

International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development
2024–2033
World Conference on Science and Art for Sustainability
September 22–24, 2025



Belgrade Declaration on Science and Art for Sustainability

The World Conference on Science and Art for Sustainability was held on September 22–24, 2025 in Belgrade, Serbia – as a flagship event within *the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development* [a–e]. The talks and discussions spanned all disciplines of science and art, and were focused on the existential problems and challenges facing the Earth and humanity, which are: depletion of natural resources, pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss; human inequality and inequity, autocracy, plutocracy, and corruption; intercultural conflicts and forced migrations; political and economic sanctions, color revolutions, military interventions, and wars.

The Belgrade Declaration on Science and Art for Sustainability has been prepared on the basis of the talks and discussions at *the Conference* [f]. It comprises the following statements.

1. Complex and multiple disciplinary challenges

- The existential challenges the Earth and humanity are faced with in the 21st century are complex and encompass many disciplines. In contrast, the efforts of scientific and academic communities are predominantly limited to disciplinary siloes. Moreover, the dilemmas facing nature and societies at local, national, regional, and global scales are interdependent and mutually reinforce one another to a considerable degree. Therefore, wholistic, systemic, and multiple disciplinary solutions are necessary. Consequently, disciplinary knowledge must often be complemented by multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary analyses and transdisciplinary syntheses. In many cases, this ambition should extend to include local traditional and indigenous knowledge systems and the results of their interactions with mainstream scientific knowledge.
- Three interconnected global threats to human survival and well-being, which no nation can adequately address alone, must be underscored – geopolitics, climate change, and misuse of artificial intelligence (AI). While respecting national sovereignty, the UN together with science and art institutions worldwide should work to cultivate global citizenship consciousness to foster worldwide social consensus in overcoming the destructive potential of these threats.
- All these problems have pulled the world into a deep polycrisis – a state of heightened global disunity with an increased momentum towards national isolationism and antagonism, conflicts, and wars. This trajectory needs to be addressed through a balanced and sustainable remediation of competing interests at all scales. Advancement of this long-term ambition should proceed on multiple pathways with polycentric leadership, *i.e.*, it should be pluriversal. A precondition for addressing these challenges is planetary peace, understood as peace within oneself, with others, and with nature. Planetary peace seeks transformation of prevailing economic, environmental, and social systems, which includes reduction of our addiction to an outdated

development paradigm based on growth of the gross domestic product (GDP) at all costs, particularly through harnessing and overexploitation of harmful and non-renewable energy sources. The state of the world in the Anthropocene requires a different approach based on the goal of security and well-being of the entire integrated system of humans embedded in the rest of nature. Such an approach holds the promise of making ours a peaceful ecological civilization.

2. Direct cooperation and integration of science and art

- Relations between science and art should be developed as interactions between two interconnected and complementary frames of inquiry about nature, society, and human beings. The goal is to affirm the sense of oneness of the universe and communicate the findings to others. Science and art should influence and enrich one another. Jointly, they can push farther the boundaries of a true understanding of the universe. Without art, our appreciations of the beauty of the world and the mystery of human being would be considerably diminished. A fuller integration of science and art can lead to a more complete understanding of human motivations, inspirations, and actions, offering more reliable knowledge, which can enable a comprehensive and transformative paradigm shift in global social development.

3. Specific contributions of science, art, and education

- Special care should be given to Big Science in establishing direct strong connections of basic sciences with engineering, medicine, and high technologies, and in providing very much needed intercultural and international bridges, contributing to mutual understanding and peace in numerous conflict regions. These activities can be carried out without any military applications and financial gains by the involved parties. The success of the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) since 1954 offers a proof that the dialectical unity of national and global approaches advances a wide front in science and technology while also making important contributions to consolidating and improving geopolitical relations. Besides, further development and application of renewable energy systems as well as fission nuclear energy systems must be strongly supported. The controlled use of AI in a number of areas of science and technology can considerably enhance the expected results quantitatively and qualitatively, especially if performed through robust partnerships with industry and government guided by commitment to high ethical standards. One noteworthy challenge that requires special attention is sustainable healthcare, in light of the strategic importance of collective as well as individual well-being and prosperity for current and future generations. More advanced methods of medical diagnostics and therapy, including those based on the use of charged particle accelerators, call for continued investment.
- Researchers in social sciences, in close cooperation with researchers in humanistic sciences and artists, should be challenged and incentivized to develop a trans-ideological approach, in which all existing ideologies will be analyzed in a multiple disciplinary way. The result could be a novel, holistic, and coherent general social model, to be applied in a flexible way through different governance models for supporting long-term sustainable, secure, and peaceful development at all scales. It should include an expectation that institutional and individual practices move from serving corporate and government interests to serving public interests. In other words, our lives should not be determined by commodities and monetary values. A movement in this direction, towards greater scientific and academic independence, more readily supports a vision of the Earth as a living whole that is always emerging out of the manifold of natural, social, and humane elements and relations that make it up.
- Humanistic sciences and arts, as devoted to the activities, creativity, thought, and belief systems of human beings, cultures, and societies on the Earth, including their interrelation with other living species in all their richness and diversity, are best suited to describe, analyze, understand, and explain various ethical question, virtues, values, tensions, paradoxes, contradictions, and absurdities arising every day at all scales. In finding and formulating responses to the existential

challenges we face, the approaches that are community driven and lead by humanistic scientists, artists, and educators are called upon more than ever to forge new transdisciplinary cooperation with all other scientific and non-academic actors, from local traditional and indigenous communities, and in both public and private sectors. The goal that must be achieved is genuine human equality, equity, flourishing, and well-being, whose carrying out depends on building full respect for societal differences everywhere, including cultural, religious, and political ones.

