

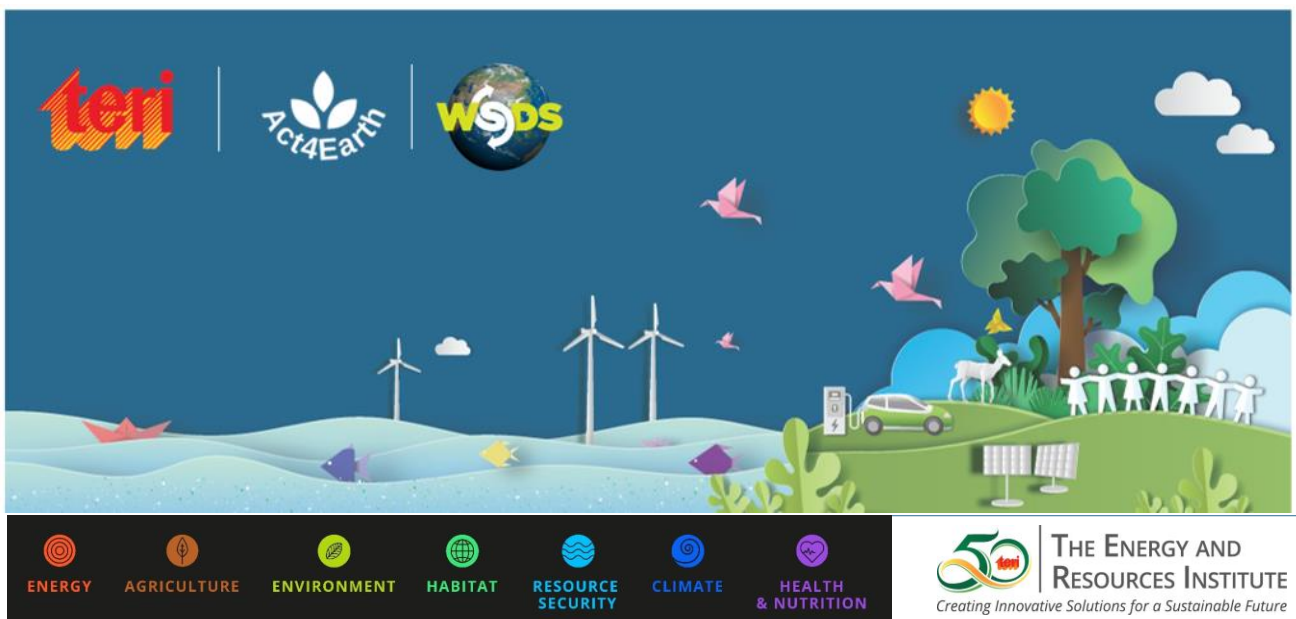
ACT4EARTH SDG CHARTER VIRTUAL DIALOGUE

Synergies Between Climate Action and SDGs: Implications for Multilateralism

Date: 22nd May 2024

Time: 2:00 p.m.– 4:00 p.m. IST

EVENT SUMMARY



ABOUT

WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

The World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) is the annual flagship multistakeholder initiative organized by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). Instituted in 2001, the Summit series has a legacy of over two decades for 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 an effective platform for mobilizing opinion-makers to drive ambition and advance pioneering actions to address some of the most relevant issues concerning sustainable development and climate change. The Summit series has witnessed the participation of 58 Heads of State and Government, 137 Ministers, 13 Nobel Laureates, 2045 Business Leaders, 3373 Speakers, and 40,362 Delegates.

ACT4EARTH

Act4Earth initiative was launched at the valedictory session of 21st edition of WSDS. Building on the discussions of WSDS, this initiative seeks to continuously engage with stakeholders through research and dialogue. Act4Earth initiative has two components: COP Compass and SDG Charter. The COP Compass will seek to inspire and mobilize leadership at all levels, for inclusive transitions through ambitious and informed policies and measures which will enable paradigm shifts – towards meeting The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Paris goals through mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation. The SDG Charter will seek to identify gaps and suggest ways for strengthening and mainstreaming sustainable development in policy agendas for enhanced environmental, social, and economic outcomes.

