



SETTING THE STAGE – presenting a world of contrasts, paradoxes and opportunities

A presentation at the **2022 Sustainable Development
Transformation Forum, UNOSD, Incheon, South
Korea**

¹
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Jan-Gustav Strandenaes

Senior Adviser on Governance, Stakeholder Forum, the
Netherlands and Oslo, Norway



Who am I?

- A historian with a degree in development policies and environmental sciences
- Worked with the UN, environment, sustainable development and governance issues all his life
- Had key responsibilities for UN DSD and DESA with the 2002 Johannesburg Summit (WSSD) and Rio + 20 Summit (2012) and began with the UN environment in 1972 in Stockholm
- Contributed to developing the SDGs at the UN (2010 – 2018)
- Lectured at universities all over the world
- A practitioner and an optimist

The contrasts - On one side

- Poverty is growing
- Food shortages develop and hunger looms
- Environmental degradation is increasing
- Biodiversity is threatened
- Pollution is endemic
- Inequality is on the increase
- Human rights are threatened
- Economic stability is threatened
- Wars and conflagrations threaten world peace
- People and the planet's well being are in a precarious state
- Unknown diseases are lurking, pandemics may follow

The contrasts - On the other side

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- ➡ Development is producing more millionaires than ever before
- ➡ Our collective knowledge is unrivalled in history
- ➡ The financial and economic strength of the world has never been greater
- ➡ Technology has allowed us to do and solve things that for centuries have been a threat to humanity
- ➡ For every environmental problem, we know what to do
- ➡ We have the resources to eradicate poverty

Consider this -

- **WE HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE:** – more than 50 years of research and knowledge development on economic, social and environmental issues
- **WE HAVE THE TOOLS:** – we understand how the world is connected, and can organize any development according to sustainable development
- **WE HAVE THE MONEY:** – the cost is estimated to be between 5 and 7 trillion US dollars per year – ca 5-6 Per cent of the worlds economic Gross Product
- **THE QUESTION IS:** are we ready and willing to carry out the 2030 agenda based as it is on a broad-based all-out participation of all stakeholders?
- 5 ➤ **DO WE HAVE THE ANSWERS?**



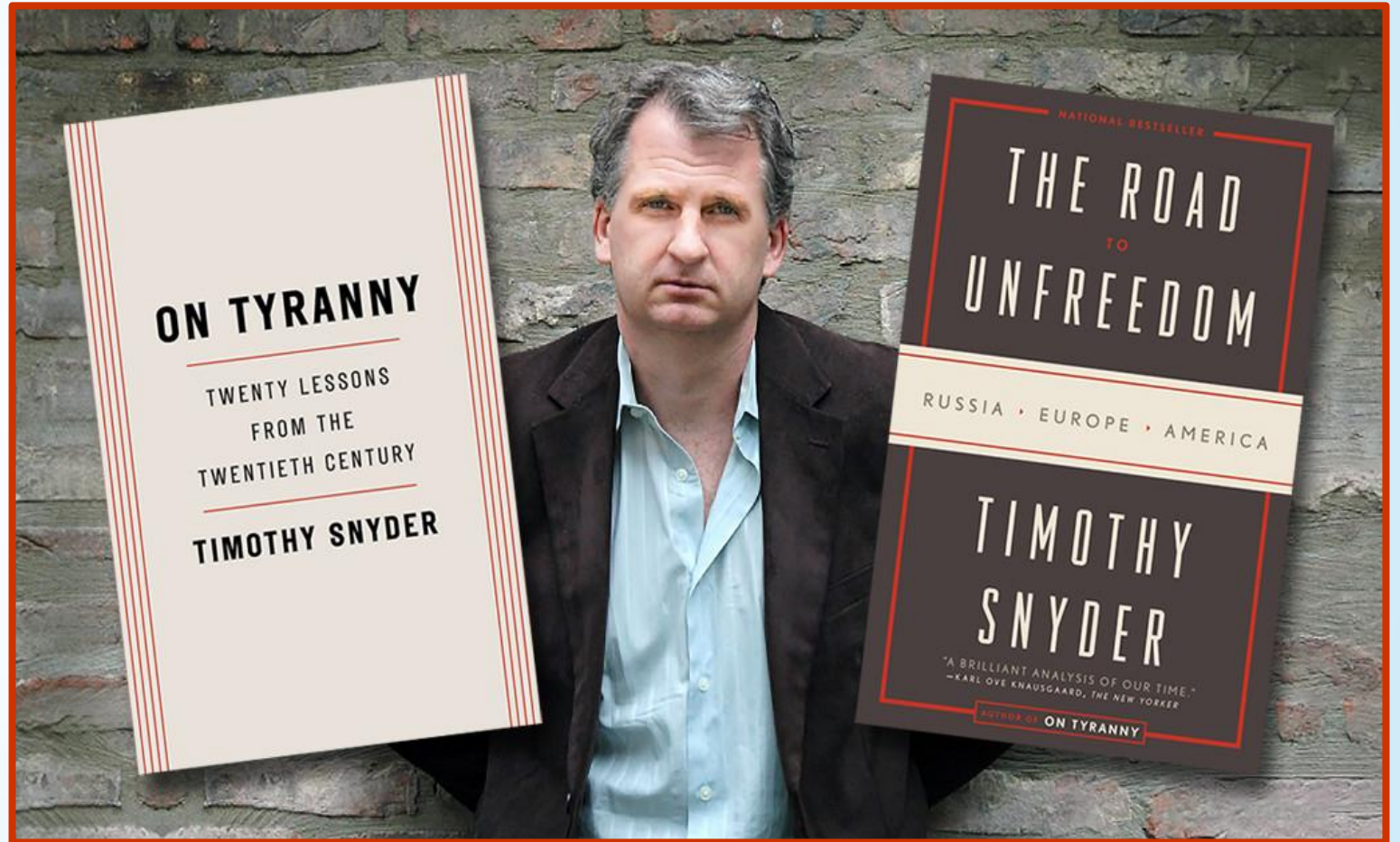
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A few observations



