

Leading sustainability experts call for more efficient approach to deliver UN goals

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Dozens of global sustainability experts and stakeholders have called for urgent action to exploit the connections between goals designed to end poverty, hunger and environmental destruction to deliver significant savings off the final bill of securing global peace and prosperity.

The roster of experts and stakeholders, which includes the University of Sussex Professor Joseph Alcamo, Director of the Sussex Sustainability Research Programme (SSRP) and former Chief Scientist of UN Environment, are calling on governments to develop a more strategic and efficient approach as they begin adapting plans to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

They argue that a smarter approach which exploits the synergies among the goals would lead to significant reductions in the global community's bill, likely to run into the trillions of dollars, for creating a sustainable world by 2030.

Taking advantage of these positive connections among the goals would help poorer countries with limited resources to achieve the ambitious goals and avoid unintended and debilitating trade-offs.

Speaking ahead of a High-Level UN Political Forum event in New York, co-organised by the Ghanaian delegation and SSRP, on Wednesday 11 July 2018, Prof Alcamo said: "Efficiencies can be gained by exploiting the positive interconnections—the synergies—among the global goals, and minimising their trade-offs. Taking a more integrated approach to

the SDGs will save resources and could be an attractive option for governments looking to reduce the high costs of SDG implementation."

The SSRP has joined with more than forty distinguished international stakeholders and experts in calling for a major international initiative to identify which of the several thousand SDG interactions have the greatest positive impact and prioritise their implementation globally.

Prof Alcamo said: "Achievement of the SDGs remains within our grasp, but that will not always be the case; the time to act is now. That is why we have been working closely with key stakeholders and influencers around the world, such as the Ghanaian government, to open up this discussion on how these synergies among the goals can be harnessed in practical terms and how that can be done with immediate effect."

Today [Wednesday 11 July 2018], Prof Alcamo will be among experts presenting at the UN a joint statement agreed following a three-day summit organised by the University of Sussex, Wilton Park, and the British Council on how the SDGs can be met most effectively by profiting from their many overlaps.

The recommendations call for a more multi-level, cross-sectoral and long-term approach to SDG policies and a move away from current strategies which are too compartmentalised and too focused on individual goals and near-term payoffs.

Instead, the international experts are calling for finances to be focused on innovative strategies and infrastructure designed to achieve multiple SDGs; governments to integrate the SDGs into the heart of their budgets and policies; international platforms exchanging knowledge of SDG interactions to be established; and for a greater involvement of grassroots, traditional and indigenous knowledge.

The experts warn in their statement that failure to recognise these synergies could see long-term decisions being made now that would lock-in detrimental impacts for decades to come; for example achieving energy goals by increasing coal-fired power stations to the severe detriment of climate goals.

The experts will also call for an authoritative review into the potential economic costs of failing to take action towards the [sustainable development goals](#) and for a dramatic change in how the SDGs are promoted to the private sector, urging them to be portrayed as investment opportunities rather than an unresolved funding gap.

Prof Alcamo said: "This is no time for taking small steps towards these momentous global goals. Bigger thinking is needed in this era of rising national self-interest. We need to get out of our boxes and grasp that the global goals are all interconnected, both across countries and across sectors. More, not less, strategic collaboration is needed between governments, across government departments, among different business sectors and different groups in civil society. We cannot go it alone."

Case study—how linkages among the SDGs can be harnessed positively and practically

Traditional cookstoves produce substantial amounts of smoke and are a major cause of indoor air pollution and a significant health threat particularly to women and children in poor countries.

Various organisations, including the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, are working at the community level in several low and middle income countries to encourage households to replace traditional cookstoves with cleaner and/or more efficient types.

A growing body of evidence suggests that doing this is an effective way of achieving several goals at the same time because curtailing indoor smoke meets the health [goal](#).

But by replacing traditional cookstoves with cleaner models which emit fewer black carbon particles which make a significant contribution to global warming, the move also helps achieve the climate goal.

Additionally cookstoves that burn fuel more efficiently reduce the amount of biomass harvested from surrounding woodlands which works towards achieving the land conservation goal.

Finally, the improved efficiency of the cook stoves addresses the efficiency target of the energy goal.

More information: sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2018

Provided by University of Sussex

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