



SDG Action Weekend

September 2023

Catalyzing Transformative Change: Science, Academia, and the Journey to 2030

**12:00 – 2:00 PM, 16 September 2023, Trusteeship Council
Chamber, UNHQ**

**Part of the SDG Mobilization Day during the SDG Action Weekend
of the SDG Summit**

Speaker biographies

Speakers

Opening

Welcome remarks - Mr. Earle Courtenay Rattray

Chef de Cabinet, Executive office of the United Nations Secretary-General

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres announced on 17 December 2021 the appointment of Courtenay Rattray of Jamaica as his Chef de Cabinet.

Mr. Rattray has been High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States since July 2021. Prior to this appointment, he served as Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations in New York, during which time, he was also Co-chair of the Group of Friends of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Financing; Children and the SDGs; and the Group of Friends of Decent Work.

He previously served as Jamaica's Ambassador to China (2008-2013); Director of the Bilateral Relations Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade in Kingston (2005 -2008); Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Jamaica in Washington, D.C., (2001-2005); Special Adviser to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade (2000-2001); and Special Adviser to the Minister for Industry and Investment (1999-2000). Before he joined the foreign service, he served as Executive Director of the Jamaica Marketing Company in London (1990-1997) and Director of Marketing and Promotions at the Jamaica National Export Corporation in Kingston (1987-1988).

Mr. Rattray holds a Master of Arts degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in the United States, a Master of Arts in International Business from the London South Bank University and a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies from West Virginia Wesleyan College in the United States. He was awarded a Doctor of Humane Letters (Honoris Causa) by West Virginia Wesleyan College.

Keynote address - Ms. Mariana Mazzucato

Professor in the Economics of Innovation and Public Value, University College London

[Mariana Mazzucato](#) (PhD) is Professor in the Economics of Innovation and Public Value at University College London (UCL), where she is Founding Director of the UCL [Institute for Innovation & Public Purpose](#). She is winner of international prizes including the [Grande Ufficiale Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana](#) in 2021, Italy's highest civilian honour, the [2020 John von Neumann Award](#), the 2019 [All European Academies Madame de Staël Prize for Cultural Values](#), and 2018 Leontief Prize for Advancing the Frontiers of Economic Thought. Most recently, Pope Francis appointed her to the Pontifical Academy for Life for bringing 'more humanity' to the world.

As well as [The Entrepreneurial State: debunking public vs. private sector myths](#) (2013), she is the author of [The Value of Everything: Making and Taking in the Global Economy](#) (2018), [Mission Economy: A Moonshot Guide to Changing Capitalism](#) (2021), and most recently [The Big Con: How the Consulting Industry Weakens our Businesses, Infantilizes our Governments and Warps our Economies](#) (2023). She advises policymakers around the world on innovation-led inclusive and sustainable growth. Her current roles include being Chair of the [World Health Organization's Council on the Economics of Health for All](#), Co-Chair of the [Global](#)

[Commission on the Economics of Water](#), a member of the [South African President's Economic Advisory Council](#).

Introduced by - Mr. Patrick Paul Walsh

Full Professor at University College Dublin, on secondment to SDSN as Vice President of Education and Director of the SDG Academy

Patrick Paul Walsh is a Full Professor of International Development Studies in University College Dublin, Ireland. He is currently on secondment to the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) as Vice President for Education and Director of the SDG Academy and President of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland (SSISI). He received a Ph.D. in Economics from the London School of Economics and Political Science. He has held academic positions in Trinity College Dublin, K.U. Leuven, Harvard University and Columbia University. He has also held positions in the United Nations, European Commission, IMF and World Bank. His current focus is on Sustainable Development Education that is informed by Science, Practice and Policy.

Enhancing the science-policy interface

Moderator

Mr. Nikhil Seth

United Nations Assistant Secretary-General, Executive Director, UNITAR

Before assuming the post of the UNITAR Executive Director in 2015, Nikhil Seth was the Director of the Division for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) at the United Nations Secretariat in New York. In this role he served as head of the Rio+20 secretariat and of the secretariat for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, spearheading the preparations for these conferences in Rio, Brazil, and Apia, Samoa. He was also closely engaged in coordinating and advancing their follow-up. Mr. Seth's Division was also responsible for supporting the intergovernmental negotiations for the post-2015 development agenda.

During his career with the United Nations since 1993, Mr. Seth has served as Special Assistant and Chief of Office to the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs (Sept 1993 – Jun 2001), Chief of the Policy Coordination Branch in the Division for ECOSOC Support and Coordination (Jun 2001 – Jan 2003), as Secretary of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Second Committee of the General Assembly (Feb 2003 – Aug 2006), and as Director of the DESA Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination (Aug 2006 – Aug 2011), where he guided the ECOSOC's work in implementing several new key mandates, including its Annual Ministerial Review and Development Cooperation Forum.