Timothy Snyder, historian at Yale, wrote:

➡ “History does not repeat, but it does instruct”





Institutional progress – also
a result of our willingness to
collaborate and solve
problems

IS OUR MIND-SET 9 1945	FIT FOR PURPOSE? 1970 1987 1992 2000	Our SD mind-set has a short past and a long future (I hope) 2012 2023 ...2030....2050....
Peace, Conflict, Cold War	The Development Paradigm A North South Dichotomy	Sustainable Development on its own, resulting in ...
Environment is weak Sustainable development at zero	1987- Our Common Future Sustainable Development on the political agenda	The HLPF in 2013 2015 - the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs
	1972 –UNEP 1992 – UNCED, Agenda 21 2000 and 2001 – the Millennium Declaration the MDGs	2014 – UN Environment Assembly, UNEA Sustainability Summits in 2019 and 2023
Universal approach in the world at the time is restricted	North South development paradigms dominate	With Sustainable Development comes universality, but is this a systemic change?
INSTITUTIONS ...	REFLECT ...	OUR MIND-SETS

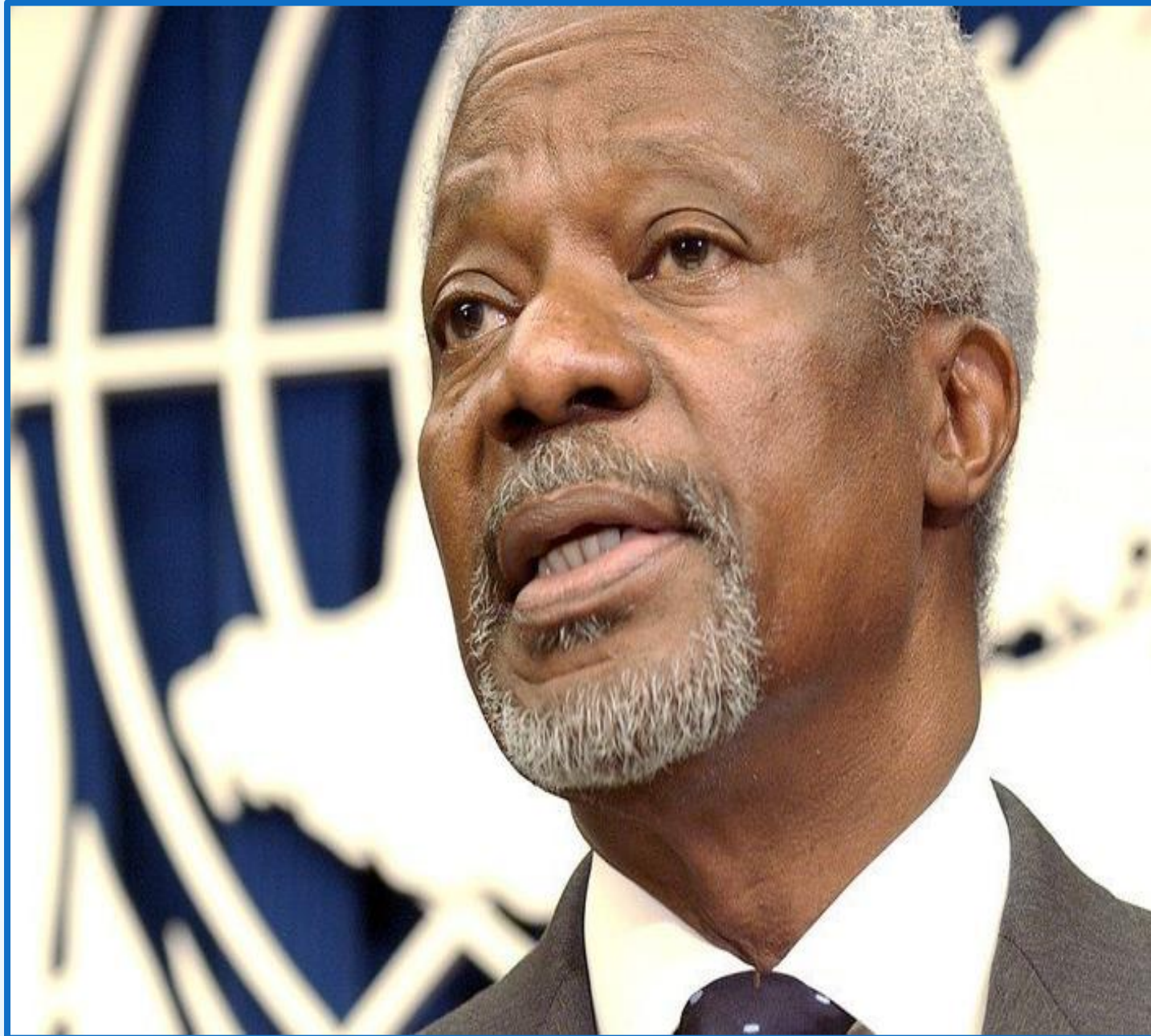
On the 16th of June 1972, in Stockholm, Sweden

the “United Nations Conference on the Human Environment,” closed and the establishment of UNEP was a fact



2001 – 2015
the Millennium Development
Goals – the MDGs

- ➔ Based on an initiative by the then UN Secretary General, the late Kofi Anan, the UN member states agree to adopt the 8 Millennium Development Goals, and the world agrees to implement this plan between 2001 and 2015



Agreeing to the Sustainable Development Goals, the SDGs, was called the biggest surprise coming out of the Rio+20 Conference in 2012, and in 2015 the 2030 Agenda was unanimously adopted



The Decade of Action for Sustainable Development 2020 – 2030

- ➡ The 193 UN member states decided unanimously at the UN Summit on Sustainable Development in 2019 to call this decade a Decade of Action and mandated the SG of the UN Antonio Guterres to act accordingly



UN Decade for Ecosystems Restoration, 2021-30

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- ▶ PREVENTING, HALTING AND REVERSING THE DEGRADATION OF ECOSYSTEMS WORLDWIDE.
- ▶ The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration is a global rallying cry to heal our planet. What will you restore?



