

How can the global science community meet the challenge of the Sustainable Development Goals?

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The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets out a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for everyone. The 17 SDGs with 169 associated targets are deeply interconnected with many cross-cutting elements, and address the global challenges we face, related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, and peace and justice. The High-Level Political Forum, which provides the political leadership and accountability found in 2018 that more people are leading better lives than a decade ago, the under-five mortality rate dropped by nearly 50 percent in the least developed countries yet one third of the world still lacks basic sanitation and that for the first time in more than a decade, there are now more hungry people in the world, with conflict one of the main drivers. Global economic losses attributed to the disasters are rising, land degradation threatens the livelihoods of more than 1 billion people and 90 percent of people in cities breathe polluted air. The SDGs present the global science community with the most critical challenges and transformations of our time. Achieving them will require us to draw upon the entire repertoire of our knowledge including complex science systems, planetary boundaries, interdependencies, dealing with poor or missing data, traditional knowledge systems, transformative but potentially disruptive technologies, and social inclusion. It will mean working in different ways, co-creating knowledge with communities of practice and collaborating across disciplinary boundaries. The question is: are we ready and can we deliver?