

## Side Event Report

### Building Knowledge Partnerships: Academia and UN System Knowledge Platforms for Advancing the SDGs

This meeting was moderated by Surichai Wun'gao, Chula Global Network (CGN) and Director, Rotary Peace Centre, Chulalongkorn University.

It was chaired by Lawrence Surendra, Chairman, The Sustainability Platform.

The overarching aim of this Side Event was to briefly identify certain aspects about the current state-of-affairs of knowledge partnerships between various actors in the region (including academia, think tanks, and supranational organisations) and recognise potential opportunities to promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Participants outlined the importance of knowledge partnerships from a variety of perspectives that touched upon both policy making and the implementation and achievement of the SDGs at a lower level. On a policy making level, the role of knowledge partnerships was appreciated both in terms of data collection and analysis, as well as the translation of SDGs into national policies and programmes. With regards to the latter, knowledge exchanges were viewed as facilitating the formulation of neutral and objective opinions that could help Member States to accurately identify their priorities and thus incorporate the SDGs into their specific national contexts.

During the session, knowledge partnerships were also recognised as effective tools to tackle the challenging future task of sensitising citizens to the SDGs. Participants noted the need for agents to synthesise and communicate knowledge related to sustainable development to the general population (particularly when that knowledge was of a scientific nature). Further along these lines, participants discussed specific examples related to the translation of large amounts of data into decision-making at the grassroots level. For example, participants discussed how knowledge partnerships in Tamil Nadu, India created an environment in which extensive meteorological data gathered by the Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System was utilised by members of the agricultural and health sectors for sustainable development purposes.

As indicated by the Side Event's title, the role of academic institutions in furthering the SDGs was given particular attention. Participants briefly discussed existing partnership formats that focus on the ways universities can work together to revise and harmonise their curriculum related to sustainability. Similarly, participants recognised the roles of academic institutions as knowledge hubs capable of helping individuals to develop the skills needed for the achievement of the SDGs. Business schools in particular were highlighted as playing an important role in the creation of leaders that are socially responsible, regionally conscious and who prioritise sustainability. The importance of learning institutions as places that prioritise learning objectives and long term perspectives over short term, target based approaches was also stressed. Furthermore, academia was recognised as having a great potential to contribute to data to make policy more informed and evidence-based, while facilitating the creation of visual data that is more understandable and thus more accessible to a greater number of people.

Other areas that were touched upon briefly but are worthy of note included the outlining of how knowledge networks have played an important role in the protection of human rights, specifically through the protection of migrant workers and the repatriation of trafficked persons.