Our common challenge is to be pro-active and act. But how?

Providing knowledge and understanding of knowledge underpinning all actions are prerequisites for being pro-active.



**What have we done
so far?
Actually – quite a lot**



Change: the Global 2030 SD Portfolio – expanding the knowledge, increasing complexity

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Agreed and operationalised:

The 17 SDGs with their 169 targets/2030 agenda

The 232 review indicators (2016)

Resolution 67/290 - HLPF

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda

The Paris Climate Agreement (December 2015)

The Sendai Outcome document, Disaster reduction

The Samoa Pathway (SIDS agreement)

Relevant work by UNDP, ECOSOC
Commissions, CBD, other UN institutions,
UN Specialised Agencies

To be followed towards 2030:

- World Data Forum, 2023/25/27
- Annual HLPF reviews, the VNRs
- The Reviews, national, regional, global
- SDG High Level meeting, 2023/27
- Indicator reviews 2024/28
- Annual Finance for Development Forums
- UNEP Geo-reports, GEO-7 2024/5
- The UN Environment Assembly, every 2 years,
- The Global Sustainable Development Reports
- UNGA resolutions on Sustainable Investment
- ECOSOC deliberations
- **And the Summit in 2023**

UN Environment Assembly, UNEA 5 in 2022 identifies the three interdependent planetary crises: “Climate change, Chemical and other Pollution and Biodiversity Loss.”

The programme of implementation is “Towards the Sustainable Development Goals”

14 resolutions – three important ones

- Nature based solutions for sustainable development
- Establish a scientific panel on Chemicals on par with IPCC and IPBES
- A legally binding agreement to phase out plastic pollution



Between now and the Summit

- ➡ UNFCCC, COP 27 in November (Egypt)
- ➡ CBD COP 15 in December (Canada)
- ➡ UN Water Conference, March 2023
- ➡ Mid Term Review of the Sendai Framework, May 2023
- ➡ HLPF in July, 2023
- ➡ SDG Summit in September 2023

We have come a long way – in a short period of time. But have we come far enough?





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Looking at UN Milestones and outcomes

Inspiring, influencing, solution orienting?

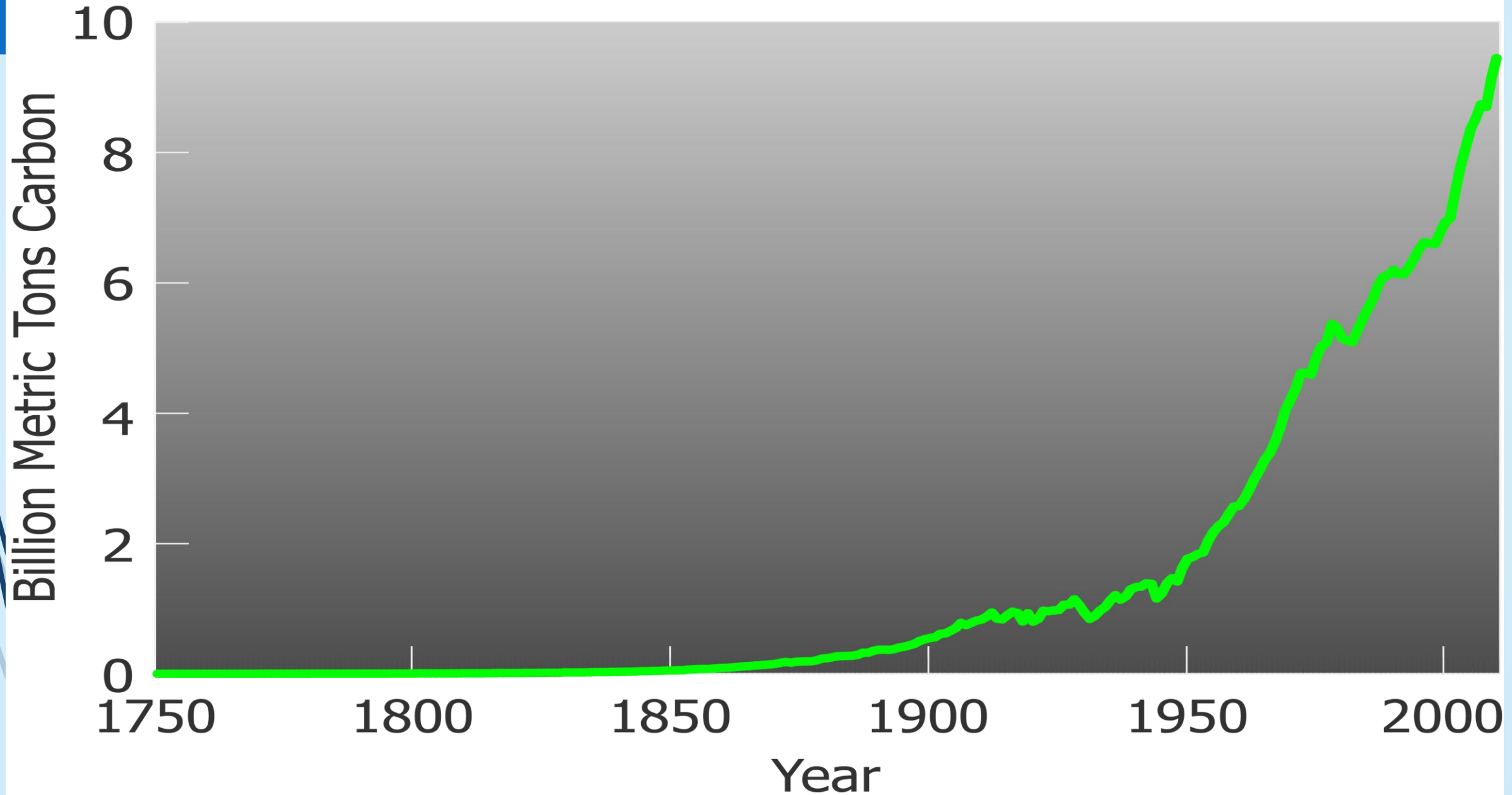
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Climate