SYNERGIES BETWEEN CLIMATE ACTION AND SDGS: KEY ISSUES

According to the first global stock-take, to achieve ambitious temperature goals, 43 per cent of emissions needs to be reduced by 2030 while implementation of current nationally determined contributions will lead to only 2 per cent reduction. In the mid-point review of sustainable development goals, out of the 169 targets, only 13% are on track while 18% of the targets are not even tracked. The goals are off-track due to factors such as the pandemic, climate change, geopolitical conflict, and economic slowdown. These highlight gaps in not just implementation but also data to inform progress. The UNFCCC was adopted in 1992 along with the establishment of a UNFCCC Secretariat. Since the adoption, 198 countries have ratified the convention and the UNFCCC's annual meeting of the parties to the convention, known as the Conference of Parties (COP) has emerged as the foreground for setting global targets and multilateral climate negotiations. The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was established by the UN General Assembly post the 1992 Earth Summit which played a key role in advancing the norm of sustainable development. Post the Rio+20 conference, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) has been playing a crucial role in follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs and meet annually under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). HLPF, which will be held in July 2024, will include review of SDG 13 (climate action) along with four other goals (SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 16, and SDG 17). Over time, an insulation has set in between the multilateral process involving SDGs and climate change COPs. Since there is much to gain from examining synergies between SDGs and climate actions, there is also a need for enhanced institutional interactions between these two multilateral processes.

The discussion will throw light on the possible synergies that exist between Climate and SDGs and how they can be leveraged to align the targets set in the Paris Agreement and Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. The deliberation will also include the possibility of organizational of climate discussions insulation with COP being the main forum for climate negotiations and HLPF discussing the progress on SDGs under the aegis of ECOSOC and United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

Suggested Citation

The Energy and Resources Institute (2024), Synergies Between Climate Action and SDGs: Implications for Multilateralism, (Rapporteur: Shivangi Raj), Event Summary, SDG Charter, Act4Earth and World Sustainable Development Summit, New Delhi: The Energy and Resources Institute.

Disclaimer

The event summary is based on auto-generated transcript. Some edits were made on grammar and spelling. The discussion can be accessed from YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fe4g0Y3YduU>

Welcome Address

- Ambassador Manjeev Puri, Distinguished Fellow, The Energy and Resources Institute (Chair)
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Framing Presentation

- Dr Shailly Kedia, Senior Fellow, The Energy and Resources Institute
 - Ms Palak Khanna, Research Associate, The Energy and Resources Institute
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Panel discussion

- Prof. Joyeeta Gupta, Professor, Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, University of Amsterdam
 - Dr Archana Negi, Associate Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University
 - Dr Kusum Lata, Team Lead, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
 - Ms Nobue Amanuma, Fellow, Integrated Sustainability Centre, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)
 - Dr Himangana Gupta, Research Fellow and Academic Associate, United Nations University
 - Mr Christopher Garroway, Development Economist, United Nations, India
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Vote of Thanks

- Ms Madhuparna Maiti Research Associate, The Energy and Resources Institute

Message 1: Buttress United Nations and expert mandates with political mandates. A stronger political mandate for SDG-climate synergies at HLPF and COPs is imperative.

Message 2: We must strengthen SDG and climate reporting processes by including a section on SDG-synergies in nationally determined contributions (NDCs), strengthening the SDG 13 review process and including specific aspects of SDG synergies.

Message 3: Enhanced coordination in national processes can further yield positive results. The capacity of national governments to identify SDG-climate synergies and trade-offs must be built and more interactions with planning and environment departments is needed.

Message 4: We must not only de-risk project for investors but also for impacted communities and bring coherency in development priorities and funds.

Message 5: We can enhance data collection and utilization through capacity building to monitor reliable accurate data reflecting ground realities in developing countries

Message 6: A programmatic approach rather than a project-based approach is required. We can transition from project to programmatic approach for holistically integrating various initiatives and stakeholders.

Message 7: Bridge financing gaps for multilateral organizations and developing countries by focusing on tax justice, and not just attracting investors or supporting bankable projects.

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We need to have synergistic action. Meeting nearly 70% of the SDG target by 2030 requires adaptation especially in urban areas and in vulnerable countries.

