

ASIA-EUROPE ENVIRONMENT FORUM



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN ASIA AND EUROPE. LOCALISING THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR REPORT

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About the Organisers

Asia-Europe Environment Forum

Established in 2003, the ENVforum is a partnership of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF); ASEM SMEs Eco-Innovation Center (ASEIC); Government of Sweden through the Regional Asia Environment Conference Support Programme administered by Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI); the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF); and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES). During the first decade of its operation, the ENVforum has organized over 50 high-level international meetings, roundtables, conferences and workshops, bringing together over 1200 selected participants from government, ministries, academia, international organizations, NGOs and civil society and also authored seven prominent publications.

The Asia-Europe Environment Forum (ENVforum) aims to foster inter-regional cooperation between Europe and Asia on sustainable development and its environmental dimensions. To support such collaboration, the ENVforum aims to provide a multi-stakeholder platform for knowledge-sharing, capacity building, to offer up-to-date information for policy makers and partner organizations on environmental themes, and to contribute to the formulation of sound political decisions that are mindful of their environmental impacts.

The National University of Political Studies and Public Administration

The National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (NUPSPA), established in 1991 as a school of governance and training of professionals for essential social areas, is a landmark in the Romanian academic setting.

The institutional vision of the university relies on promoting and implementing a unique relationship between academic learning and genuine change in Romania. NUPSPA constantly trains Romanian elite and aims to extend this training capacity at regional level, while adapting to the requirements of the Europeanization and globalization processes. Hence, NUPSPA aims to become a provider of governance competences so that in the following years it can develop its capacity of having elite graduates who will contribute to the responsible governance of Romania and the European Union. In this context, the Romanian higher education institution takes great interest in engaging in multi-stakeholder dialogue on the topic of sustainable development not only at the national level, but also at the international one with a view to bringing an academic perspective in this targeted field of cooperation.

Based on its experience and renewed interest in training the next generation of specialists in development policy, NUPSPA established a formal partnership relation with ASEF in 2014 and prides itself on its ability to be a voice in a vast network aiming to promote a deeper mutual understanding between Europe and Asia. Therefore, by hosting the international seminar on sustainable development goals, NUPSPA takes a step forward in its partnership with ASEF and highlights its commitment to cooperation in an area supported by the Foundation.

Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and Europe. Localising the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

On March 17th, the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (NUPSPA) hosted the international seminar on sustainable development – “Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and Europe. Localising the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” – with the support of the Asia-Europe Environment Forum (ENVforum), a multilateral programme of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF).



Background

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined in Transforming Our World : The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development presents multiple challenges for the countries that are to implement it. While 17 SDGs were designed at the global level, countries will need to make an effort to localise this global agenda into their national strategies and systems in order to initiate transformative change.

Moving forward, countries will work on localising SDGs and their accompanying targets and indicators to assure alignment with the goals and principles set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Furthermore, the application of multi-stakeholder approaches will be crucial in integrating the 2030 Agenda into the national context; this entails developing appropriate dialogue and partnerships between government and active stakeholder networks of civil society, universities, think tanks, the private sector and other development actors.

In this regard, Asian and European countries have gained significant experience in implementing Agenda 21 as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Integrating lessons learnt from the MDG era, as well as dialogue between different country experiences, will be important for the process of localising the 2030 Agenda and implementing SDGs. Finally, the ENVforum has conducted research dedicated to SDGs implementation readiness and analysis of possible options for financing sustainable development in Asia and Europe. The event hosted by the NUPSPA also served as a public launch of the research outcomes.

Overview of the event

The seminar was held at the NUPSPA's headquarters in Bucharest, Romania, on 17th March 2016 and was open for attendance to over 60 attendees from the government, the academic environment, businesses and the civil society at large. The participants engaged in lively discussions around the topics presented by **the panels:**

1. Tailoring Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to National Realities
2. SDGs Implementation Challenges and Opportunities in Romania
3. Review of Development Work in Asian and European Countries
4. Who Will Pay for SDGs? Exploring Financial Options
5. Way Forward – Challenges and Opportunities for SDGs Implementation

Notable speakers included: Prof. Remus Pricopie, PhD.; Ms. Daniela GÎTMAN (Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs); H.E. Mr. Edward IOSIPER (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Romania); Mr. Thierry SCHWARZ (Director, Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)); Ms. Grazyna PULAWSKA (Project Manager, ASEF); Mr. NGUYEN Trung Thang (ISPONRE, Vietnam); Dr. Suh-Yong CHUNG (CSDLAP, South Korea); Dr. Andrzej KASSENBERG (Center for Sustainable Development, Poland); Mr. Mayukh HAJRA (Development Alternatives, India); Mr. Răzvan NICOLESCU (Deloitte, Romania); H.E. Mr. Gheorghe MAGHERU (ASEF Governor for Romania); Mr. Andrei LUNGU (RISAP, Romania) and Ms. Luminița GHIȚĂ (Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests, Romania).