Before joining the UN Secretariat, he was a delegate to the UN in the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations (Sep 1990 – Sep 1993) and involved with various UN conferences and summits including the Rio Summit on Environment and Development and the climate change related process. After joining the UN, he has been involved in the organization of the Copenhagen Summit on Social Development, the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development, the Mauritius Conference on Small Island Developing States, the Millennium Summit, World Summit on Sustainable Development and the UN World Summit, beside the Rio+20 Conference.

He joined the Indian diplomatic service in 1980 and his diplomatic assignments included Geneva, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. Before joining the Indian diplomatic service, he worked as a Lecturer in Economics in St. Stephen College, Delhi University for 2 years (Aug 1977 – Sep 1979). Mr. Nikhil Seth holds a master's degree in economics from Delhi University.

Panelists

Dr. Tawfik Jelassi

Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, UNESCO

Dr. Tawfik Jelassi was appointed UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information on 1st July 2021. In this position, he is responsible for the Organization's programmes on building inclusive knowledge societies, leading digital transformation, strategizing the role of ICT in education, and fostering freedom of expression. Dr. Jelassi holds a Ph.D. doctorate in information systems from New York University (USA) and postgraduate diplomas from the University of Paris Dauphine (France).

Dr. Jelassi has extensive experience in higher education, scientific research, and information & communication technologies. He held academic, corporate and government leadership positions in Europe, the USA, and Tunisia. Among others, he was Programme Director and Professor of Strategy and Technology Management at IMD Business School in Lausanne (2015 – June 2021). Prior to that, he served as Minister of Higher education, Scientific Research and Information & Communication Technologies in the democratic transition government of Tunisia (2014 – 2015). Prior appointments included being Chairman of the Board of Directors of Ooredoo Telecom in Tunisia, Dean at Ecole Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées (Paris), and Professor & Chairman of the Technology Management Department at INSEAD (Fontainebleau).

Dr. Melody Burkins

Director of the Institute of Arctic Studies, Dartmouth College, Member of the ISC Governing Board

Dr. Burkins is Director of the Institute of Arctic Studies, Senior Associate Director in the John Sloan Dickey Center for International Understanding, and Adjunct Professor of Environmental Studies at Dartmouth. She also serves as the UArctic Chair in Science Diplomacy and Inclusion at Dartmouth, ISC Steering Committee member of the Fourth International Arctic Research Planning Conference (ICARP IV), Past Chair of the U.S. National Academies' Board on International Scientific Organizations (BISO), and Past Chair of the U.S. National Committee for Geological Sciences (USNC-GS).

With a career spanning academia and government, Burkins is recognized as a “science diplomat” advocating for policy-engaged scholarship, science diplomacy education, and the engagement of more diverse knowledge systems, community voices, and youth in decision-making for Arctic and global climate and sustainable development policy.

During her first term with the ISC, Burkins contributed to multiple reports and initiatives focused on the advancement of more inclusive and sustainable global science systems. This included review of the 2019 UN Global Sustainability Development Report, service on the UN Office of Disaster Risk Reduction Global Assessment Report (UNDRR-GAR) Advisory Board, a science advisory role on the ISC 2021 Missions for Science report to the Global Forum of Funders (GFF), editorial contributions to the ISC program of Combatting Systemic Racism in Science, and service on the 15-Member UNESCO Global Independent Expert Group on Universities and the 2030 Agenda (EGU2030).

Ms. Åsa Persson

Research Director and Deputy Director of the Stockholm Environment Institute

Prof Persson is a social scientist and expert on climate and sustainable development governance. She is Adjunct Professor at the Department for Thematic Studies, Environmental Change, Linköping University. Since 2023, she is Chair of the Swedish Climate Policy Council.

As Research Director, she heads the Department of Global Research and leads the work of the SEI Global Research Committee, which manages internal research funding, oversees research quality and ethics policies, and facilitates research innovation across SEI's centres. She is a member of the SEI Executive Team and Global Management Committee.

Her research focuses on the interaction between global and national policy and governance, including the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Previous research includes the global governance of climate change adaptation, climate finance, implementation of international environmental agreements, environmental policy integration and coherence, and development of the planetary boundaries framework.