- Education should comprise and integrate in a transdisciplinary way all sciences and arts with the ambition to foster curiosity, courage, creativity, and persistence among learners, and thus contribute considerably to their establishment as independent and responsible citizens prepared to participate in solving the problems confronting the world. The knowledge generated in our scientific, artistic, and educational systems should be objective and subjective, comprehensive and effective, reliable and constructive, reconciling and fulfilling, and value-based and ethical. Along these lines, EHC has made a plan to create the Worldwide Grid of Transdisciplinary Hubs for Sustainability as a network for collecting, storing, analyzing, and distributing all types of data related to regeneration and sustainability of nature and society, human dignity and security, and planetary peace.

4. Support to science, art, and education

- Relationships between scientists and artists on the one hand and businesspeople, policy-makers, and decision-makers on the other hand are often marked by the lack of mutual understanding that can sometimes develop into an absence of respect or trust. Therefore, novel efforts to build new pathways for communication and cooperation, based on sincere mutual respect and trust, must be developed and nurtured by all parties, including joint events focused on science and art integration. Scientific advice must be open, inclusive, evidence-based, peer-reviewed, and easily understandable, and must recognize and avoid self-centered and short-term gains and interests. Art, with its tremendous potential to serve as a valuable source of cultural expression and interpretation, should stimulate growth towards individual awareness and alertness as well as collective engagement in societal capacity building for greater human flourishing. It cannot be only our rhetorical ally, but also provide a means to convert dissatisfaction, resignation, and even doom into creative generation of ideas and solutions. Such an approach, which should enable us to build new productive interfaces of science and art with society, can increase the interest within society for supporting scientific and artistic activities, and thus enlarge their funding. Besides, all three pillars of Science and Art Diplomacy, being science and art for diplomacy, science and art in diplomacy, and diplomacy for science and art, should be continually used in efforts to direct relationships between science, art, education, industry, policy, and government along pathways inclining towards sustainability, security, and peace.
- Direct cooperation of scientists, artists, and educators concentrated on attaining sustainable, secure, and peaceful social development should be stimulated by the UN system in all countries worldwide, in the Global North and the Global South, and in their interactions following the principles of multilateralism, guaranteeing respect for the rights of every nation in every domain, and the objectives of regenerative economy, following the enduring human desire to attain well-being for all on a healthy planet, in accordance with *the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. We would like to underscore the facts that global considerations of the problems of human dignity and security have been concentrated dominantly on the Global North – the problems have been relativized – and that the Global South must receive equal attention in the future. In addition to the UN system, international financial institutions, national, regional, and global philanthropic and business organizations, and civil society organizations around the world are invited to establish programs and project for direct institutional support of cooperation of scientific, artistic, and educational communities worldwide in looking for the appropriate solutions to the existential threats the Earth and humanity face.

Notes

- a. On August 25, 2023, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly proclaimed *the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development*, from 2024 to 2033 – proposed by Serbia and supported by Argentina, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, South Africa, Spain, and Vietnam. The idea of *the Decade* was launched by the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics (IUPAP), the World Academy of Art and Science (WAAS), and The Club of Rome (CoR) in September 2022 in Belgrade, Serbia, during *the World Conference on Basic Sciences for Sustainable Development*, as the flagship event for Europe within *the International Year of Basic Sciences for Sustainable Development*. The UN General Assembly assigned the task to prepare and implement the overall program of *the Decade* to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
- b. The integral goal of *the Decade* is to contribute significantly to identifying and developing pathways towards regeneration and sustainability of nature and society, human dignity and security, and peace. This should be done following eight Human Security Dimensions, specified by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in January 1994 and September 2022, eight Millennium Development Goals, based on the UN Millennium Declaration, signed in September 2000, and 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), defined by the UN General Assembly in September 2015. However, the current state of affairs clearly shows that achieving the ambitions of these dimensions and goals, as agreed for the SDGs in September 2015, will not be possible by 2030.
- c. On April 16, 2024, The Earth-Humanity Coalition (EHC) was founded as an association of global, regional, and national scientific organizations tasked with preparing and implementing various initiatives within the overall program of *the Decade*, in close cooperation with UNESCO. IUPAP, WAAS, CoR, and the UNESCO-MOST-BRIDGES Coalition (BRIDGES) were among the founding Members of EHC. The first of these initiatives was the EHC-WAAS Program of Sciences for Sustainable Development, whose outline had been prepared by WAAS.
- d. *The World Conference on Science and Art for Sustainability* was the first major event within the EHC-WAAS Program. The Host of the event was the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA), and its Co-Hosts were the Alliance of National and International Science Organizations for the Belt and Road Regions (ANSO), and UNESCO. Additional organizing institutions of *the Conference* were EHC, WAAS, CoR, and BRIDGES.
- e. The program of *the Conference* comprised 12 sessions including 42 talks and eight moderated discussions – at SASA; the moderators and speakers came from 20 countries from the Global North and the Global South. Besides, the program included a musical performance in the National Museum, an exhibition of paintings in the Zepter Museum, and a musical performance and an exhibition of paintings in the Ethnographic Museum.
- f. The authors of *the Declaration* are Michel Spiro, Chair of the EHC Steering Committee, Garry Jacobs, President and Chief Executive Officer of WAAS, Nebojša Nešković, Vice President for Science and Technology of WAAS and President of the Serbian Chapter of CoR, Paul Shrivastava, Co-President of CoR, Carlos Álvarez Pereira, Secretary General of CoR, and Steven Hartman, Founding Executive Director of BRIDGES.