

# 3<sup>rd</sup> Worldwide Meeting of Young Academies Statement

## The role of Young Academies in achieving the UN SDGs

October 2017

### Preamble

In July 2017, more than 60 representatives from over 35 Young Academies and similar young scientist initiatives from all over the world met in Johannesburg, South Africa. This Third Worldwide Meeting of Young Academies focused on the question of how young academies in general, and young scientists in particular, can contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Participants discussed the role of Young Academies in the national implementation of the SDGs, and how science and technology can best be harnessed towards achieving the SDGs.

We concluded that Young Academies can and should play a central role in conceptualising, developing and implementing strategies to achieve the SDGs. We urge policy-makers working on the SDGs and Senior Academies to act on their proclamation that ‘young people are key drivers of sustainable development’<sup>1</sup> and to increasingly seek and include advice from Young Academies. As members of Young Academies, we are willing and ready to contribute to achieving the SDGs and, to this end, have identified the following areas for engagement:

### Policy Advice

Achieving the goals of sustainability and poverty reduction will require a concerted effort by all sectors of society. Science has a crucial role in this effort and its central role must be recognised and utilised in achieving the SDGs and in monitoring their implementation.

We believe that the members of Young Academies, whether national, regional or global, are well placed to contribute interdisciplinary science advice to SDG implementation: they are typically not working in disciplinary silos, but looking together at societal challenges, they embrace diversity (cultural, disciplinary, gender, etc.) and connect scientists across borders due to their regional and global networks. Thus, we recommend that Young Academies should take on a science advisory role at a national, regional and global level. By becoming recognised as an independent part of their national, regional and global policy advice systems, Young Academies and their members can play an important role as trusted intermediaries between the research community and policy-makers and provide research-based evidence for SDG implementation and indicators for monitoring and evaluation. This would ensure inclusion of perspectives of young scientists at the national and global science-policy interface and strengthen the scientific base of the SDG process.

### Science Communication and Outreach

We see Young Academies as strategically well positioned to raise awareness and understanding of the SDGs and related science issues within their nations by communicating them to civil society, policy-makers, the private sector and wider public through workshops, lectures, and outreach programmes. By engaging with schools and universities on the SDGs, they can reach out to the next generation of future scientists.

Moreover, Young Academies can assist the media in building science literacy on the SDGs as well as confidence in science by contributing to science articles in the popular media and online.

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<sup>1</sup> UN General Assembly, 69th Session, High-Level Event for World Programme of Action on Youth, 29 May 2015. Online: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/ga11648.doc.htm>

Through all these activities, Young Academies can play a crucial role in demystifying science to the public by communicating research clearly and accessibly, thereby increasing public trust in science, unmasking fake news, and exposing infringements on academic freedom.

### Capacity Enhancement for Young Scientists and Young Academies

An important part of the work of Young Academies is making the SDGs more familiar to our members. By helping each other to gain a better understanding of policymaking processes and evidence-based policymaking, as well as how to apply the UN policy framework to joint collaboration in the field of SDG implementation and monitoring, our work will be more effective and efficient.

Young Academies can achieve this by aligning ongoing academy activities and working groups with the SDGs, focusing on these goals in meetings and workshops (e.g. 2018 Africa Young Academies Regional Conference, 2019 Worldwide Meeting of Young Academies), looking at ways to incentivise young researchers to get involved, and by collaborating with Senior Academies, international science networks and other stakeholders.

One potential avenue, we suggest, is that Young Academies strengthen their engagement with the InterAcademy Partnership and their SDG-related project on “Improving Scientific Input into Global Policymaking: Strategies for Attaining the Sustainable Development Goals”, and their African SDG project on “Harnessing Science, Engineering and Medicine to Address Africa’s Challenges”, to learn about pathways into the UN science-policy interface.

In summary, we believe that Young Academies around the world can contribute successfully to national, regional and global SDGs processes using science, research and innovation. Engaging with our partners, in particular Senior Academies, we can leverage science to attain evidence-based policymaking and to deliver tangible outcomes on the livelihood of societies. To achieve this, we will continue encouraging, training and supporting our members and each other around the globe to be involved in national, regional as well as international, interdisciplinary, and intergenerational SDG-related dialogues and undertakings, and to work towards embedding the voice of young scientists in any proposed solution for achieving inclusive sustainability. We now urge SDG policy-makers and Senior Academies to work with us. We can achieve more by coming together and working jointly towards a “global science” driving sustainability.

*Ratified by the Global Young Academy and the Albanian Young Academy of Sciences, Jonge Academie (Belgium), Burundi Council of Young Scientists, College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists of the Royal Society of Canada, Young Academy of Denmark, Egyptian Young Academy of Sciences, Ethiopian Young Academy of Sciences, Indian National Young Academy of Science, Indonesian Young Academy of Sciences, The Israel Young Academy, The Young Academy of Japan, Kenya National Young Academy of Sciences, Young Korean Academy of Science and Technology, Association of Latvian Young Scientists, Young Scientists Network-Academy of Sciences Malaysia, De Jonge Akademie (NL), Nigerian Young Academy, The Young Academy of Norway, National Academy of Young Scientists (Pakistan), Philippine Academy of Young Scientists, The Polish Young Academy, The RSE Young Academy of Scotland, Académie Nationale des Jeunes Scientifiques du Sénégal, South African Young Academy of Science, Sri Lankan Academy of Young Scientists, Sudanese Academy of Young Scientists, Young Academy of Sweden, Thai Young Scientists Academy, Uganda National Young Academy, Council of Young Scientists at the Women Scientist Association of Uzbekistan, Vietnam Young Academy, Zimbabwe Young Academy of Science, Jmmi Talla Mbé representing the Cameroon Academy of Young Scientists initiative, Gergely Toldi representing the Young Academy initiative in Hungary, Vidushi Neergheen Bhujun representing the initiative of Young Academy in Mauritius, Meghnath Dhimal representing the Young Academy initiative in Nepal.*



For more information on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Worldwide Meeting of Young Academies, hosted by the South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS) and co-organised by the GYA, and its outcomes, see:

<https://globalyoungacademy.net/events/3rd-worldwide-meeting-of-young-academies-2017/>

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