Global Cumulative Fossil Fuel CO₂ Emissions

373 billion metric tons carbon released from 1751 to 2011



CLIMATE - highlights

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1970-1980	1988	1990	1992	1997	2009	2015	2021
UNEP and WMO begin a joint research programme on the atmosphere	UNEP and WMO founds the IPCC	The First IPCC Assessment Report	Rio and Agenda 21 and UNFCCC	Countries agree to the Kyoto protocol	Copenhagen, COP 9	The Paris Accord 2019 SD Summit , Focus - climate	Glasgow COP
		Background to UNFCCC	IPCC AR 2, 1995 Background to Kyoto	AR 3, 2001, impacts of climate change and adaptation	AR 4 – 2007, limit to 2 Degrees	AR 5 2014, science input into the Paris Accord	AR 6 in 2022 and a global stock-take

Extreme-
weather

Temperature
rising

Global youth
and popular
engagement

By the way -

- ➡ Did you know that land distribution and land use are now greater threats to biodiversity than climate change and global warming?



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The environment



ENVIRONMENT

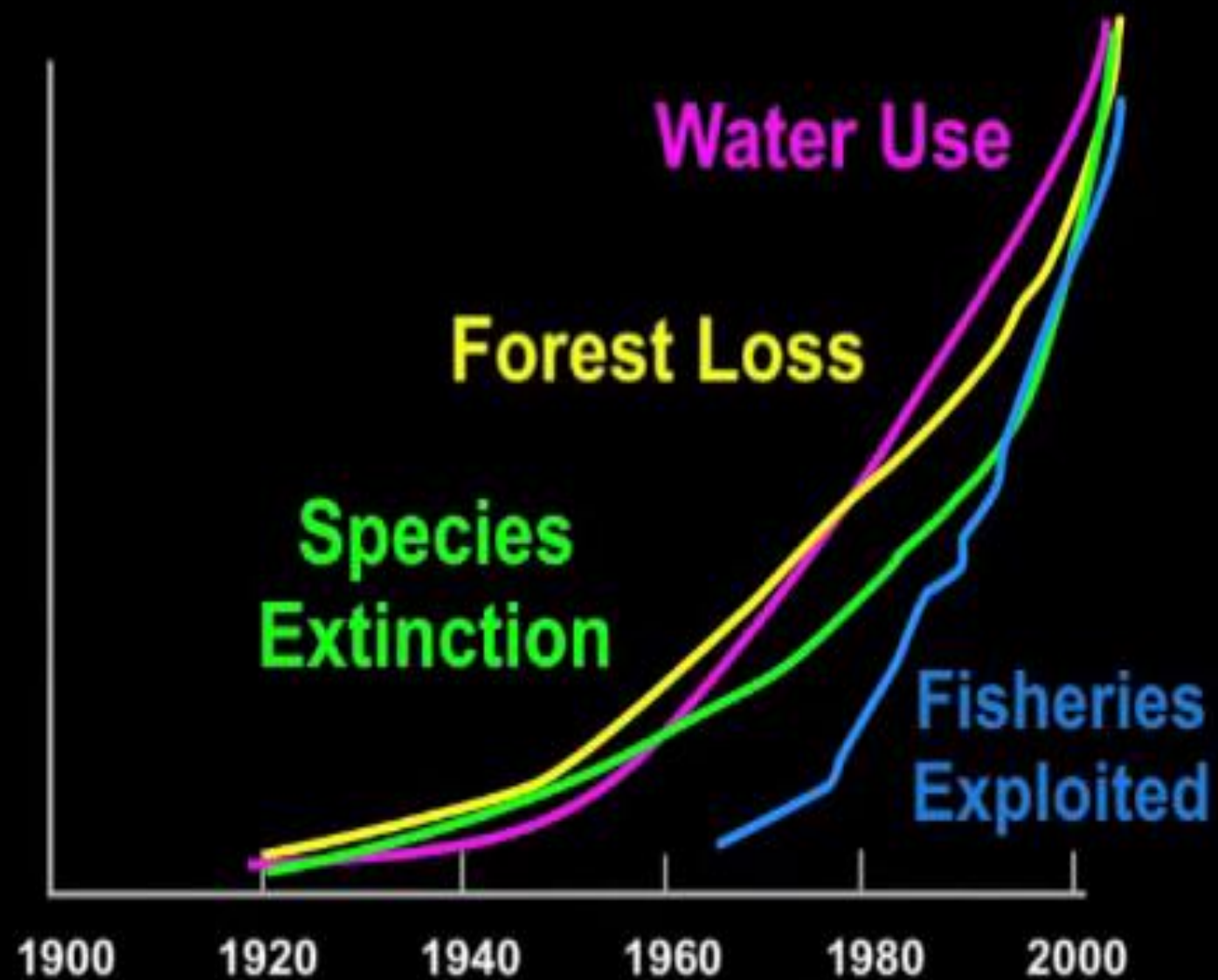
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1972	1982	1992	1997 -98	2000	2012	2013	2022
Stockholm, UNEP founded	The Nairobi Declaration	UNCED, UNCBD, UNFCCC UNCCD (1994)	Montevideo 1, Aarhus, environmental law	Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2001)	Rio+20 and strong UNEP IPBS established	UNEA 1 2019 – the loss of species report, The right to a clean environment	The Plastics Convention 2020-30, the Science we need for the Ocean we want

Civil society
allowed into
plenaries:
environmental
governance

Education, science
and research
Environmental
multilateralism

Environmental law,
Environmental
diplomacy



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THE REPORT THAT SHOOK THE WORLD ...