Ambassador Puri
The Energy and Resources Institute

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People are willing to send money, but they all want bankable projects, but not all SDGs can be bankable projects.

Prof. Joyeeta Gupta
University of Amsterdam

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The core point is to identify the high synergy areas to find where more can be done with less not just in terms of finances but also in terms of political effort among others.

Dr Archna Negi
Jawaharlal Nehru University

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There are a lot of interlinkages between SDGs, but climate change is much more complicated and integrated and that is why the focus is more on climate change. However, progress on one does progress on one, does not ensure progress on others. So, we have to work in a synergized way.

Dr Kusum Lata
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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When we talk about the synergies between climate and SDG one of the common suggestions is the synergized planning and reporting processes between Paris agreement and the SDGs.

Ms Nobue Amanuma
Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)

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The global goal on adaptation is very strongly linked to sustainable development goals, but it is only so if you try to look at it from a local perspective because these goals are global goals, but they are ultimately achieved at the local level.

Dr Himangana Gupta
United Nations University

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Our wakeup call happened I think because of COVID and then the wars that have happened in Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan. The fact that we as a multilateral system are increasingly looking at emergency response and humanitarian responses instead of investing in transformations is worrying and that is a reflection on our member states' priorities and the fact that we would rather put band-aids on problems than tackle root causes of issues.

Mr Christopher Garroway
United Nations India

Dr Vibha Dhawan, The Energy and Resources Institute

Dr Dhawan briefly shared the work undertaken by the Centre for Sustainable Development Research and Leadership (CSDRL), Sustainable Development and Outreach Division. She said the team aims to drive systemic change for green growth and achieving sustainable development goals. She spoke about the activities of the team consisting of four focus areas: policy innovations such as green budgeting and green public procurement; sustainable development goals (SDG) synergies across various issue areas; international cooperation and global governance through Act4Earth. Dr Dhawan also spoke about TERI's flagship event, the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS).

Ambassador Puri, The Energy and Resources Institute

Ambassador Puri extended a warm welcome to all attendees, including the panelists and a large number of participants from around the world. He expressed gratitude to the United Nations colleagues for their contributions to the discussion. He highlighted concerning statistics, where out of 169 SDG targets, only 13% are on track, while 18% are not on track at all. This underlines the challenge of achieving these targets by 2030, and even extending the timeline to 2032 seems uncertain. Ambassador Puri pointed out that critical Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as poverty alleviation (SDG 1) and climate action (SDG 13), are off track. He stressed that while humanity is progressing in many areas, existential challenges like climate change require collective action. He noted that 43% of emissions need to be reduced by 2030, but current nationally determined contributions (NDCs) will only achieve a 2% reduction. He argued for the decoupling of growth from emissions to benefit both global and national economies.

Ambassador Puri stated that focusing solely on climate targets could put 84 million people at risk of hunger, underscoring the need for synergistic action. He pointed out that meeting 70% of SDG targets by 2030 requires adaptation, particularly in urban areas and vulnerable countries. However, only 23 of 173 NDCs explicitly mention SDGs. He concluded by advocating for simultaneous development and climate efforts to bridge investment gaps and yield significant co-benefits. This approach could provide \$4 in co-benefits for every \$1 invested. Ambassador Puri then introduced a presentation by TERI to highlight the importance of synergy and discuss ways to advance both human development and climate goals. He then went on to moderate the discussions.

Dr Shailly Kedia and Ms Palak Khanna, The Energy and Resources Institute

TERI gave a framing presentation and set the tone for the discussion. In the presentation it was brought into notice that of the 169 SDG targets, only 13% are on track while 18% of the targets are not even tracked. Evidence links climate action to 80% of 2030 Agenda targets, providing opportunities for impactful policies. Meeting nearly 70% of SDG targets by 2030 requires adaptation measures in urban areas and vulnerable countries and only 23 out of 173 NDCs explicitly reference the SDGs. Moreover, aligning climate and SDG efforts could boost economic output by a staggering USD 43 trillion by 2070, but solely focusing on climate targets could put 84 million more people at risk of hunger by 2050. The presentation highlighted the importance of SDG-Climate Synergies and Multilateralism. It presented that the current approach to SDG-Climate synergies including the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and UNFCCC, that are climate action and SDGs synergies platform, the Global Report on Climate and SDG Synergies, Global Conference on Strengthening Synergies between the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, the engagement with HLPF processes and engagement with G20 and G7 processes are driven largely by experts and the UN system.

