COP31 Event | RCF Pavilion

Sustainable Development and Climate Action in Agenda Beyond 2030

Concept Note | Agenda | Speaker Profiles

CONCEPT

Venue: Regional Climate Foundations (RCFs) Pavilion, Blue Zone, COP31, Antalya

Date: 16th November 2026 (Monday)

Time: 3:00 to 4:00 pm

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement in 2015 marked milestones in global multilateral cooperation. However, progress remains significantly off track. The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2026 indicates that only 12 per cent of SDG targets are on track or have been met, while the UNEP Emissions Gap Report 2025 projects global warming of 2.3°C–2.5°C by 2100 under full implementation of climate pledges. Widening inequalities, geopolitical tensions and financing constraints further complicate implementation, particularly for developing countries. The interlinkages between climate action and sustainable development highlight the need to strengthen synergies while managing trade-offs. As 2030 approaches, attention is turning towards accelerating existing commitments and shaping a future sustainable development agenda, including its priorities, targets, timelines and institutional arrangements. The 2027 SDG Summit is expected to advance these discussions. This session will deliberate on a sustainable development framework beyond 2030, emphasising SDG–climate synergies, multilateral cooperation and the priorities of the Global South.

The session aims to reflect on SDG and climate implementation and explore how a future framework can advance equitable and inclusive sustainable development while addressing climate challenges. It will contribute to the post-2030 discourse through the following questions:

1. What should be the core priorities of a sustainable development framework beyond 2030, particularly in carrying forward the unfinished SDG agenda and strengthening synergies with climate action?

2. How can a future sustainable development framework address gaps in financing, technology access, data, accountability and implementation, particularly for developing countries?

3. What multilateral reforms and institutional arrangements are needed to strengthen global cooperation, coherence and representation of the Global South in advancing sustainable development and climate action beyond 2030?

The session will be structured as a panel discussion followed by an interactive question-and-answer segment.

The flow will be as follows:

- Welcome and context-setting by moderator (2 mins)
- Launch of publication and group photo (3 mins)
- Segment 1: Global perspectives (4 minutes each)
- Segment 2: Perspectives from South Asia (4 minutes each)
- Audience Q&A | Key takeaways

AGENDA

Welcome and Context Setting - 2 minutes
Dr Shailly Kedia, Senior Fellow and Director, TERI (moderator)

Publication Launch and Group Photograph - 3 minutes
Launch of the TERI publication on sustainable development indicator frameworks and implications for agenda beyond 2030, followed by a group photograph.

Segment 1: Global Perspectives
4 minutes for each speaker

- **Mr Ovais Sarmad**, Former Deputy Executive Secretary, UNFCCC; Vice Chair, GHG Protocol Steering Committee
- **Prof. Phoebe Koundouri**, Co-Chair, United Nations Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR); Chair, UN SDSN Global Climate Hub, Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB) and University of Cambridge
- **Ms Annika Markovic**, Engagement and Impact Director, Stockholm Environment Institute
- **Ms Nadja Emmanuel**, Programme Director and Head of the GIZ Climate Diplomacy Action Programme, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
- **Ms Bahareh Seyedi**, Inter-regional Advisor, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) (tbc)

Segment 2: Perspectives from South Asia
4 minutes for each speaker

- **Mr Shubhashis Dey**, Founder and Council Member, Global South Sustainability Foundation (GSSF)
- **Dr Debajit Palit**, Centre Head, Centre for Climate Change and Energy Transition, CRF
- **Dr Ipsita Kumar**, Economist, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS)
- **Mr Abhishek Yadav**, Deputy Director (South Asia Office), Climate Analytics

Audience Q&A and Key Takeaways
Moderated by Dr Shailly Kedia, Senior Fellow and Director, TERI.