The seminar was designed to promote Asia-Europe dialogue on Sustainable Development Goals and provide a multi-stakeholder platform for meaningful discourse on localising the global SDGs agenda. It also explored how SDGs could be better integrated into national development strategies and visions to ensure their implementation at the country level.

Besides gathering experts from the host country, Romania, the workshop also gathered representatives from related government organisations, academia, civil society and business enterprises with the aim of developing appropriate dialogue and partnerships between government and active stakeholders.

The event consisted of presentations on SDGs to facilitate the exchange of crucial insight from Asia and Europe. As such, participants benefited from the expertise of regional and international experts, as well as the research conducted by the Asia-Europe Environment Forum (ENVforum) that examined financing options for SDGs. Specific discussion topics included:

- the challenges regarding the SDGs' implementation
- the Asian and European experience in implementing MDGs and the possibilities lying ahead of the governments and their partners in the on-going work related to SDGs (case studies on Vietnam, South Korea, Poland and India)
- the need to explore a step-by-step approach to integrating SDGs to existing national governance framework alongside relevant policy adjustments during the process
- the possible financing options for Asia and Europe according to the research conducted by the ENVforum
- the necessity and benefits of Asia-Europe dialogue on a critical issue that would be central to development cooperation in the years to come

The event was co-chaired by **Prof. Remus Pricopie, PhD.** (NUPSPA) and **Ms. Grazyna Pulawska**, Project Manager (ASEF).

The panels – detailed presentations

1. Tailoring Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to National Realities



Ms. Grazyna PULAWSKA, Project Manager, Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)

The Asia-Europe Environment Forum (ENVforum) conducted a research project (“Small Planet”) seeking to come up with an alternative and unique approach to the formulation of SDGs by enriching the global discourse on national perspectives (14 Asian and European countries targeted). Linking the global and national levels was a unique element of the approach, grounded in the recognition that SDG implementation will be led mainly by countries. Ms. Pulawska also stressed that the new framework should ensure the smooth transition from MDGs to SDGs that include the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

The project found that while SDGs pose a new challenge, they can and should build on existing experience with goal-setting, monitoring and implementation. Most of the 14 countries covered by the study were found to have at least some relevant cross-cutting strategies and related documents with priorities, goals, targets and indicators that represent national concerns.

Besides building on existing strategies and related policies, the Small Planet work found it necessary to refer to a conceptual framework that captures sustainability issues in a structured way and as an interconnected system. In other words, countries should consider adopting a conceptual framework for SDGs that captures all key dimensions of sustainability and their relationships.

The project highlighted the importance of approaching SDGs as a multi-step process. Given its complexity, countries should count on planning the process carefully in advance, identifying both specific activities and results at each stage. Moreover, in order to connect to the national level, country negotiators involved in SDG development at the international level should identify their national sustainable development strategies and related reports in the earliest possible stage of the process (so as to improve national clarity of their own priorities and make the global SDGs more relevant).

Lastly, the research identified governance as a crucial factor in enabling SDGs implementation to build on existing foundations and lessons learnt from other international commitments.

2. SDGs Implementation Challenges and Opportunities in Romania



H.E. Mr. Edward IOSIPER, Director, Analysis and Policy Planning Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)

Romania participated in the Sustainable Development Summit in 2015 and committed itself to implementing the 2030 Agenda, which is complementary to the Millennium Development Goals in the sense that it brings forward three other dimensions: society, economy and environment. The current work of Romania is based on the National Strategy devised in 2008 to accommodate the MDGs but a review is due soon in order to respond to the new objectives and challenges regarding sustainable development.

The 2030 Agenda will be successfully implemented only if local institutions are engaged directly in the process because the citizen's needs must be adequately identified and addressed. Furthermore, additional measures should be taken to ensure to smooth transposition and implementation of SDGs in the national context. This involves cross-sector investment programmes; modernization of education and social system; better use of new technologies; protection and enhancement of cultural heritage and European norms and values; and most importantly, developing a model of sustainable development policies by taking into account the availability of resources (economic, natural and human).

