



2019 Sustainable Development Transformation Forum

22-24 October 2019, Incheon, Republic of Korea

Closing remarks

By Jean D'Aragon, Officer-in-Charge, UNOSD

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

I must admit that among all the SDTF editions we held so far, this one went very fast and was quite intense.

Perhaps it has to do with the fact that this year, we changed the title from *Sustainable Development Transition Forum* to *Sustainable Development Transformation Forum*. However, we were told yesterday by Dr. Eloundou that transformation takes time compared to change. I just can't imagine how fast and intensive those last 2-3 days would have been if we had called this forum *Sustainable Development Change Forum*.

Seriously, as some of you who participated in our previous SDTF may have noticed, our SDTF editions are normally structured around the HLPF and the Goals to go under deeper review during the HLPF to come 8 months later, this year's SDTF was particular —I even heard the term “experimental” a few times, actually. And I am delighted that we went that way this year, although, as you can imagine,

and as discussed during the last couple of days, experiments and innovation call us to move out of our comfort zone.

We were somehow blessed that such a good report as the GSDR came out a couple of weeks before our Forum. No doubt we were also very fortunate to have three of the authors of the GSDR with us, and that they were willing to go beyond delivering a simple discourse to present the report at a conventional launching event (I believe). They accepted to go through a *hard talk*-like interview, where they were challenged on their position by a very strong and seasoned journalist but also by the participants, and even throughout the whole forum. They also offered a critical view on their own work.

As we were told by the authors, the intention of the report was to sound the alarm and make a strong call to action while also providing us six entry points for transformations to leverage interlinkages and accelerate progress across the 17 SDGs.

For some of the participants, like Professor Louis Meuleman, the report didn't go far enough by "telling us the what" but "not telling us the how" (to do it).

In only two and half days, it was not possible for us to look at all of those six entry points for transformation. In some cases, we may not have even gone deep enough when we looked at the entry points of transformations throughout the different sessions. For instance, as it was raised by David yesterday, we could have gone further on with Session 3 on Food systems and nutrition, which somehow left some of us hungry (for more) — as we say in French, *certaines sont restés sur leur faim*.

Is it the urgent call for action of the GSDR telling us that *THE FUTURE IS NOW* or is it the greatly disrupting presentation *THINKING THE UNTINKABLE* delivered by Mr. Nik Gowing, where we were told that there is, sometimes, not even a box anymore from which we should be looking outside, that is making us more impatient in front of the too-slow pace of transformation towards the SDGs?

Whatever it is, I hope that you will all keep and even cultivate that level of impatience, and spread it all around you, to your colleagues in your institutions where, I hope, you will succeed to bring the systemic changes needed, perhaps starting by “teaching the silos to dance.”

While I understand the importance of making sure that ideas discussed here for the first two days or other (possibly innovative) ideas like “creative destruction” we heard about this morning, are applicable and/or adaptable to your context, I would like to, still, also encourage you to be bold, to be a maverick, to shine a light on innovative and workable solutions in your own sphere, in order to change the mindset and attitudes to speed up the transformations needed to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the SDGS in the next ten years or so that are remaining.

I sincerely hope that this Forum has been meaningful to you and that you got something out of it as much we learned from you as well. It is a rare privilege to gather such a dynamic and diverse group of participants and experts from governments, the UN system and academia from around the world.

I would like to thank you all for your active participation through your presentations, interventions and sharing of your ideas during the discussions.

I also thank our partners, ASEF, and our colleagues from UN DESA and other UN offices, and from other international agencies. (applause)

I want to thank UNOSD staff and interns for their tireless efforts for the preparation of this Forum, and, of course, I thank our facilitators, Dr. David O'Connor and Mr. Colm Foy, who were fabulous in driving us through this wonderfully challenging experience. (applause)

As participants in this Forum you have now become part of UNOSD's community of practice. For some of you, it is not the first SDTF, and it was a pleasure to see you coming back.

We look forward to keeping in touch with you. Please let us know about your future achievements in implementing the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs in your countries. We will be highly anticipating your active participation again in the future. I would like to reiterate that we count on you to convey the message that our Office is there to support your respective governments in regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. As a reminder, we simply need an official request from the relevant authorities in your country to initiate the process.

Finally, I wish you a great time during the field trip this afternoon!

And I wish you all a safe trip back home.

Thank you very much.