Jena Declaration on Sustainability

International network calls for strategy change to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goals / Invitation to online launch event on 9 September at 3:00 p.m.

The United Nations’ Agenda 2030 came into force on January 1, 2016. In this Agenda, the member states committed themselves to doing everything possible over the following 15 years to achieve 17 goals for sustainable development in the world. These goals include ending poverty; education and a healthy life for all; and achieving sustainable production and consumption. Increasingly, experts are now pointing out that despite immense political, legal and financial efforts, the global community is about to miss its last chance to achieve these UN Sustainable Development Goals in time. Merely increasing existing resources does not appear to be sufficient to implement Agenda 2030.

A network of renowned international institutions, such as the Club of Rome, the World Academy of Art and Science, the Academia Europaea, and the German and Canadian UNESCO Commissions, is therefore now calling for a clear change of strategy through a new cultural approach. On the initiative of Prof. Benno Werlen of the UNESCO Chair on Global Understanding for Sustainability at Friedrich Schiller University Jena, more than 30 institutions have already adopted “The Jena Declaration”, in which they define a new cultural approach through which the Sustainability Goals can still be achieved.

Speakers at the launch event at 3:00 p.m. on 9 September 2021 will include the Co-President of the Club of Rome, Mamphela Ramphele, the President of the World Academy of Art and Science, Garry Jacobs, as well as important co-signatories to the Declaration such as Prof. Hartmut Rosa, Secretary-General of the German UNESCO Commission, Dr Roman Luckscheiter, the President of the Leibniz Association, Prof. Matthias Kleiner, but also, the German climate activist Luisa Neubauer and artists from Afghanistan, Iran and South Africa, among others.

“It will take a broad-based global social movement to change thinking and action”

Top-down measures to tackle global challenges, which have dominated so far, cannot take sufficient account of the diversity of cultural and regional differences. For example, many global programmes are poorly adapted to actual local living conditions and therefore find little acceptance. “It will take a broad-based global social movement to change thinking and action for the transition towards sustainable prosperity. This requires fine tuning to local needs and conditions,” emphasises Garry Jacobs, President of the World Academy of Art and Science and one of the first signatories to the Declaration. The primary aim is to get such a movement up and running.

In order to accelerate and deepen the necessary societal change, the United Nations and political decision-makers must approach more directly the most important actors of change: individuals with their everyday routines and habits. The aim of “The Jena Declaration” is to draw greater attention to the way in which human activities are embedded culturally, regionally and historically. Building on this, the network is calling on everyone to develop inclusive solutions tailored to local conditions. This requires first of all a respectful appreciation of, and regard for, cultural diversity. “The fact that young people worldwide are assigned a central role in the realisation of the programme of the Jena Declaration
on Sustainability is particularly noteworthy and, in my view, absolutely necessary. Without the ideas, the demands and the commitment of the generation of tomorrow, it will not be possible to overcome the great social challenges. Today’s generation is obviously finding it very difficult to do so. Therefore, young and old, hand in hand for sustainable improvement, that can be the key,” emphasises Prof. Uwe Cantner, Vice-President for Young Researchers and Diversity Management for of Friedrich Schiller University.

World Secretariat in Jena

The Declaration’s programme accordingly aims to reach people of all ages – especially younger generations – and of diverse cultural, social and regional backgrounds, and to make it easier for them to act locally in the spirit of global sustainability.

The necessary change extends into all areas of life, as Mamphela Ramphele, Co-President of the Club of Rome, points out, using education as an example: “Humanity has the opportunity to learn from the multiplicity of interconnected planetary emergencies upon us. To learn the lesson we have to embrace nature’s wisdom reflected in indigenous knowledge. At the same time we need to break down the knowledge silos in our outdated education systems.”

Implementation of the declaration will take place along the three programme lines “Art”, “Education” and “Civil Society”. These will be coordinated by a World Secretariat established at the University of Jena in cooperation with the Max Weber Centre for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies (Max-Weber-Kolleg) of the University of Erfurt and the University of Music Franz Liszt in Weimar. “It is a special opportunity for Thuringia and Germany to be able actively to shape future sustainability policy together with such influential partners and a broad social movement,” says Prof. Benno Werlen, head of the coordination office.

The livestream of the event and further information can be found at: https://www.thejenadeclaration.org/

After the event, journalists will have the opportunity to ask questions.

Press access to the event:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88156565597?pwd=UWZhNngoa2ViOWFUQVZMZeNbkVoQT09
Meeting ID: 881 565 6597
Passcode: 026417

wissenschaftliche Ansprechpartner:

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