FOR A FEW DAYS

- Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

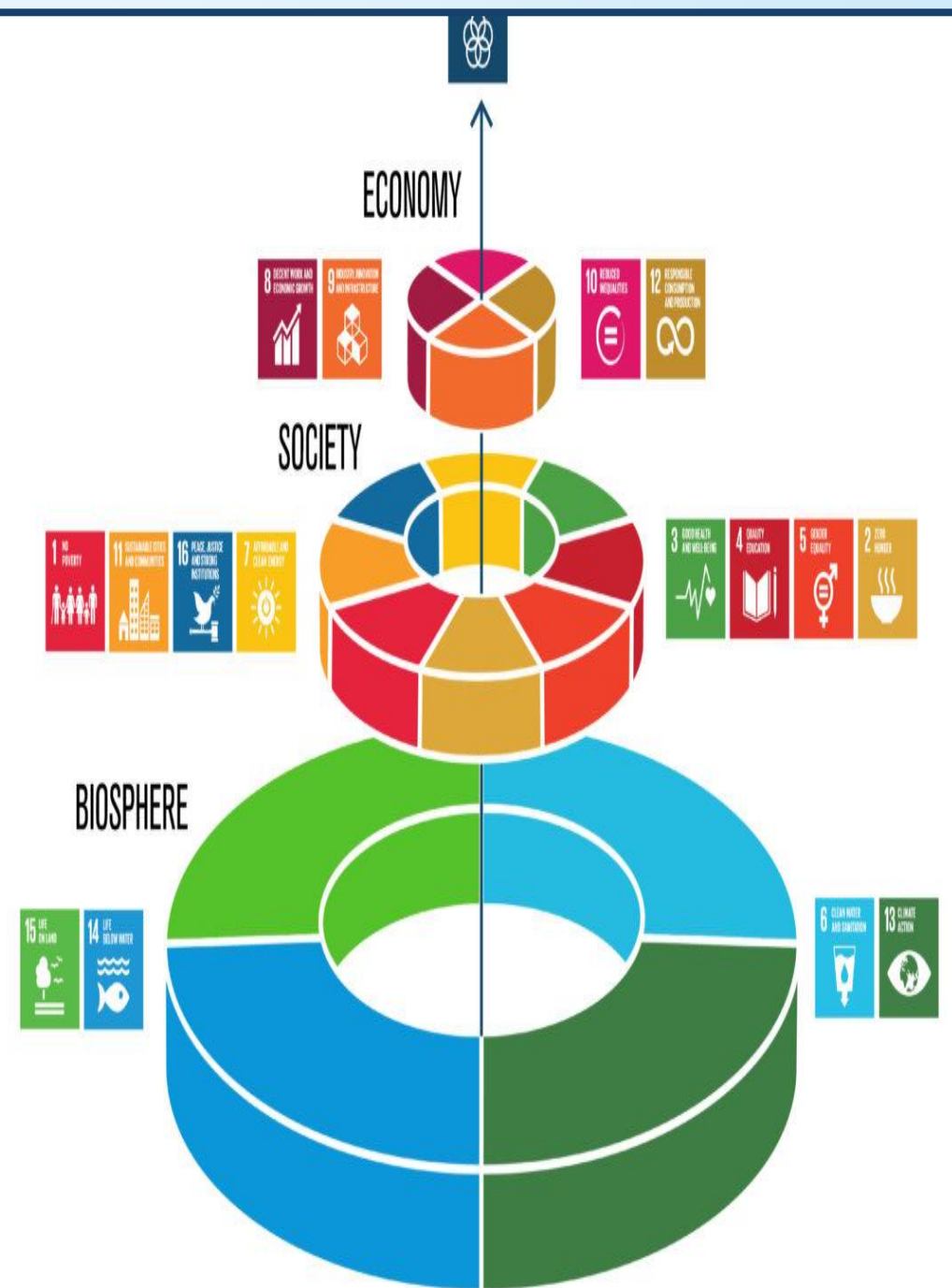
IPBES
GLOBAL
ASSESSMENT
SUMMARY FOR
POLICYMAKERS
(PDF)



**Professor Rockström,
University of Stockholm on
the SDGs:**

**“The lower level,
the biosphere, is
non-negotiable.”
Without nature,
nothing exists ...**

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Sustainable development



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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1980	1987	1992	2000	2002	2007	2012	2015
First SD report, IUCN, UNEP, FAO, World Conservation strategy	The Brundtland Commission	UNCED, Agenda 21, the 27 Rio Principles Commission for Sust Dev	The Millennium Declaration MDGs	WSSD – CSD+	In Larger Freedom After UN Summit in 2005 The planetary boundaries, 2009	Rio + 20 and the birth of the SDGs	The 2030 Agenda 2019 - GSDR

From a
slow
beginning

to

a dominant
paradigm?



