

Media Update

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United Nations PRESS RELEASE

SDG GLOBAL FESTIVAL OF ACTION, 25-26 MARCH 2021

- A Turning Point for People and Planet –

Over 20,000 gather at the SDG Global Festival of Action, calling for transformative change to turn things around for people and the planet

BONN, GERMANY, 25 MARCH – Calling for the beginning of a ‘new era’ following COVID-19 recovery, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General **Amina J.**

Mohammed alongside United Nations Development Programme Administrator **Achim Steiner**, spoke today at the fifth annual [SDG Global Festival of Action](#), bringing to attention the urgent need for economic and social change that protects our ecosystems and humanity’s well-being.

The Deputy Secretary-General stated her support for an inter-generational transition, putting youth at the forefront to allow them to shape the SDG agenda, and encouraged countries to listen to its young people to ensure we don’t return to business as usual.

Convened over two days, from 25 to 26 March, under the theme ‘A Turning Point for People and Planet’, the Festival connected government and private sector leaders with changemakers, activists, creatives and more, hosting talks, performances, interactive workshops and exhibits to inspire and mobilize action. Because of the pandemic, the dynamic in-person event moved to a virtual platform, elevating its attendance to over 20,000 remote participants from 203 countries and territories, making it the largest and most geographically diverse Festival ever.

With the world still suffering from the effects of the pandemic and many countries still in lockdown, the year 2021 was framed as a critical year to accelerate progress on the SDGs, with climate, gender equality, poverty and inequalities, and sustainable financing firmly in focus. The Festival aimed to scale up both awareness and ambition ahead of important events such as the G20 meetings, The Generation Equality Forum, The Food Systems Summit and the important COP climate conferences in Italy and Scotland towards the end of the year. Over 300 speakers from 80+ countries represented the wide range of SDG stakeholders,

came together to share their knowledge and experience on how to tackle the world's ongoing challenges, present solutions and discuss what is at stake if we fail to meet the promises of the Sustainable Development Goals.

"It's become clear that everyone has a role in advancing this transformation," said **Achim Steiner**, UNDP Administrator. "On the one hand, we need new policies that steer our societies in the right direction. On the other, each of us is an agent for change. Our individual behaviours will add up to make the difference - powerfully so." **Marina Ponti**, Director of the SDG Action Campaign who organized the Festival, echoed the sense of optimism and called to seize the opportunities that came with the unprecedented global crisis we saw last year, noting that we should use what we've learned to shift the way we live, consume, earn and produce. "Together, we can dream big. We can act with shared heart and conviction. And we can generate a global turning point that resets our world for good."

Other speakers during the opening day included SDG Advocate and disability activist **Eddie Ndopu** who talked about how the pandemic has caused pre-existing inequities to bubble up to the surface, including a crisis of inequality, the ecological breakdown of the planet, and systemic injustices - yet shared optimism in the fact that it has also compounded humanity's capacity for creativity, genius and resilience. **David Nabarro**, Special Envoy of WHO on COVID-19, echoed Eddie's statement in his talk highlighting that only by working together and supporting each other will humanity come through this pandemic with the strength it needs to help set the world on the right path.

Chairman of Japan SDGs Action Promotion Council, **Norichika Kanie**, was proud to represent Japan as they became the first country to host a local edition of the Festival - the SDG Global Festival of Action from Japan, an integral component of this year's Global Festival. Sharing local solutions and setting an example of nationwide movement for action, the spin-off was curated by 12 UN agencies based in Japan and featured Goodwill Ambassadors **Misako Konno** (UNDP) and **MIYAVI** (UNHCR), popular comedian **Yuriyan Retriever**, and many other multi sectoral stakeholders. Dr. Kanie urged that we work together to combine our solutions for people and planet, to light the spark for action following the vision set out by the Sustainable Development Agenda.

Representing youth climate advocates, **Mitzi Jonelle Tan** from the Philippines joined with an impassioned plea to recognize and empower marginalized sectors of society, especially those from the global south, who are on the frontlines of the unequal impacts of climate change, and who are not always included in the conversations on how to confront the crisis.

To interact and engage the participants at the Festival, organizations and experts helped organize 27 workshops focusing on ideation, upskilling, campaign activation and well-being, creating a unique and personalized experience for the 10,000 participants that signed up to join just the workshops alone. Workshop hosts included civil society organisations such as Social Watch, Project Everyone, Humanity Lab

Foundation and the World Organisation of the Scout Movement, with more lined up for Day 2.