As a development assistance provider, Romania has by far fulfilled this role with regard to the Republic of Moldova, which has received financial and technical assistance, partially due to Romania's commitment of bringing its neighbour closer to the European Union both politically and economically.

3. Review of Development Work in Asian and European Countries

a) Millennium Development Goals Lessons for Sustainable Transition: Vietnam Experience



Dr. NGUYEN Trung Thang, Deputy Director General of Institute of Strategy and Policy on Natural Resources and Environment (ISPONRE) in Vietnam

Viet Nam developed its sustainable development framework in the 1990s. Viet Nam has been strengthening this framework through an institutional architecture for the implementation of SDGs, in the form of national development public offices and counselling bodies to the Prime Minister.

Although the government is proud of achieving some major MDGs, such as the eradication of poverty, ensuring universally primary education, promoting gender equality and empowerment of women and improving national health, there are still a few other goals that were not fully implemented.

With regard to the 7th MDG, i.e. ensuring environmental sustainability, there have been some overall achievements in Viet Nam such as the internal integration of the sustainable development/environmental protection principles at the policy level; improvement in sanitation and clean water supply from 40% in 1990 to 85% in 2015; increasing afforestation from below 30% to 41% in 2015; improvement in clean water supply and housing for poor people.

Lessons learnt for success

The government has been implementing different programs and the so-called National Target Programmes (NTPs) on afforestation, clean water supply and accommodation for poor people in rural areas. In addition, it has given priorities and mobilized resources in implementing these NTPs: increasing national budget; mobilizing international supports from donors; involve participation of communities in the implementation of these programs.

However, there are reasons accounting for failures in ensuring environmental sustainability and so sustainable development that are connected to the environmental pollution, depletion of natural resources. These reasons include weak enforcement of policies and legislation; fines on the violations not being high enough; lack of financial resources for the devising of EP policies and lack of sense of responsibility and awareness.

As such, the implementation of the SDGs can, on one hand, be done by way of research in areas that can accommodate change. This includes research on the multi-dimensional redefinition of poverty, promotion of large-scale production by using rice land, electrification and energy efficiency. On the other hand, the government should pursue the unfinished MDGs matching the already existing NTP programme documents. Economic growth should be

restructured, such that growth relies on innovative technologies and the rational and efficient use of resources. In other words, the economy should be restructured towards green growth and sustainable development, integrating the SDGs into all socio-economic policy programmes and mobilizing the resources and stakeholders for the efficient and effective implementation of the SDGs.

b) National Implementation Challenges for South Korea



Dr. Suh-Yong CHUNG, Director, Center for Climate and Sustainable Development Law and Policy (CSDLAP), Seoul International Law Academy

Koreans have nationally-owned and country-led sustainable development strategies because they think a country needs to have its own agenda to integrate SDGs in the overarching global framework for development. In implementing development objectives, South Korea relies on already existing mechanisms which are revived in the fashion of the new mechanisms and strategies.

Traditionally, South Korea has had a long history of sustainable development goals, starting from the 1970s, which succeeded in transforming the Korean rural development model into a shared resource for all. Additionally, the South Korean state changed from an assistance receiver into an assistance donor over time and this helped to increase its influence in development forums. Nowadays, South Korea has gone global with its development models.

With regard to accommodating the 2030 Agenda SDGs, South Korea pushed for the introduction of new implementation legislation in 2015 – the Sustainable Development Act and the Third National Strategy for Development. These policy documents were created in light of the SDGs, which call for a harmonised development of society, economy and environment. The Korean SDGs implementation strategy will be finalized after the UN high-level meetings in 2016, and the monitoring and evaluation of the process will be executed by the Presidential Commission for Sustainable Development to issue a biannual sustainability report.

c) Sustainable Development in Poland



Dr. Andrzej KASSENBERG, Founder, Center for Sustainable Development in Poland

There is a need to understand the megatrends in order to solve the problems at the national level: demographic changes and growing social problems, global economic changes, accelerating urbanisation, climate change and resource scarcity. All pose a challenge to meet the European demands.

In order to secure the means of implementation of the SDGs, Poland should tackle issues like poverty, sustainable agriculture, and an out-dated energy system and technologies that contribute to climate change (waste, mass motorization, consumption, use of highly polluting natural resources such as coal, increased green house emissions). In addition, the ecological footprint for Poland is currently growing after a period of slowing down.