The basic document is:

- ➡ **“Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”(A/Res/70.1)**
- ➡ **The 17 SDGs are all part of this document**
- ➡ **Adopted unanimously by 193 states in September 2015 at the UN Summit on Sustainable Development, UN Headquarters, New York**

“Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” consists of four parts:

**Preamble &
Declaration**

**17 Sustainable
Development
Goals (SDGs)**

**Means of
Implementation
& Global
Partnership**

**Follow-Up &
Review**

Sustainable development and basic values, conflicting choices

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THE triple bottom line of the economy:

- ➡ PEOPLE
- ➡ PLANET
- ➡ PROFIT

THE five Ps of the 2030 Agenda of sustainability

- ➡ PEOPLE
- ➡ PLANET
- ➡ PROSPERITY
- ➡ PEACE
- ➡ PARTNERSHIP

The technicalities are:

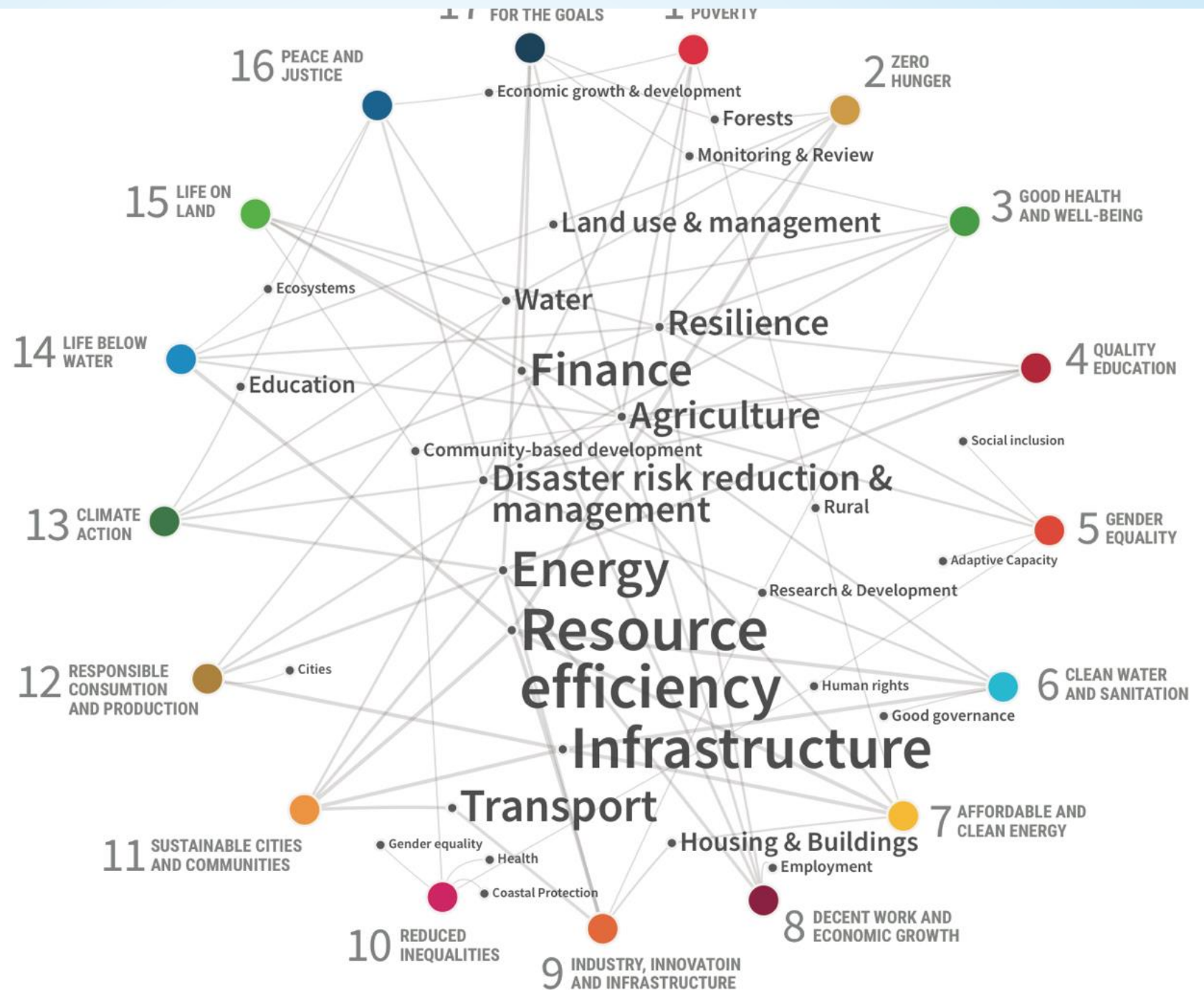
- 17 Sustainable Development Goals
- 169 targets
- 232 indicators

They SDGs and targets are:

- integrated, interlinked and indivisible;
 - people-centred and planet-sensitive;
 - universal — applying to all countries while recognizing different realities and capabilities.
- And now only **8** years to finalise this!

The inter-linked nature of the SDGs

Adapted from the Stockholm University, Centre for Resilience



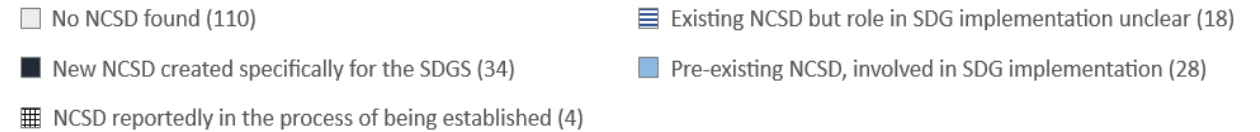
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Where are we
now?