SPEAKER PROFILES



Mr Ovais Sarmad

Former Deputy Executive Secretary, UNFCCC; Vice Chair, GHG Protocol Steering Committee

Mr Ovais Sarmad is Vice Chair of the Greenhouse Gas Protocol Steering Committee and former Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). His experience spans climate governance, multilateral cooperation, sustainable development and organisational leadership. During his tenure at the UNFCCC from 2017 to 2023, covering COP23 to COP27, he managed secretariat operations and advised successive Executive Secretaries on strategic planning and organisational development. He contributed to international discussions on climate change and multilateralism, engaging with public policy discourse and the institutional challenges of advancing collective action. His current work focuses on supporting initiatives that accelerate sustainable development, strengthening public policy and empowering young people through education. He also advises and mentors individuals and organisations on climate change, diplomacy, geopolitical issues and institutional change. Mr Sarmad is a Chartered Management Accountant and Chartered Global Management Accountant, with a Bachelor of Commerce degree from Osmania University, Hyderabad, and extensive international experience.



Prof. Phoebe Koundouri

Co-Chair, United Nations Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR); Chair, UN SDSN Global Climate Hub, Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB) and University of Cambridge

Professor Dr. Phoebe Koundouri is a mathematical economist pioneering systems-based approaches to sustainable development and exploring the interconnected dynamics of Nature, Society, and the Economy. With three decades of research excellence, she ranks among the world's top 2% of scientists, has authored 21 books and more than 800 publications, and has led over 100 international research projects spanning 120 countries. She is Professor at the Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB) and Visiting Professor at the University of Cambridge, where she earned her MPhil and PhD. Her distinguished academic career also includes appointments at the University of Cambridge, UCL, LSE, Univ. of Reading, and the Technical University of Denmark. In 2025, she was appointed by the UN Secretary-General as Co-Chair of the 2027 Global Sustainable Development Report. She also serves as President of the World Council of Environmental and Resource Economists Associations, Chair of the SDSN Global Climate Hub, and Founder of the AE4RIA Research Centres. A Fellow of multiple scientific academies and a member of the Nominating Committee for the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, Professor Koundouri has received a European Research Council (ERC) Synergy Grant and numerous distinctions, including Scientific Excellence awards from the Academies of Athens and Cyprus. Her distinctive contribution lies in translating scientific excellence into systemic, actionable change at a global scale. Through interdisciplinary collaboration, stakeholder co-design, and the development of implementable and financeable transformation pathways, she advances integrated solutions that connect scientific innovation, public policy, and investment to accelerate the transition towards a sustainable future.



Ms Annika Markovic

Engagement and Impact Director, Stockholm Environment Institute

Annika Markovic has joined SEI as Engagement and Impact Director in the Executive Team. This newly created position reflects an enhanced ambition to driving change through policy engagement. Annika Markovic will spearhead SEI:s strategic and high-level engagement with key policy processes at global, regional, and national levels, ensuring that our research shapes policy agendas and leads to impact on sustainable development. Annika Markovic brings more than 35 years of diplomatic and policy experience, having served as Sweden's Ambassador to Austria, the Netherlands, Brazil, and the Philippines. She has extensive and indepth knowledge of the international multilateral system and has served as Permanent Representative to the OECD, UNESCO, ICC, OPCW and to the international organizations in Vienna. She has also been the Environment Ambassador for the Swedish Ministry of the Environment and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and co-created and co-chaired the Climate and Clean Air Coalition.



Ms Nadja Emmanuel

Programme Director and Head of the GIZ Climate Diplomacy Action Programme, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Dr Nadja Emmanuel is Programme Director and Head of the Climate Diplomacy Action Programme at Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. The programme supports Germany's Federal Foreign Office in advancing international climate policy and strengthening cooperation with partner countries.



Ms Bahareh Seyedi

Inter-regional Advisor, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)

Ms. Bahareh Seyedi is Inter-regional Advisor, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). She was earlier climate change and energy advisor at the United Nations. She previously served as an Energy Policy Specialist at UNDP headquarters in New York and as an Energy and Environment Programme Officer with UNDP in Burkina Faso. Her professional experience also includes roles with Engineers Without Borders Canada and Cimmetry Systems. She holds a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from McGill University and a master's degree in Sustainable Development and Climate Change from De Montfort University, UK.



