International Science Council
The global voice for science

International Science Council written inputs to the 2023 SDG Summit Political Declaration 'elements paper' on behalf of the Scientific and Technological Community Major Group

The International Science Council (ISC) welcomes the consultation process on the Political Declaration of the 2023 SDG Summit and the commitment of the co-facilitators to develop an action-oriented, transformative and ambitious document and linking pledges from other related processes such as the Water Conference, Transforming Education Summit, Sendai Mid Term Review, COPs, HLPF, which is key for promoting coordinated and effective multilateral actions to the complex and interrelated challenges ahead of us.

The 2023 SDG Summit comes at a crucial time in the SDG lifespan. We are reaching a midpoint in the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development while the world finds itself in the midst of an accumulation of crises requiring more ambitious global cooperation and robust scientific information. While science is recognized as an important part of the solutions to many global issues and to pave the ground for more coordinated and stronger multilateral cooperation, the gap between available knowledge and action is widening, threatening progress on the multilateral agenda.

The ISC would like to recommend on behalf of the Scientific and Technological Community Major Group the following inputs and language for inclusion in the 2023 SDG Summit Political Declaration to support ambitious, action-oriented and evidence-based commitments as we move forward with SDG implementation:

- **Crises and disasters wipe out hard-won development gains with decades of slow progress on key goals such as poverty and ending hunger having been wiped out.** As risks continue to accumulate and their impacts intensify on lives, livelihoods and ecosystems, we need a stronger integration of the sustainable development agenda with other agendas to build resilience, reducing vulnerability, restore nature and advance transformations. Such integration should be embedded at all stages from policy design, planning, budgeting, conditionality of finances, through to monitoring, reporting at all governance levels. The High-level Political Forum (HLPF) should provide a forum to explore how risk can be mainstreamed in public policy development and mobilize expertise from the active scientific community in relation to methods to reduce uncertainty related to risks and participatory scenarios related to decision-making in the area of risk.

- **The underlying drivers of sustainable development are well studied and understood by the active scientific community; yet, there is a mismatch between these and public policies, several of which tend to focus on direct drivers**. One example is policies framing the use of fertilizers in agriculture and agricultural production, which may affect water availability and quality; these policies are motivated by trade concerns and not agricultural production for food security and distort the sustainability of agricultural systems. There is a need for a systemic approach to future efforts related to the SDGs. The HLPF should provide the Forum for assessing progress and discuss gaps and systemic barriers. Without a systemic and sustained attention to looking at the sustainable development agenda (and its enablers) holistically, progress will continue to lag and silos will remain strong.

- **The multilateral community needs to turn the SDGs into a set of missions to focus innovation, experimentation, regulation, policy development, finances, civil society mobilization in problem solving with an explicit attention to support synergies and minimize and avert trade-offs**. In this context, science can act as a main enabler and a game-changer. However, science itself has to be reconsidered, and a new generation of science missions for sustainability based on co-design of the research agenda by multiple stakeholders, co-production of knowledge by scientists with local and indigenous knowledge holders, and co-delivery of actionable knowledge by multiple actors including philanthropists ought to be put in place and pursued.

- **Too much knowledge is not being put to use**. The multilateral system should collaborate with the scientific community in developing a repository of evidence-based solutions, interventions and their context specificity to promote peer learning and scalability. This can be realized through multiple approaches strengthening the science-policy-society interface to ensure that available knowledge and options for solutions are assessed, adapted and applied across scales and a variety of contexts. Such approaches include inter alia: the mobilization of expertise from the active scientific community in support of intergovernmental negotiations and deliberations on thematic and cross-cutting issues, the active involvement of organizations federating the science community such as the ISC in assisting Member States to inform their priorities through identifying, translating and synthesizing relevant knowledge, and an active interaction of UN scientific advisory bodies and mechanisms with the active community of scientists.