Through the presentation, TERI put forth recommendations involving multilateralism and SDG-Climate synergies. It emphasized buttressing UN and expert mandates with political mandates and talked about stronger political mandate for SDG-climate synergies at HLPF including review of SDG 13 at HLPF. TERI advocated for stronger mandate for SDG-climate synergies at COPs including review of SDG 13 at HLPF. It

is crucial to strengthen SDG and climate reporting processes. It recommended that NDCs include a section on SDG-synergies and stressed on strengthening the SDG 13 review process and make it annual along SDG 17. Talking about strengthening national processes, TERI discussed the capacity of national governments to identify SDG-climate synergies and trade-offs. More interactions are needed with the planning and environment departments, ideally coordinated by the Prime Minister or President's office. Over time, an insulation has set in between the multilateral process involving SDGs and climate change COPs. There is much to gain from examining synergies between SDGs and climate actions, there is also a need for enhanced institutional interactions between these two multilateral processes

Prof. Joyeeta Gupta, University of Amsterdam

Professor Joyeeta Gupta has been working in the field of climate change for nearly 35 years. Drawing from her experiences, Prof. Gupta highlights several key issues. She stated that there is a lack of synergies in climate action. She observed that experts often work in silos, focusing narrowly on their specific areas without a systematic approach to link, for instance, water and other issues to all 17 SDGs. This fragmented perspective is prevalent among experts at various forums, including the United Nations (UN), where different departments and ministries operate in isolation. Prof. Gupta then spoke about institutional coordination challenges, where she noted that effective coordination within the UN is hindered by the varied expertise of the negotiators. She further gave an example stating that those negotiating on climate change often lack the knowledge to address water or ocean issues which leads to disjointed efforts. Governments also influence these priorities, making comprehensive coordination difficult.

Prof. Gupta further discussed financial constraints. She said that the UN faces significant financial challenges, with many member states not paying their dues, leading to austerity measures. In contrast, the World Economic Forum meetings show ample financial resources, but these funds are often directed towards "bankable" projects that promise high returns on investment, neglecting long-term, non-bankable projects essential for achieving SDGs. She expressed her concern over project verses programmatic approaches. There is a tendency to focus on symptomatic solutions, such as reducing emissions or shifting to renewables, without addressing deeper systemic issues. For instance, the production of batteries and solar panels has its own environmental impacts, which are often overlooked. Prof. Gupta urged for the need for better governance: She argues for stronger, more accountable governments to achieve the SDGs, rather than smaller ones. She emphasizes the need for a programmatic approach to development, which considers long-term sustainability over immediate economic growth.

Talking about development paradigm shift, Prof. Gupta called for a re-evaluation of development goals, questioning whether the right to development should now be seen as the right to sustainable development. This shift is crucial for balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability and social well-being. She then deliberated on technology transfer issues. She said, despite decades of effort, technology transfer to the Global South has often resulted in dumping rather than genuine leapfrogging. Mechanisms like the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) have not effectively facilitated technology transfer to developing countries. In summary, Prof. Gupta's intervention underscored the need for integrated, long-term approaches to climate action and development, emphasizing the importance of systemic change, better coordination, and sustainable financing to achieve global goals.

Dr Archana Negi, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Dr Archana Negi provided a comprehensive analysis of the intersection between climate actions and SDGs, delving into key aspects such as the UN's perspective on synergy, emerging trade-offs, examples of co-benefits, and the implications for multilateralism. In discussing the UN's stance on synergy, Dr Negi emphasized the growing recognition of the interconnectedness between climate action and SDGs. She cited statements from the UN Secretary-General and collaborative efforts between United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and UNFCCC to explore synergistic approaches. These initiatives aim to leverage integrated action to address shared challenges effectively. Highlighting the commonalities between climate action and SDGs, Dr Negi underscored their significance as global objectives attracting

substantial investment and effort. However, she also acknowledged the looming threats to both sets of goals, with many targets facing stagnation or regression. Dr Negi stressed that achieving the SDGs hinges on robust climate action, as inadequate policies can impede progress toward development targets.