Mr Shubhashis Dey

Founder and Council Member, Global South Sustainability Foundation (GSSF)

Shubhashis Dey is a climate strategist and institutional builder with more than two decades of experience in climate change mitigation, adaptation, resilience, sustainable finance, and low-carbon development. He is Founding Partner of Solutions for Sustainable Living (SoSuL LLP) and Founder and Council Member of the DIFC-domiciled Global South Sustainability Foundation (GSSF), where he focuses on building credible institutions and delivery mechanisms for sustainable economic growth. Shubhashis has contributed to several major elements of India's climate transition, including the Net Zero pledge, India Cooling Action Plan, National Carbon Market, Taxonomy for Sustainable Activities, and Green Hydrogen Mission. He served on SEBI's ESG Advisory Committee and has advised NITI Aayog, the Department of Economic Affairs, Bureau of Energy Efficiency, Mitigation Action Facility and other national and international platforms. A Certified Energy Auditor and Manager, Canberra Fellow, and SABIT alumnus, he was recognised as Energy Innovator of the Year for Asia by the Association of Energy Engineers.



Dr Debajit Palit

Centre Head, Centre for Climate Change and Energy Transition, CRF

Dr. Debajit Palit heads the Centre for Climate Change & Energy Transition at Chintan Research Foundation, an independent, not-for-profit think tank based in New Delhi. He is a researcher, practitioner, author, editor, and trainer, with around 30 years of experience in renewable energy and related fields, including solar PV, biomass, clean energy access, microgrids, energy transitions, climate action, and the energy-livelihood-gender nexus. Dr. Palit has extensive national and international experience, having worked on projects across 17 countries in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. He is a prolific writer and has authored four books and around 150 research papers published in scholarly journals, conference proceedings, and books, among other publications. He has consistently been listed among the world's top 2% of scientists in the Stanford University rankings since its inception



Dr Ipsita Kumar

Economist, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS)

Dr. Ipsita Kumar is an economist and modeller working on the food, energy, water and land nexus and its impacts on policy and on the sustainable development agenda. She builds integrated economic and systems models that connect resource use, climate and policy. She is currently a Consultant (Economics) with Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), an autonomous research institute under the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. She has previously worked at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), the Columbia Water Centre, Columbia University, University of Maryland and TERI. She holds a PhD in Geographical Sciences from the University of Maryland, an MA in Climate and Society from Columbia University, and degrees in economics from TERI University and Delhi University.



Mr Abhishek Yadav

Deputy Director (South Asia Office), Climate Analytics

Abhishek is the Deputy Director of the South Asia Office in Kathmandu, Nepal and a Senior Climate and Energy Policy Analyst in the Implementation Strategies Team. He works on climate change action plans and finance strategies, especially Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Long-term low-emissions development strategies (LT-LEDS) and NDC implementation plans. He has over a decade of professional experience and a proven track record of supporting the development and implementation of climate plans aligned with the Paris Agreement's goals and securing finance and investments for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and climate vulnerability. He has served as a climate change negotiator on behalf of the Government of Nepal, an expert member of the government's NDC and implementation plan technical committees, and a member of government's Central Renewable Energy Fund investment committee. He works closely with multi-stakeholders and has expertise in international climate funds and financing instruments, mainstreaming climate action, and matching project pipelines to appropriate funding sources. His research interests include climate change policies and plans, climate finance strategies, GHG mitigation and climate hazard modelling, loss and damage strategies, economic assessments, and just energy transition. Prior to joining Climate Analytics, Abhishek worked at the NDC Partnership, the World Bank and renewable energy development companies. He holds a MSc in Economics and Policy of Energy and Environment from University College London and a BSc in Electrical Engineering from University of New Orleans. He is a Chevening Scholar alumnus.



Dr Shailly Kedia

Senior Fellow and Director, TERI (moderator)

Dr Shailly Kedia is a Senior Fellow and Director with the Centre for Sustainable Development Research at The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). She has been with TERI since 2009 and is a multidisciplinary professional with more than two decades of experience in programme development, policy research, outreach, and capacity building. At TERI, she has spearheaded the work on green budgeting, green public procurement, green finance, sustainable consumption and production, multilateralism, and international cooperation. She is a Board Member of World Sustainable Development Forum and serves on the Board of Directors of ESG Risk Assessments and Insights. In the past, Dr Kedia has worked with the Sustainable Development Network of the World Bank in Washington, DC; and with the Center for Climate Systems Research at Columbia University and NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York. Dr Kedia has a doctoral degree in International Organization from the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; Master of Business Administration (Finance) from University of Stirling, Scotland; and Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical Engineering) from the National Institute of Technology, Surat.