

AAUN Africa Forum, 15-16 April 2024

Concept Note and Programme

Theme: Sustainable Development in Action – The 2030 Horizon and the Role of Higher Education

Concept Note

Almost eight years have passed since the international community agreed to take bold and transformative steps to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; a plan of action to secure the rights and well-being of everyone on a healthy, thriving planet. Currently, a year into the second half towards 2030, that promise is in jeopardy and a fundamental shift is needed – in commitment, solidarity, financing, and action – to put the world on a better path. While the links between higher education institutions, networks, and development are clear, the many opportunities the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer also come with their own constraints and challenges.

A strong trajectory of enquiry have been in action since the 1987 Brundtland Report; now integrated with the development agenda. The ambition of the 17 SDGs is to address multidimensional and interacting inequalities by enhancing people’s capabilities and ensuring that everyone has equal access to opportunity and choice, while at the same time protecting the environment and planet. Progress toward achieving the SDGs, however, has been unsatisfactory. At the halfway mark of the 2030 Agenda, there are several lessons to be learned. These are presented in numerous high-level documents, notably the 2022 Global SDG Report, and the 2022 UN Africa SDG Report.

At its core, the 2030 Agenda is aimed towards the 5Ps - *People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership* to contextualise and focus the development agenda. A particular focus on *Partnerships* is essential to enable synergy in attaining and escalating the impact of the other dimensions. The Partnership dimension centres the role of the AAUN as a collaboration facilitator, ensuring additionality of development work of its members, and beyond.

People

Only by achieving Goals 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 3 (Good health and Well-being), 4 (Quality Education) and 5 (Gender Equality) can humans fulfil their potential in dignity and equality in a safe and healthy environment.

Planet

In order to ensure the safety of the planet as well as the capacity to support the current and future generation, Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), as well as Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), Goal 13 (Climate Action), Goal 14 (Life Below Water) and Goal 15 (Life On Land) are dedicated to the well-being of the planet as well as other species that inhabit the planet.

Prosperity

If Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), Goal 10 (Reduce Inequalities), Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) can be achieved, a sustainable and prosperous world for all would be guaranteed.

Peace

Determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies (Goal 16) which are free from fear and violence, there are still opportunities for progress towards the 2030 Agenda with commensurate focus to provide justice and peace for all.

Partnership

In order to achieve an inclusive and sustainable global community, governments, corporations, universities as well as the citizens must work together towards Goal 17 (Partnerships) to improve the current state of the world we are living in.

Exacerbating the challenging progress towards the goals, are the series of interlinked global crises – the COVID-19 pandemic, conflict, the climate crisis, and a weak global economy. In addition, the two recent conflicts - Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestinian create immense uncertainty. Even before the events of the past three years, trust in public institutions had been declining, and changes in the world of work, globalisation, and technological breakthroughs – which raise aspirations, but also fears – brings additional challenge dimensions. There is a narrowing window of opportunity over the next six to seven years to redouble efforts to eliminate poverty and hunger, advance gender equality and overcome the triple planetary crisis.

In this context, the AAUN Africa Forum will examine how African and Australian Higher Education systems are transitioning and contributing towards achieving sustainability. Their pioneering work of new practices, and their education of future generations, are giving sustainable universities a special ability to create and influence change. An emerging future dimension for the AAUN will be collaborative/comparative education, teaching, and curriculum reform for concerted effort toward 2030. The effective implementation of sustainability policies in universities is highly dependent on various policy and practice approaches, but there is a lack of systematic effort in how best to map this interaction.

The Forum will consider progress and success, and determine potential levers of change for knowledge networks, especially the AAUN, to position and direct for transformative change and impact in the remaining six years.

Programme

Sunday, 14 April		
<i>Arrivals</i>		
17:00-18:15: AAUN Africa Steering Group Meeting (<i>by invitation</i>) Venue: UMP Council Chambers, Building 2, Floor 3		
18:30: Welcome Cocktail Venue: Thoko Mayekiso Library, Quad		
Monday, 15 April		
Venue: Tfokomala Conference Centre		
Time	Session	Speakers
09:00-09:30	Opening Session Moderator: Prof Aldo Stroebel, DVC Research, Innovation, and Internationalisation, UMP	Prof Thoko Mayekiso, Vice-Chancellor, University of Mpumalanga Prof John Hearn, University of New South Wales, Co-Chair AAUN Australia HE Tegan Brink, High Commissioner of Australia to South Africa (<i>virtual</i>)
09:30-10:15	Sustainability in Action Moderator: Prof Maano Ramutsindela, University of Cape Town	Lead Paper: Dr Heide Hackmann, Director Future Africa, University of Pretoria <i>An analysis of sustainability in action emanating from recent reports, contextualised by the 5 Ps</i> 25 min. discussion
10:15-11:00	Panel: Africa-Australia Relations – Implications for the SDGs Moderator: Prof David Mickler, Dean Global, Africa, Curtin University	Lead Paper: Prof Chris Isike, Professor in Political Science, University of Pretoria Respondents: Hon. Prof Matthew Neuhaus, Honorary Professor, College of Law, Australia National University Anneline Morgan, Chief Director, Department of Science and Innovation, South Africa 20 min. discussion
11:00-11:30	BREAK: Deck, Tfokomala Conference Centre	
Sustainability in Action		
11:30-12:15	Planet Moderator: Prof David Norris, VC University of Botswana	Prof Dan Parker, Professor, School of Biology and Environmental Sciences, UMP Priscilla Morley, Network Manager, Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) 20 min. discussion
12:15-13:00	People Moderator: Prof Margaret Hutchinson, DVC, University of Nairobi	Prof Ndiko Ludidi, Dean, Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Sciences, UMP Prof Ntebogeng Mokgalaka, Executive Dean, Faculty of Science, Tshwane University of Technology Prof Felix Asante, Pro Vice-Chancellor Research, Innovation and Development, University of Ghana 15 min. discussion
13:00-14:00	LUNCH AND GROUP PHOTO: Egumeni Restaurant, Tfokomala Conference Centre	