Hence, a relation should be established between economic growth and a low emission economy. In other words, Poland needs a greener economy. In this context, in the last five years there have been many possibilities to improve energy efficiency and renewables in Poland, but these opportunities have not been utilised properly. As such, Poland should design a sustainable approach to its economy within the limits determined by the economic resources; a

circular economy whose main characteristic would be to reduce waste. In other words, the products should be reusable in order to improve the way the available resources are employed.

Moreover, a greener economy could be complemented with a 'symbio-city' which is a synergy approach to sustainable urban development where you "get more for less". By integrating different technologies and city functions, a synergy can be created. For example, waste can turn into energy, waste water can turn into fuel, and the excessive heat from an industry can warm up a household.

In order to progress in the field of sustainable development, creating business opportunities related to SDGs should be considered, but the conditions for it should be first created by decision-makers together with the beneficiaries. However, what impinge sustainable development in Poland are the two opposing dilemmas: whether to follow a regressive approach (maintain the current development goals and ensure stability) or a progressive approach (seek to establish new thresholds for achieving a more sustainable and greener society and economy) towards sustainable development (i.e. the greed vs. need model). Until this gets sorted out, steps forward cannot be easily taken.

d) Civil Society Participation in SDGs Implementation in India



Mr. Mayukh HAJRA, Development Alternatives

Civil society participation in development is significantly robust in India and is appreciated and valued as it enables data, insights and perspectives into the aspirations of people from the grassroots to inform policy development towards facilitating more effective outcomes. Even the government acknowledges the role of civil society in facilitating the effective last mile implementation of development programmes. However, civil society also has a responsibility towards maintaining high levels accountability in their functioning in order to

maintain the trust that the Government places in it and thus continue to effectively and meaningfully contribute to policy development and implementation.

Based on the on-ground experiences of Development Alternatives, the potential of civil society to play an effective role in SDGs implementation lies in a four-fold opportunity area as described below.

- i. **for enabling last mile access and as agents for monitoring and reporting progress at local level** - Civil society can be instrumental as development partners of the government in ensuring that the country's development programmes are able to reach more effectively the last mile stakeholders they are meant to benefit. Their access to the grassroots can be capitalised upon to generate local data on implementation status that can be used in tracking progress towards SDGs not only at a cumulative but also at a disaggregated level that can reveal disparities between different constituencies. Civil society may also use such data to highlight implementation gaps and hold stakeholders along the implementation value chain accountable.
- ii. **as voice of the marginalised, in facilitating the defining of localized priorities and informing and feeding into policy** - Civil society, by virtue of its outreach amongst local communities has ground level understanding into the immediate priorities and long term aspirations of the communities they serve and thus can provide insights towards development of policies that are more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people. They can facilitate people's informed participation in local development planning such that development plans are more equitable and are able to achieve a balance between immediate development priorities and long term sustainability goals.

- iii. **as service delivery partners** – Civil society, especially in the forms of community based organisations, can manage decentralised systems for service delivery. Decentralised management through community owned and community operated models ensures that the local infrastructure is owned and thereby sustainably managed by the community it serves and also allows for real time resolution of interruptions in service delivery in response to community demand.
- iv. **for creating a conducive atmosphere through stakeholder mobilisation** – Civil society can play a major role in promoting awareness amongst communities and thereby demand for sustainability concerns to be addressed in development. They can engage in effective behaviour change communication that can create a conducive atmosphere for the implementation of policies targeted at sustainability outcomes.

It was concluded that civil society has major potential to contribute as effective development partners in mainstream national development by enhancing outreach and implementation efficiency, promoting innovation in implementation approaches and being the voice of the people.

4. Who Will Pay for SDGs? Exploring Financial Options



Mr. Thierry SCHWARZ, Director, Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)

According to a poll conducted by ASEF regarding the source of money for financing the SDGs implementation among workshop participants, most respondents indicated that money should first come from the national budgets, followed by official development assistance, the UN system and international organizations. In this case, developing countries should be smart about finding their own way to finance SDGs as for the moment there are no new SDG funds available aside from the traditional ones, such as public and private domestic finance, private and public international finance (the latter being the lowest source of income).

However, on a global level, although financing the annual implementation of SDGs would be a very costly affair according to estimates (between USD 5-7 trillion per year investment needs for developing countries), there is much funding available (mainly coming from the oil and gas wealthy nations, but also from environmental taxes and cuts in several industry and sectors of economy spending). Additionally, developing countries could benefit from the support of new donors and lenders such as BRICS, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the New Development Bank or the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank.

