

Global Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network

Youth and Women as Enablers in Enhancing the Domestication and Localization of Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030

Friday 10th February 2022

3:00 pm- 5:00 pm CET

Keynote speech

Irena Zubcevic, Director, Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future

Distinguished speakers, dear participants,

Let me first thank the Global Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network for this invitation and greetings from New York, where I work as a director of a Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future, an international non-for-profit organization that works on empowerment and capacity building of stakeholders in sustainable development.

I am honored to be part of this meeting. The work you are doing is amazing.

The network that you have in 124 countries in Africa, Asia, the US, Latin America, and Europe to share findings and seek practical advice for your projects and activities is exactly what is needed for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals.

Sustainable development is about long-term development. Therefore, it is important to have young people engaged from an early age. The way we learn to think and be aware of the communities in which we live, will define our lives, our opinions and our views.

The sooner we learn that all people are equal wherever they are, whatever they are and regardless how old they are and that they all have rights to live productive and healthy lives in harmony with nature, the better all our lives will be.

And this is what sustainable development teaches us. We all have rights, and we have to fight and defend them. And to be able to fight and defend them, we need to learn how to do it. And we can only learn if we are given the opportunity to learn and have access to quality education. Learning about Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs, is part of that education.

SDGs have been defined in such a way as to cover all aspects of our lives. If we achieve SDGs we will achieve inclusive and nature-responsive economy, equal and inclusive societies where all people are treated with respect and lead productive and healthy lives

with access to all basic services like education, health, decent housing, water and electricity. At the same time, our nature and our Planet will be protected as we strive to produce and consume sustainably, reduce impacts of climate change and preserve biodiversity.

As we approach the SDG Summit that will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York this coming September, we need young people to tell world leaders what they need to be able to live quality and productive lives.

We will be at mid-point of implementing the SDGs, so just assessing where we are is not going to be enough. We need to go beyond assessment. We need to recreate optimism and hope from 2015 when SDGs were adopted, even though our world faces many more challenges today. Many parts of the world are still grappling with consequences of the COVID pandemic, food, energy and financial crises are upon us as well as triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. This is why we need accelerated action and game-changing policies based on science.

But this is all easier said than done. We know that we need to develop sustainably. We know we have SDGs through which we can achieve it, but the big question is how. Youth, as leaders of tomorrow. They need to lead transformational change to respect nature as without nature there is no life on this Planet. And youth need to be that change.

And for the change to happen, efforts like this one through the network that you have are invaluable. We have this great framework in SDGs, we now need to learn how to accelerate their implementation for better lives for all of us. Networking, stopping working in silos, investing in smart agriculture to eliminate food insecurity, are all measures that need to be undertaken.

And that is why I congratulate all your efforts and encourage you to continue your great work.

We in the Stakeholder Forum are also doing our part. I invite you to check out are activities, especially the webinars we are organizing on SDGs in the run up to the SDG Summit. Our next webinar on SDGs 7 on energy and 8 on sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all will take place on 22 February and I invite you all to join us.

Thank you.