

UN & Australia Sustainable Partnerships Forum Communique

The United Nations and Australia: Sustainable Partnerships Forum (Forum) recognised that the momentum for sustainable development is building. We see action and partnerships working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across communities, research organisations, business, and all levels of government in Australia and internationally.

Speakers and participants alike called on leaders across the community, academia, business and government to reinvigorate governance arrangements, policies and programs and set targets to enable us to better implement and measure the SDGs within Australia, as well as in our international work.

The Forum was convened by the United Nations Association of Australia. The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs joined over 300 representatives from the Australian public, private and community sectors.

Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Elder Tony Garvey welcomed Forum participants to Country and shared the story of [Bunjil](#), the eagle who represents spiritual life and is the creator of people.

Mario D'Elia, National President of UNAA welcomed speakers and participants to the Forum saying

'Our challenges in 2021 are many and complex. By working together, we join a groundswell of community, business and government leading change through cooperation.'

In conversation with Lucy Stronach, Australian Youth Representative to the UN 2021, UN Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed began the meeting with confidence and urgency

'I am absolutely confident that the UNSDGs provide a pathway to a safer, fairer and more sustainable world. They serve as a roadmap to guide COVID 19 responses, in the immediate response and the recovery... We need to reshape our systems, to work towards our needs and not our wants.'

The Deputy Secretary-General shared a special message for young people.

'The UN is opening up leadership opportunities for young people. Yielding the chair is not leaving my job, we need to be creative and welcoming, and invite young people to challenge and shape the environment and decisions.'

Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Marise Payne recognised that the COVID 19 pandemic has demanded leadership and partnership.

'This Forum provides an invaluable opportunity to reflect on how partnerships are pivotal in ensuring we continue to work towards a more just, fair and sustainable'

world. Our challenge going forward is to harness this energy (the leadership and partnership demanded by the COVID 19 pandemic) to meet the UNSDGs.

Donella Mills, Chair, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

highlighted the National Partnership Agreement for Closing the Gap.

'The Uluru Statement from the Heart is a call to action to walk together into the future - this is a big partnering project. We see this come to light in the Agreement for Closing the Gap which partners with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations at every level of government.'

UN Leaders opened the door for direct partnership in pursuit of the SDGs.

Simona Marinescu, UN Resident Coordinator, Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa, and Tokelau provided a practical partnership challenge.

'The Pacific is highly connected through submarine cables, but nations struggle with technical and digital capacity and welcome partnerships to accelerate solutions for small island states.'

Dr Angela Pratt, Director of the Office of the Regional Director, and Director of Communications and External Relations, WHO Western Pacific, emphasised that partnerships, and partnerships beyond the health sector are integral to how WHO works.

'Bring your ideas for partnerships to us, be clear on you purpose impact and values.'

Business leaders spoke to the critical role of business.

Andrew Petersen, CEO Busines Council for Sustainable Development Australia said

'Business know we cannot do it alone, we need partners for effective and transformational change. We dont have to know how, we do need to know that we need partners.'

Taking a national lens, ACOSS, Global Compact and The Whitlam Institute highlighted the critical importance of national government integrating the goals across policy and programs within Australia.

Cassandra Goldie CEO of Australian Council of Social Services said

'It is extremely important that the national government puts itself at the centre of the program of work that is needed and creates a culture of expectation around collaboration to achieve the SDGs. If we want a seat at the global table we need policy mechanisms from the government, integrated across every department.'

Kylie Porter, CEO Global Compact Australia said

'It can't be left to government alone, but government has a role to play to enable transformational change. We need to let go of the mantra of she'll be right, and move to a mantra of we need action, and we need action now.'

Partnership examples

The program included many examples of Australians leading partnerships to implement the SDGs. These examples are drawn from work to address Gender Equality, Climate and Planet, Poverty and Inequality and Justice and Human Rights.

Conversations included the UNAA Goodwill Ambassadors Tanya Hosch, General Manager, Inclusion and Social Policy, AFL, UNAA Goodwill Ambassador for Indigenous Issues, Erika Feller, UNAA Goodwill Ambassador for Refugees, and Grace Forrest, Founding Director, Walk Free, UNAA Goodwill Ambassador for Modern Slavery.

A strong theme across these partnership conversations at the Forum is that the problem is human. The solutions are known and the task is to build the relationships and will to remove barriers.

The upcoming Forum Report will include details of the partnerships shared at the Forum.

Future for partnerships

Speakers and participants alike shared information, inspiration and galvanised their determination and commitment to work together. **The Forum agreed a Partnership Manifesto and concluded with partnership pledges.**

Steve Gawler, Regional Director, ICLEI Oceania, observed

'We are seeing a groundswell of community expectations which is cascading up through to leadership roles.'

John Thwaites, Monash Sustainable Development Institute shared his insight into the progress of our work to date and explored next steps.

'At the headline level Australia is on track with 12 of 56 indicators we measured in 2020. On others we have a way to go. We can leverage Australia's effective response to the pandemic. This shows what we can achieve using data and evidence to inform decisions. Setting targets will galvanise action to meet the goals and build a more prosperous, greener and fairer nation.'

Role of UNAA

The United Nations Association of Australia is committed to supporting these partnerships. Our ongoing activities inform, inspire and engage Australians on the work, goals, and values of the United Nations to create a safer, fairer, more sustainable world.

Mario D'Elia, National President of UNAA encouraged participants to join.

'The power of the UNAA is bringing people together, respecting diversity and opening up a pathway to shared power and partnership. Through our Divisions across Australia, our Young Professionals Network, and our sister organisation UN Youth we run events which engage thousands of people on the work of the UN and the Sustainable Development Goals. We also convene networks of academics, UN Alumni and Parliamentary Friends. We welcome you to join us.'



ISSUED BY MARIO D'ELIA, National President, on behalf of the United Nations Association of Australia.

22 April 2021.

A report of proceedings will be published on the UNAA website.

Updates will be included in the UNAA Newsletter and socials.

<https://www.unaa.org.au> email admin@unaa.org.au

We thank our speakers, participants and partners and look forward to continued work together

Forum Partners

Monash University

University of Melbourne

PwC Australia

Session Partners

RMIT University

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