Drawing from her research on climate litigation, Dr Negi presented compelling cases illustrating the trade-offs inherent in climate action. The first case, from the European Court of Human Rights, centered on a challenge to Swiss authorities over insufficient climate policies affecting public health. The court's ruling highlighted the intersection between climate action and fundamental human rights. In contrast, the second case, from India's Supreme Court, focused on biodiversity protection versus the transition to cleaner energy. Dr Negi explained how efforts to mitigate climate change through renewable energy infrastructure clashed with wildlife conservation efforts, underscoring the complex trade-offs involved.

Dr Negi also touched on the potential co-benefits of climate action, noting that integrated approaches could yield positive outcomes across multiple SDGs. She emphasized the need to identify high-synergy areas to maximize the impact of investments and political efforts, thereby advancing progress toward both climate and development goals. She emphasized the importance of better coordination between the UNFCCC and HLPF frameworks to enhance synergy. She called for integrated planning and reporting at the national level to effectively address the interconnected challenges of climate change and sustainable development. Through collaborative efforts and strategic interventions, Dr Negi believes that synergistic approaches can unlock new opportunities for global progress.

Dr Kusum Lata, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Dr Kusum Lata, drawing from her extensive 15-year tenure within the UN system, offered a nuanced reflection on its functioning, acknowledging both its strengths and areas for improvement. While she recognized the UN's remarkable convening power as a platform for global collaboration, she candidly admitted that it falls short of being the perfect system. However, she maintained that despite its imperfections, the UN system presents significant opportunities for addressing global challenges. In her discourse, Dr Lata particularly emphasized the need for increased synergy, especially concerning the relationship between climate change and the SDGs. Having worked closely with climate change initiatives, she underscored the robust mechanisms within the UN framework, such as legally binding agreements and monitoring processes, that have proven effective in driving progress. She highlighted intricate linkages of climate change with various SDGs, making it a pivotal focal point for global action.

Moreover, Dr Lata discussed ongoing initiatives aimed at understanding and enhancing the synergy between climate action and the SDGs. She mentioned the efforts of expert groups and reports dedicated to exploring these synergies, offering insights into how climate actions contribute to SDG achievement and identifying barriers that need addressing. Despite the bureaucratic challenges inherent in the UN system, she remains optimistic about the potential for collaboration and progress. She also raised critical issues regarding finances and coherence between development priorities, funding mechanisms, and NDC targets. She stressed the importance of aligning financial resources with development objectives to ensure effective implementation and avoid discrepancies between stated goals and actual outcomes.

Additionally, Dr Lata advocated for capacity-building efforts to improve data availability and accuracy, particularly in developing countries. She emphasized the significance of reliable data for evidence-based policymaking and underscored the role of the UN in supporting capacity enhancement initiatives. Her discourse offered a comprehensive assessment of the UN system's strengths, challenges, and opportunities for fostering greater synergy and collaboration towards achieving the SDGs and addressing climate change.

Ms Nobue Amanuma, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)

Ms Nobue Amanuma, a representative of the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), situated in Japan, provided an insightful perspective on the imperative need to foster synergy between climate action and the SDGs. Drawing from IGES's extensive research legacy, dating back to the 1990s, Ms Amanuma

underscored the organization's early focus on identifying co-benefits in climate mitigation, pollution control, and health—a testament to IGES's long-standing commitment to advancing synergy in environmental policy.

