

Mobilizing Science to help end poverty and reduce inequalities worldwide: Fostering the involvement of Science Academies in the SDG implementation process

Eradicating poverty in all its forms and reducing inequality within and among countries are two of the greatest challenges facing humanity. Although more than 1 billion people have been removed from extreme poverty conditions in the last two and a half decades, more than 800 million people still need to struggle for the most basic human needs.

Rapid economic growth in countries like China and India has lifted millions out of poverty, but progress has been uneven and too many people still lack access to adequate food, clean drinking water and sanitation. In parallel, income and wealth inequality is on the rise, with the richest 10 percent earning up to 40 percent of the total global income. Widening disparities requires the adoption of sound policies to empower the bottom percentile of income earners, and promote economic inclusion of all regardless of sex, race or ethnicity.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are universal targets that were agreed upon by all 193 Member States of the United Nations in 2015. The international community issued this call to action by agreeing upon 17 ambitious goals related to the eradication of poverty, protection of our planet, and achievement of prosperity and peace, which are to be achieved by 2030.

The goals are universal: each country is asked to contribute, as are all parts of society from politics, civil society, business, and science. The goals are also interconnected: Progress on one goal is highly dependent upon progress in many others.

In order to translate the 2030 Agenda into action, a comprehensive understanding of the inherent complexities is required, which balances the social, environmental and economic dimensions of the Agenda.

The Inter-Academy Partnership (IAP), a global partnership of over 130 Academies of science, engineering and medicine recognizes the importance of these goals for global development and the sustainability of life on this planet. Therefore, it was decided to explore in several global IAP working groups the potential of science to play an effective role in the implementation of the SDGs and consider specifically which tasks Science Academies can, should and must undertake.

Under this framework, on December 8 and 9, the IAP-SPEC convened in Beijing, China, to discuss the role of Science Academies in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in general and their participation in the achievement of SDG 1 and SDG 10 specifically.

The meeting was organized by the Brazilian Academy of Sciences (ABC) and the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), and followed the inaugural meeting in Manaus, Brazil in 2014. Over the course of two days, it was discussed what science can do to end poverty in all its forms everywhere (SDG 1) and what science can do to reduce inequality within and among

countries (SDG 10). For this, scientific and organisational progress from a variety of contexts and regions were collected and discussed. Presentations included the factors responsible for rural poverty reduction and eradication in China, efforts underway in Africa and elsewhere, legal considerations and human rights, societal developmental aspects (e.g. early childhood development and its relevance for the topic), as well as an overview of existing attempts to support science, and the Science Academies more specifically, to aid in the implementation of the SDGs.

The importance of the participation of the Global Young Academy (GYA) and the National Young Academies was particularly stressed. Here, we want to draw attention to their joint statement on [“The Role of Young Academies in achieving the UN SDGs”](#).

The direct interaction of the IAP working groups with the Academies is now of prime concern. Discussions are underway to deliver four regional meetings in partnership with the IAP regional networks for Africa (NASAC), the Americas (IANAS), Asia (AASSA) and Europe (EASAC). The IAP-SPEC welcomes the focus on the SDGs and supports the development of regional road maps for how the Academies can support the implementation of the SDGs to 2030. The Academies should be encouraged to become active partners and use their expertise to contribute more directly to the UN advice mechanisms and implementation efforts, as in proposals collected in the recently published [guide](#) for merit-based academies.

The IAP SPEC aims to complement and strengthen existing efforts by highlighting best practice approaches on how academies engage with the SDGs, and is happy to serve as a distributor of strategic information on how to enhance the role of the Academies in implementing the SDGs.