The creative arts were also represented with musical contributions from global artist **Yoko Ono** with her ode to the planet 'I love you Earth', as well as performances from climate activists including **Patti Smith**, **Bomba Estéreo**, and **Tenzin Choegyal** scheduled for Day 2. The 20 exhibits that were available to participants throughout the program included exclusive pieces by **La Triennale Di Milano**, street art, photography and immersive media by **Oculus**, **Lavazza**, **CANON**, **Google Arts & Culture Lab**, and **Terry Riley** and **Sasha Waltz**.

About the SDG Action Campaign

The United Nations Secretary-General established the UN SDG Action Campaign to bring people together from every part of the world to act on the SDGs and to hold decision-makers to account for progress. Through compelling and creative SDG outreach and communications, the Campaign serves UN Member States and the United Nations whilst bridging thinkers and doers from civil society, local governments, think tanks, the arts and culture, the media and the business world. It mobilizes individuals to champion the SDGs in homes, communities and beyond. Through tailored advocacy and communications, they build powerful networks that reach millions worldwide, urge decision-makers to act and impel momentum.

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UNIDO PRESS RELEASE

UNIDO Launches a Micro-Financing Scheme for Small Businesses and Micro Enterprises to Promote Renewable Energy Solutions for Productive Uses

Islamabad (25 March 2021), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) organized a virtual launch event of the Renewable energy investment support program for small businesses and micro enterprises, under GEF funded project "Sustainable Energy Initiative for Industries in Pakistan". The program is being executed in collaboration with

National Rural Support Program (NRSP) and will help to increase access to finance for clean and green productive solutions.

Chief Guest Mr. Shah Jahan Mirza, CEO Alternative Energy Development Board, in his key note remarks appreciated the efforts of UNIDO and NRSP and said “this economically viable initiative by UNIDO aiming at smaller enterprises and poorer communities for sustainability through affordable renewable energy solutions will boost the rural economy of Pakistan”. He also opined ”since taking national grids to remote areas is expensive, this scheme will provide easy access to affordable and reliable energy solutions in these areas.”

Dr Rashid Bajwa, CEO NRSP, in his remarks said “In Pakistan this kind of zero interest loan scheme is being carried out for the first of time in terms of renewable energy. This blended finance based RE micro financing program will initially benefit about 400 persons whereby providing an opportunity to small businesses to make productive use of Renewable Energy technology solutions for income generation. We will reach our targets on a sound footing at a high frequency”.

Earlier in her welcome remarks, Ms. Nadia Aftab, UNIDO Country Representative, shared her thoughts “Several renewable technologies have emerged with economically viable and environmentally friendly options which if suitably adopted can meet energy needs of industry particularly for small enterprises. With the funding from the Global Environment Facility, UNIDO has setup a precedent for how renewable energy solutions can enhance MSME's for income generation and value addition, especially for women owned enterprises. When we stress on economic development and SDGs, energy must be used to promote productive uses to create jobs and more income generating opportunities for communities. The larger impact of this project is contributing in achieving the SDGs.”

Later in the technical sessions, the technical teams from NRSP and UNIDO highlighted key components of the project. The presenters informed the audience about this unique initiative from UNIDO which intended to utilize the GEF grants to provide interest free loans to beneficiaries for procurement and installation of Renewable Energy projects along with post installation maintenance support. The program will be implemented in 48 districts across Punjab and Sindh provinces providing access to clean, reliable and affordable Renewable Energy based solutions to small businesses, farmers and women



owned micro enterprises. The program in affect would not only contribute in reducing GHG emission in rural and agro-sectors but would step forward towards providing sustainable livelihoods to rural and marginalized communities. In the session, types of RE technologies and available solutions in the market along with their application were showcased. It was attended by representatives from public sector, donors, representatives from NRSP district offices and beneficiaries including smallholding farmers and local renewable energy solution providers.

UNIDO is specialized agency of UNITED NATIONS focusing on industrial development in the developing world. UNIDO works on different projects which are directly or indirectly related to Industrial development, Climate Change, Trade Etc. In all projects where UNIDO provides technical assistance, it is ensured that that project is sustainable and adaptable for the private sector. UNIDO under its REEE Project, is fully working on its theme of ISID (Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development) which refers to inclusive participation of the women along with men in all aspects of industrial development. For more information, please visit website <http://unidogefpakistan.org.pk>

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