Although funding can be made available, it needs to be directed towards sustainable activities in light of prioritized goals: offer a higher return on sustainable investment to investors; make sustainable production more profitable for producers; make sustainable consumption cheaper for consumers.

5. Way Forward – Challenges and Opportunities for SDGs Implementation



Panellists: H.E. Mr. Gheorghe MAGHERU, ASEF Governor for Romania; Ms. Luminița GHIȚĂ, Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests; Mr. Răzvan NICOLESCU, former Minister of Energy and Executive Lead Advisor, Deloitte and Mr. Andrei LUNGU, President, Romanian Institute for the Study of the Asia-Pacific (RISAP)

According to the panellists, climate change, affordable and clean energy, research and innovation and reducing consumption remain the greatest challenges the world has to face in terms of SDGs. In order to meet these challenges, the three big players on the international stage, the EU, China and the USA, need to show stronger commitment to solving the issues at large and act together in order to protect the environment. It could be said that they have a moral obligation to the planet and the people inhabiting it as they produce more than 60% of the total greenhouse gas emissions.

Moreover, the lack of leadership is a big problem in the EU nowadays, which impedes on the creation of the internal market for energy. In terms of clean energy, there is much to be done to improve information exchange on best practices and technologies. There is still a lot to be achieved for a common competitive energy market at the EU level, also in terms of interconnections.

Investment in research and innovation presents an opportunity for making sustainable development cheaper. In this sense, there is a need for a common platform to discuss energy challenges and finding solutions between the key players on the global scene. Cross-border cooperation between both energy and transport ministers should be further pursued in order to develop an alternative to the traditional use of fossil fuels, which is highly damaging to the environment.

With regard to Romania, it can lead by example as its actions related to climate change went beyond mere support statements to concrete results by fulfilling its international commitments (implementing the Kyoto Protocol) and European commitments (five years ahead of the 2020 target). Romania also pushed forward its achievements in the environmental field by being a part of the Paris Agreement.

Finally, Romania has the capacity to become a green economy in the medium and long term, as there are attempts at mainstreaming the environmental policy in other policy sectors. The 27% share of renewables in the overall national energy mix could be considerably improved in the coming years. Hence, Romania should take advantage of its membership in different regional and international multi-party institutions and forums (Chair of Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP; Vice-President of the UN Environment Assembly; EU Council – WPIEI Global; the Eastern European Group at the UN, etc.) to promote and enhance its strategies for environmental protection and sustainable development. Seminar outcomes

Participants benefited from:



- Exchange of ideas on SDGs implementation, monitoring, and financing in Romania, well ahead of the first High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2016;
- Contribution to Asia-Europe dialogue on a vital issue that will be at the centre of international negotiations now and in the years to come;
- Discussions on sustainable development in Romania and the greater Eastern European region;

- Exchange of experiences between Asian and European experts on SDGs;
- Multi-stakeholder perspective on sustainable development by engaging students, academics, NGOs, business and Romanian Government representatives.

The seminar allowed for:

- Strengthening the partnership between NUPSPA and ASEF;
- Highlighting NUPSPA's profile as a school of governance.

About the ENVforum Partners



The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) promotes understanding, strengthens relationships and facilitates cooperation among the people, institutions and organisations of Asia and Europe. ASEF enhances dialogue, enables exchanges and encourages collaboration across the thematic areas of culture, economy, education, governance, public health and sustainable development.

Together with about 750 partner organisations ASEF has run more than 700 projects, mainly conferences, seminars and workshops. Over 20,000 Asians and Europeans have actively participated in its activities and it has reached much wider audiences through its networks, web-portals, publications, exhibitions and lectures.

For more information, please visit www.asef.org



ASEM SMEs Eco-Innovation Center (ASEIC) was established in 2011 with the principal mandate of promoting Asia-Europe cooperation to create and enhance eco-innovation of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in both regions.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.aseic.org/main.do>



The Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) is an official German Political Foundation. It is entrusted by the German Parliament with a mandate, which lies at the core of the task of promoting democratic and sustainable structures worldwide. This mandate involves the strengthening of the relevant institutions and persons, procedures and norms and the requisite attitudes enabling such development to take place.

For more information, please visit <http://www.hss.de> or <http://www.hss.de/southeastasia>



Established in 1998, the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) is an independent, not-for-profit think tank, based in Japan. It goes beyond research to provide practical ways to protect the earth's environment and to realise greater sustainability and equity in the global community.

For more information, please visit <http://iges.or.jp>

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