of equity and justice should be not only in climate issues but also in sustainable development.”

- H.E. Dr Bharrat Jagdeo
Hon'ble Vice-President of the Republic of Guyana

”



Dates

22–24 February 2023, New Delhi



Umbrella Theme

Mainstreaming Sustainable Development and Climate Resilience for Collective Action



Inaugural Address

H.E. Dr Bharrat Jagdeo, Vice President of the Republic of Guyana



Achievement

Held at the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, with India's G20 Presidency and the Global Stocktake at COP28 as strategic backdrops, it advanced discourse on Mission LIFE, the Green Development Pact, climate finance, energy transitions, food security, and the circular economy



Flagship Announcement

TERI and Government of Guyana collaboration on agriculture and sustainability; and the signing of a Letter of Intent between TERI and the UNFCCC on climate initiatives



2024



“

Access to energy is a right for all citizens and therefore, energy must be affordable.

- Shri Bhupender Yadav

Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and
Climate Change, Government of India

”

**Dates**

7–9 February 2024, New Delhi

**Umbrella Theme**

Leadership for Sustainable Development and Climate Justice

**Inaugural Address**

Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar, Vice President of India

**Achievement**

Contributed to preparatory discussions for the UN Summit of the Future in 2024 and COP29

**Flagship Announcement**

The Ministry of Power, Government of India and TERI to establish a dedicated Institute for Energy Transition at the TERI campus in Hyderabad



2025



“

We must advance climate finance to \$1.3 trillion annually, building on the \$300 billion pledged by developed countries.

- H.E. Ms Marina Silva
Hon'ble Minister of the Environment
and Climate Change, Brazil

”



Dates

5–7 March 2025, New Delhi



Umbrella Theme

Partnerships for Accelerating Sustainable Development and Climate Solutions



Inaugural Address

Shri Bhupender Yadav, Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India



Achievement

Shaped debates on COP30 in Brazil and COP33 in India, financing gaps, resilience, and energy transitions, positioning WSDS as a preparatory forum for upcoming global negotiations



Flagship Announcement

Professor Jim Skea, IPCC Chair, delivers address to Indian corporate leaders at the CEO Forum of WSDS; and fellowship under the Atal Innovation Mission



2026 (Silver Jubilee Edition)



The challenges confronting the world today are deeply interconnected, requiring long-term vision, diverse perspectives, and value-driven approaches to drive the transformations essential for sustainable development and climate action.

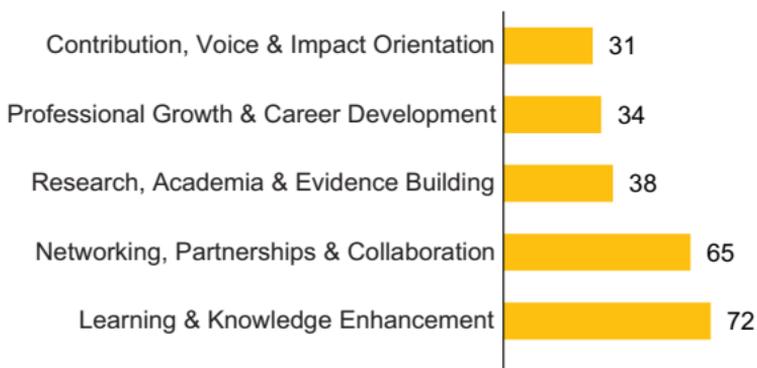
The 2026 edition of WSDS will mark the Silver Jubilee of the Summit. This 25th edition of the milestone event will be held from 25–27 February 2026 at the Taj Palace, New Delhi, under the umbrella theme: परिवर्तन | Transformations: Vision, Voices, and Values for Sustainable Development.



Expectations from stakeholders

During the applications for the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) 2026 – Silver Jubilee Edition, TERI sought to systematically capture applicant responses to better understand what prospective participants are interested in. The analysis below draws on qualitative responses submitted by applicants, which were subsequently coded and aggregated to identify dominant motivation patterns and thematic interest areas.

Motivation Breakdown (percentage of respondents)



N = 2,146 respondents

The findings indicate that WSDS 2026 is primarily perceived as a learning-oriented global platform, closely followed by its role as a networking and partnership-building forum. A significant proportion of applicants also associate the Summit with research advancement and professional development, particularly in sustainability-related fields.