Causing Change: States establish National Councils for Sustainable Development of the 2030 Agenda to coordinate national implementation

- The UN: 193 member states
- 46 National Councils for Sustainable Development have been in operation since 1992
- Of these 46, 28 had policies directly related to the 2030 Agenda-
- 34 new Councils have been established since 2015, 4 new ones are being developed
- Only 44% of all UN members have a coordination mechanism for the 2030 agenda
- 110 still have no national coordination of SD policy



Change:
“Sustainable
Development has
by 2018/2019
finally reached
political
legitimacy”

(the UN World Public
Services Reports, 2018&19)

➡ But there is still a tendency to develop strategies along traditional development thinking, - which leads to one of two things:

1 - Efforts are made to adapt development thinking to sustainable development, and tick the boxes for sustainability categories

2 - Or develop two strategies, one based on traditional development thinking and one on sustainability - the SDGs.

➡ In both cases sustainable development is given lower priority

The Global Sustainable Development Report, GSDR, 2019

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- The Future is Now: Science for Achieving Sustainable Development
 - by
- An Independent Group of 15 Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, “2019: The Future is Now” – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development, (United Nations, New York, 2019).

The four levers to induce necessary change within each of six transformational areas defined by the GSDR –
the Four levers

Governance

Economy and finance

Individual and collective action

Science and technology

- Human well-being and capabilities
- Sustainable and just economies
- Food systems and nutrition patterns

- Energy- decarbonization and universal access
- Urban and peri-urban development
- Global environmental commons

The EU Sustainable Finance Taxonomy regulation, July 2020

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- Basic principle is: do no harm,
 - a company may choose to focus on a select number of the SDGs,
- but is obliged to do no harm to all those SDGs with which it has not chosen to work, ie
- the company must understand all the 17SDGs including the 2030 Agenda.
- The EU is now working to integrate social dimensions in this taxonomy
- The social contract is being upgraded



European Commission

The Taxonomy Regulation establishes six environmental objectives

1. Climate change mitigation
2. Climate change adaptation
3. The sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources
4. The transition to a circular economy
5. Pollution prevention and control
6. The protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems

Economic development

Sustained growth

The elephant in the room

- 1972 - Stockholm accepts growth
- 1992 - UNCED accepts growth
- 2000 - MDG accepts growth
- 2002 – WSSD, no talk about the commons
- 2009 - no talk about the planetary boundaries
- 2012 - Rio+20 accepts growth
- **How great a challenge is growth?**



⁴⁶Transformative change



To accomplish change, we need

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- A new conceptual thinking
- A new institutional architecture
- Strong and active governance structures, proper accountability systems, transparency elements, participatory processes and new due diligence approaches
- A new economic systemic thinking, circular economy is just the beginning
- Effective, relevant and accountable research based on good governance, sustainable development and environmental responsibility