Highlighting the urgency of the matter, Ms Amanuma emphasized the inherent challenge of achieving both climate and SDG targets within constrained timelines and resources. Despite

Furthermore, Ms Amanuma proposed streamlining reporting processes between the Paris Agreement and SDGs to alleviate the reporting burden on countries. She seized upon ongoing negotiations, such as those surrounding a legally binding plastic treaty, as opportune moments to influence reporting frameworks. Evidence pointing to significant synergy between these goals, she argued that the underexplored nature of this relationship, in parts, is attributed to the limitations within the current UN system. She advocated for a paradigm shift in UN reform, emphasizing the necessity for member states to champion more effective support mechanisms for promoting synergistic efforts at the national level. She stressed the importance of context-specific actions, citing Japan's proactive sponsorship of a resolution on synergy at the UN Environment Assembly as a noteworthy example of governmental initiatives aimed at driving synergistic action, urging proactive engagement to ensure alignment with NDCs, voluntary national reviews (VNRs), and other sustainability initiatives. Ms Amanuma emphasized the indispensable role of collaboration and scientific insight in solidifying the groundwork for UN reform and advancing synergistic efforts between climate action and SDGs. Her remarks underscored the urgency of the task at hand while providing a roadmap for stakeholders to navigate toward a more integrated and sustainable future.

Dr Himangana Gupta, United Nations University

Dr Himangana Gupta discussed the complex trade-offs between sustainable development and climate change. She emphasized that developing countries, such as Bangladesh and Myanmar, face a dilemma, that is, achieving climate goals often means halting development. Dr Gupta highlighted the overshadowing nature of climate issues over other development goals. She mentioned that her students often feel that achieving climate goals implies stalling development. She also noted that the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent crises have exacerbated these challenges, emphasizing the urgent need for a systems approach. Addressing UN reforms, she shared the mission of the United Nations University, which focuses on collaborative research and education to address global concerns related to human survival, development, and welfare.

Dr Gupta stressed that indigenous peoples view climate, SDGs, biodiversity, and other issues as interconnected, reflecting a holistic perspective often gets overlooked due to capitalist ideologies. She discussed the historical context, noting that sustainable development and biodiversity have often received less attention compared to climate change, which gained more political traction. She highlighted the importance of separate forums for SDGs and climate change, as merging them might hamper SDGs. She also emphasized the need for quantitative indicators to measure SDG impacts at the local level, pointing out that many climate projects lack these indicators. Speaking about the global goal on adaptation Dr Gupta emphasized its linkage to sustainable development goals but it stressed that it must be viewed locally and be achieved at the local level.

Dr Gupta mentioned the joint liaison group between UNFCCC, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) as an example of efforts to find synergies between climate, biodiversity, and desertification issues. However, she noted that the lack of synergy at the national level poses significant challenges. She further discussed the gender action plan within UNFCCC, which focuses on women's participation but does not mandate gender-inclusive policies in NDCs. Dr Gupta argued that real equality requires integrating gender inclusiveness into national policies, not just participation in the international frameworks.

Mr Christopher Garroway, UN India

Mr Christopher Garroway, having dedicated substantial time collaborating with India's G20 presidency on Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) reforms, shared insights into the forthcoming Summit of the Future at

the General Assembly. As someone deeply involved in UN coordination, Mr Garroway emphasized the imperative of breaking down silos among UN agencies, especially given the integrated nature of the SDGs. Reflecting on the multifaceted challenges facing the global community, he underscored the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises on critical issues like hunger, poverty, and inequality. These crises served as a stark wake-up call, revealing the inadequacies of existing multilateral mechanisms and the urgent need for reform.

Mr Garroway highlighted the pressing need for multilateral reform in financing for SDGs and climate action. Despite initiatives such as the debt suspension initiative and special drawing rights (SDR) issuance, he expressed concerns about the widening gap between ambitious goals and the resources required to achieve them. While acknowledging some progress, Mr Garroway stressed the necessity for more significant strides in mobilizing resources and implementing systemic changes.

Looking forward to the forthcoming pact of the future, Mr Garroway outlined its objective to recognize synergies across sustainable development, peace, digital transformation, and multilateralism. However, he cautioned against prioritizing emergency response over long-term systemic transformations. Mr Garroway urged a focus on addressing root causes rather than merely applying temporary fixes, emphasizing the importance of collective action and sustained investment in transformative initiatives.

Mr Garroway's insights underscored the critical importance of coordinated multilateral efforts in addressing global challenges. His remarks highlight the need for ambitious reforms and sustained investment to achieve meaningful and lasting change. As the world navigates complex challenges, he reminded of the imperative of collective action and solidarity in building a more sustainable and equitable future.