Importantly, nearly one-third of respondents express a clear desire to actively contribute ideas, experiences, and solutions, highlighting expectations of participatory and interactive engagement rather than passive attendance.

Thematic Interest Signals (percentage of respondents)



N = 2,146 respondents

Applicant responses reveal a strong concentration of interest around climate action and resilience, with energy transition emerging as the most prominent sectoral theme. At the same time, the breadth of interest across SDGs, governance, finance, and circular economy reflects an integrated and systems-oriented understanding of sustainable development.



Way Forward

As the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) completes 25 editions over 25 years, it stands at a defining moment in its journey. Conceived at the turn of the millennium, WSDS was envisioned as a global platform rooted in the realities of the Global South, one that placed equity at the centre of environmental discourse. The Summit's very first edition, which foregrounded poverty as a core sustainability challenge, reflected a clear and deliberate choice: development and environment could not be addressed in isolation.

When WSDS was instituted, climate change was still a nascent and contested issue. A central objective of the early Summits was therefore to build awareness and legitimacy around climate change and related sustainability concerns. Over the last two and a half decades, this objective has largely been met. Climate change and sustainability are no longer fringe issues; they are now embedded in national policies, corporate strategies, financial systems, and multilateral negotiations.

Yet, this very mainstreaming has exposed a new and more urgent challenge: the growing gap between commitment and delivery. Ambition has increased, but implementation continues to lag. It is within this context that the WSDS has deliberately evolved—from a platform focused on agenda-setting and awareness to one that increasingly prioritizes solutions, implementation, and impact.



This shift is evident in the expansion and diversification of thematic tracks over the years, enabling deeper, sector-specific engagement and more rigorous exploration of pathways to action. The growing emphasis on deep-dive sessions reflects the complexity of today's sustainability challenges and the need for practical, context-sensitive solutions.

Equally significant is WSDS's strengthening focus on innovation and sustainability in action. The introduction of dedicated platforms such as the TerraZone at WSDS 2026 signals a decisive move toward showcasing real-world innovations, scalable models, and transformative practices that bridge policy, technology, finance, and communities.

Looking ahead, WSDS will sharpen its role as a catalyst for implementation—a space where ideas are tested, partnerships are forged, and solutions are advanced. As the Summit enters its next phase, its priority will be clear: to move the global sustainability agenda from dialogue to delivery, while continuing to amplify Global South voices and champion transformations that are equitable, inclusive, and grounded in action.



Annexures

Heads of State & Government (2001-2019)

INDIA



VIA VIDEO



Heads of State & Government (Former 2001-2019)



Australia



Botswana



Chile



Costa Rica



East Timor



Finland



France



Guyana



India



Ireland



Japan



Maldives



Mexico



Mexico



Netherlands



Chile



Costa Rica



Quebec



Senegal



Sweden



Sweden



Switzerland



UK



Qatar



Maldives



Sri Lanka



Mauritius



Nobel Laureates (2001-2019)