The 2030 Agenda
contains 9
dimensions for
transformative
change

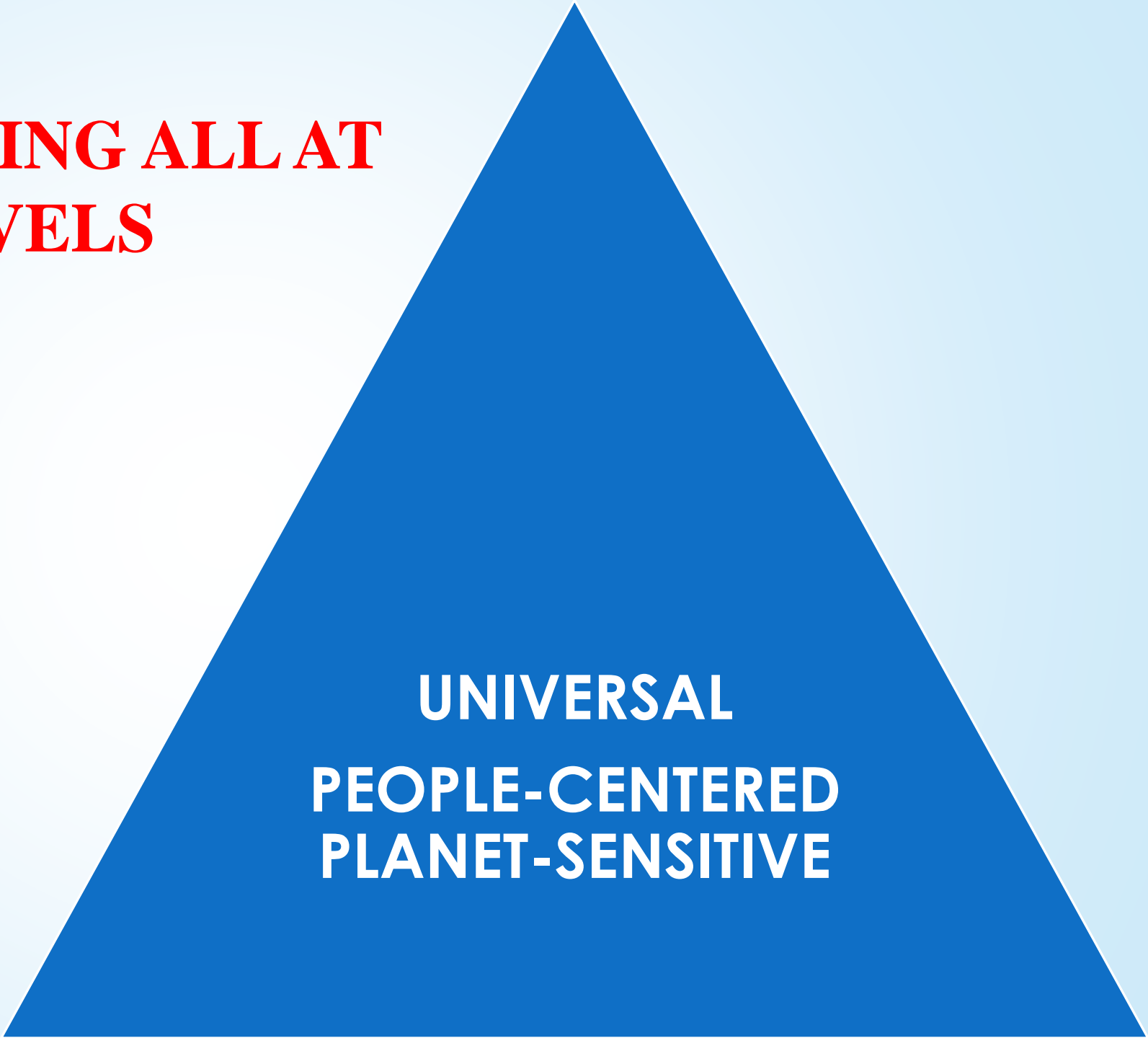


HOLISTIC



**INTEGRATED
INTERLINKED
INDIVISIBLE**

TARGETING ALL AT ALL LEVELS

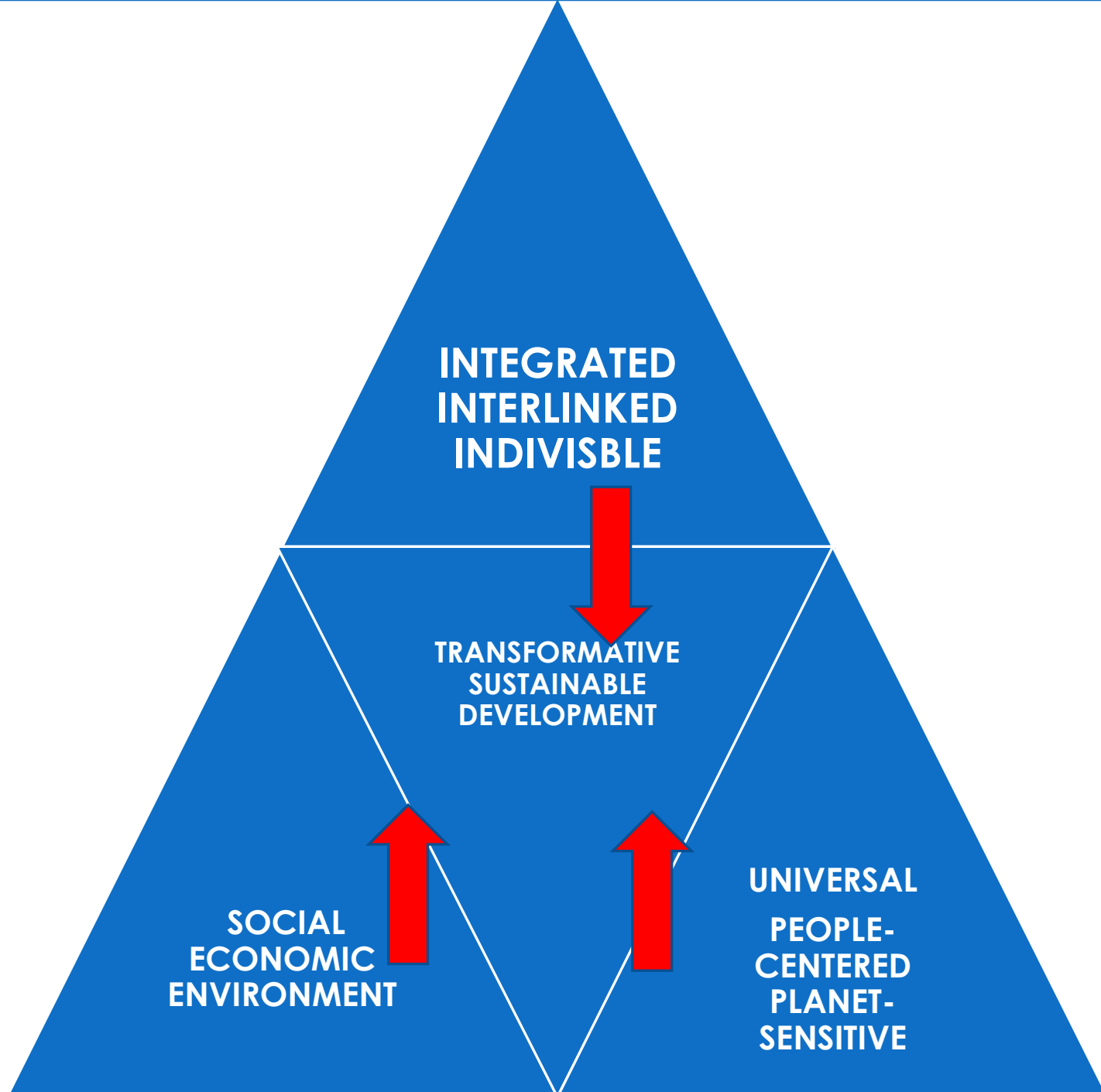


UNIVERSAL
PEOPLE-CENTERED
PLANET-SENSITIVE

THE THREE DIMENSIONS



**SOCIAL
ECONOMIC
ENVIRONMENT**



**INTEGRATED
INTERLINKED
INDIVISBLE**

**TRANSFORMATIVE
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

**SOCIAL
ECONOMIC
ENVIRONMENT**

**UNIVERSAL
PEOPLE-
CENTERED
PLANET-
SENSITIVE**

⁵³An epilogue





We work for the future

- We have changed the world in a wrong direction by several mistakes
- We can save it and make it better by intent
- As a historian I can say we have come a long way in a short period of time
- As an environmentalist, I say – we have not come far enough
- Let us move forward, we can learn, be and do better!



**“Optimism is the
fuel of heroes, the
enemy of despair
and the creator of
the future.”**





Thank you for listening to me

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes
Senior adviser on governance
and sustainability policies
Stakeholder Forum for a
Sustainable Future
jgstrandenaes@gmail.com