14:00-14:45	Prosperity Moderator: Prof Kayihura Muganga Didas, VC University of Rwanda	Prof Vusi Gumede, Dean, Faculty of Economic, Development and Business Sciences, UMP Prof Margaret Chitiga-Mabugu, Dean, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of Pretoria Prof Sonia Dickinson, Deputy PVC, Faculty of Business and Law, Curtin University <i>15 min. discussion</i>
14:45-15:30	Peace Moderator: Prof Shamit Saggar, Director, Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (ACSES), Curtin University	Prof Anthony Langlois, Stan Perron Dean of Applied Ethics, Faculty of Business and Law, Curtin University Dr Nonzwakazi Maqubela, Chairperson, Gender Forum, School of Social sciences, UMP <i>15 min. discussion</i>
15:30-16:00	BREAK: Deck, Tfokomala Conference Centre	
16:00-17:00	Synthesis Panel: Sustainability Partnerships in Action Moderator: Prof Lina Pelliccione, Pro Vice-Chancellor and President, Curtin Mauritius	Lead Paper: Prof John Gyapong, ARUA Secretary-General-designate (15 min.) Panelists (10 min. each): Dr Molapo Qhobela, DVC Institutional Change, Strategic Partnerships, and Societal Impact, University of the Free State (<i>on behalf of the USAf Chairperson</i>) Dr Thandi Mgwebi, Group Executive, Business Advancement, National Research Foundation, South Africa <i>25 min. discussion</i>
18:30	Forum Dinner and Engagement Venue: SANBI Botanical Garden	Introduction by Prof Barnabas Nawangwe, Vice-Chancellor, Makerere University Reflections from the Co-founders of AAUN (12 years on) Prof Cheryl de la Rey (<i>virtual</i>) and Prof John Hearn <i>Acknowledgement of multilateral relations between Africa and Australia: Anneline Morgan, Chief Director, Department of Science and Innovation, South Africa</i>
Tuesday, 16 April		
Venue: Tfokomala Conference Centre		
08:30-08:45	Overview of Day 1	Prof Frans Swanepoel, AAUN Co-Chair, University of Pretoria
08:45-09:45	Updates from Africa Initiatives in the AAUN Context Moderator: Prof Frans Swanepoel	Dr Heide Hackmann, Director, Future Africa, University of Pretoria Hon. Prof Matthew Neuhaus, African Studies Network (ASN), Australian National University Dr Janet Dzator, Centre for African Research, Engagement & Partnerships (CARE-P), University of Newcastle (<i>Virtual</i>) Prof David Mickler, Dean Global, Africa, Curtin University

		<i>40 min. presentations; 20 min. discussion</i>
09:45-11:00	AAUN-ARUA Vice-Chancellors' Panel: <i>Partnerships in Action</i> Moderator: Prof John Gyapong, ARUA Secretary-General-designate	Setting the Scene: Moderator (10 min) Vice-Chancellors/ Representatives: Nairobi (Prof Margaret Hutchinson), Ghana (Prof Felix Asante), Makarere (Prof Barnabas Nawangwe), Rwanda (Prof Kayihura Muganga Didas), Mauritius (Prof Sanjeev Sobhee), UCT (Prof Maano Ramutsindela), UP (Prof Loretta Ferris) <i>(dual membership of both the ARUA and AAUN Networks)</i> <i>30 min. discussion</i>
11:00-11:30	BREAK: Deck, Tfokomala Conference Centre	
11:30-12:10	A Proposed Framework for Action: AAUN towards 2030 Moderator: Prof Sanjeev Sobhee, VC University of Mauritius	Summary of levers for accelerating transformative change and enhancing impact Prof Aldo Stroebel and Dr Melody Mentz-Coetzee
12:10-12:35	Australia-Africa Engagement Strategy Framework <i>Draft for discussion by AAUN Members</i>	Prof John Hearn Prof David Mickler Dr Thandi Mgwebi
12:35-12:45	Closure	
12:45-13:45	LUNCH, Egumeni Restaurant, Tfokomala Conference Centre	
14:00-16:00	Postdoc and ECR Workshop Venue: Archives Building, Seminar Room 001 <i>Establishment of an AAUN Postdoctoral and Early Career Researcher Network</i> Moderator: Prof Julia Richardson, Head of School, Management and Marketing, Curtin University Summary: Prof Shamit Saggur, Director, Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (ACSES), Curtin University Action Plan and Way Forward: Dr Priscilla Mensah, Director Research Development, Nelson Mandela University	Workshop for Postdocs and ECRs <i>Participants: Postdoctoral research fellows, early career researchers, and PhD students from AAUN members universities</i>