Paul Crutzen



Late Frank
Sherwood Rowland



Carlo Rubia



Late James A
Mirrlees



Late Wangari
Maathai



Joseph Stiglitz



Mario Molina



Al Gore



Late Elinor Ostrom



Yuan Tseh lee



Late Kofi Annan



Kailash Satyarthi



Jose Ramos Horta



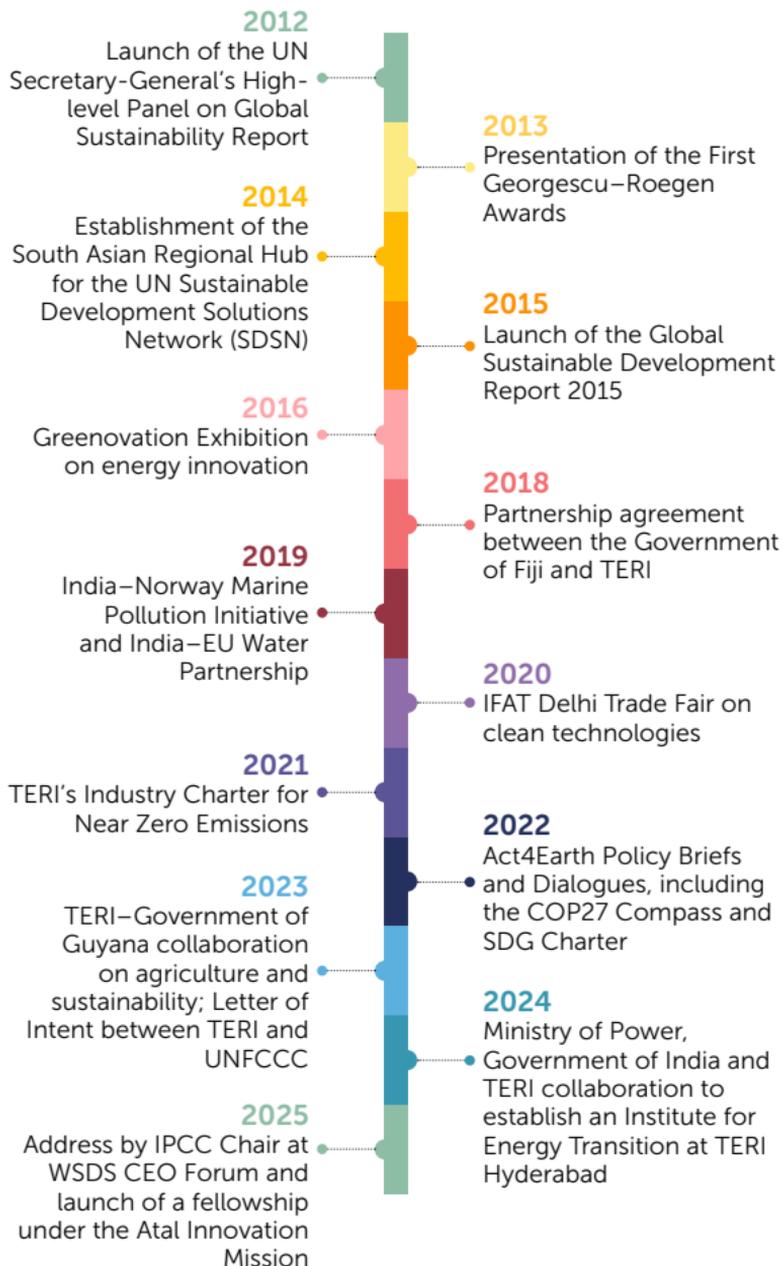
Sustainable Development Leadership Award Winners

	HE Dr Bharrat Jagdeo, Vice President, Guyana and HE Ms Marina Silva, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Brazil (2025)		HE Marina Silva, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Brazil (2025)		Mr Michael Rubens Bloomberg, UN Special Envoy on Climate Ambition and Solutions, Founder of Bloomberg LP and Bloomberg Philanthropies (2022)
Dr Jeffrey Sachs, University Professor, Columbia University (2020)		Mr Frank Bainimarama, Prime Minister of Fiji (on behalf of the Fijian Government) (2019)		Mr Pawan Chamling, Chief Minister, Sikkim (2016)	
	Dr José Manuel Durão Barroso, Former President of European Commission and Former Prime Minister of Portugal (2015)		Mr Anand Mahindra Chairman and Managing Director, Mahindra and Mahindra (2014)		Mr James Alix Michel, President, Seychelles (2013)
Dr Ms Tarja Halonen, President of Finland (2012)		Mr Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, President of Mexico (2012)		Dr Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India (2011)	
	Mr Yukio Hatoyama, Prime Minister of Japan (2010)		Mr Ban-ki-Moon, Secretary-General, United Nations (2009)		Mr Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of Maldives (2008)
Mr Arnold Schwarzenegger, Former Governor, State of California, USA (2007)		Professor Ernesto Zedillo, Former President of Mexico (2006)		Dr Shoichiro Toyoda, Honorary Chairman / Board Member, Toyota Motor Corporation, Japan (2005)	



WSDS Timeline: Key Announcements





Summit Statistics (2001-2025)



149

Ministers



41889

Delegates



59

Heads of State



13

Nobel Laureates



3730

Speakers



2158

Business Leaders



QR codes for quick access



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For more information, please contact:

WSDS Secretariat, Centre for Sustainable Development Research and Leadership
The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)
Tel. +91 11 24682100 (Extn: 2467) | Email: wdsd@teri.res.in | <http://wdsd.teriin.org>



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