She is a frequent public speaker and has provided advice and consultancy to many policy organizations, like the UN, OECD, the European Commission and the Swedish government. Her research has been published in journals such as *Nature*, *Nature Climate Change*, *Environmental Science and Policy*, and *Climate Policy*. She has won several competitive research grants from the Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development (Formas), EU, Mistra and the Swedish Research Council.

In 2020, she was appointed by the UN Secretary-General to the Independent Group of Scientists to draft the 2023 UN Global Sustainable Development Report. She is a member of several scientific committees: including the Swedish National Committee on Global Environmental Change (Royal Academy of Sciences), the Lead Faculty of the Earth System Governance network, the research committee of the Royal Swedish Agricultural Academy, and the External Advisory Board of the York Environmental Sustainability Institute. She is editorial board member of the journal *Earth System Governance*.

Åsa first joined SEI in 2001. She received her PhD degree in environmental policy from the London School of Economics & Political Science in 2007. After completing her PhD degree in 2007, she has had several roles within SEI, as group leader and theme leader. She was a Post-Doc Researcher with the Stockholm Resilience Centre in 2010-2012, and Visiting Fellow at ANU Climate Change Institute, Canberra, in 2010 and at Macquarie University, Sydney, in 2017.

Mr. José Ramón López-Portillo Romano

Chairman, Q Element Ltd, Member of the 10 Member Group for the Technology Facilitation Mechanism

Mr. José Ramón López-Portillo Romano is an academic, entrepreneur, diplomat, consultant and public servant of Mexico. Economist of origin, he has a DPhil (Ph.D.) in Political Science from the University of Oxford, where he cofounded and coordinated the Center for Mexican Studies. He was Undersecretary of State in México, Permanent Representative and independent Chairman of Council of the FAO. His multifaceted professional experience allows him to address the problems of the socioeconomic impact of accelerating scientific-technological change from different angles. He has written articles and a book and advises the Mexican Government about science and innovation diplomacy. He has cofounded and chairs several think- and action-tanks, like Q Element. He was nominated by the Secretary General member of the 10-Member Group for the TFM.

Mr. Elmar Kriegler

Head of Research Department, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research

Prof. Dr. Elmar Kriegler is Head of the Research Department "Transformation Pathways" at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) where he puts his focus on the Research Area "Mitigation and Sustainable Development Pathways". His core expertise is in integrated assessment of climate change, scenario analysis and decision analysis.

Elmar Kriegler is Professor for Integrated Assessment of Climate Change at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences at the University of Potsdam. He has coordinated several international integrated assessment modeling projects and has been a coordinator or member of the scientific boards of several German and EU research projects. He had a coordinating role in the development of the Shared-Socio-economic Pathways (SSPs) in support of new scenarios for climate change research. He is also a member of the scientific steering committee of the Integrated Assessment Modelling Consortium (IAMC). Elmar Kriegler has been a lead author for the chapters on "Mitigation pathways compatible with long-term goals" in the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report of Working Group 3, "Transformation Pathways" in the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report of Working Group 3 and "1.5°C Mitigation Pathways" in the IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C Warming. He has published more than 80 articles in refereed journals and was named Highly Cited Researcher by Clarivate Analytics every year since 2018.

Elmar Kriegler received a diploma (MS equivalent) in physics from the University of Freiburg, Germany, in 1998, and a Ph.D. from the University of Potsdam, Germany, in 2005. He was a Marie Curie Fellow at the Department of Engineering and Public Policy at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, USA.

Accelerating progress- where can scientific and technological breakthroughs currently make the biggest impact?

Moderator

Ms. Shinobu Yume Yamaguchi

Director, United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability

Since 2019 Dr. Yamaguchi has been Director of the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS). Her fields of specialization include international development and cooperation, ICT in education, education policy, science and technology policy, and the application of technology in world heritage site preservation. As UNU-IAS Director she has delivered expert interventions at numerous UN conferences and meetings including UN Climate Change Conferences (UNFCCC COPs), the annual UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), the Transforming Education Summit, and sessions of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA). Among her many contributions to education policy, Dr. Yamaguchi served as a member of the International Advisory Board of the UNESCO flagship programme Futures of Education. She is the founding Chair of the SDG–Universities Platform, an initiative mobilising effort by Japanese universities towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Prior to this post Dr. Yamaguchi was Professor at Tokyo Institute of Technology (from 2006), where she is currently serving as Professor Emeritus. In her earlier career Dr. Yamaguchi worked for UNESCO, primarily on the development of education systems in China, Indonesia, Mongolia, and Pakistan.

Dr. Yamaguchi is an Associate Member of the Science Council of Japan and a Member of the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO and has served on several committees of the Government of Japan. She is also an active member of the Comparative and International Education Society, the Japan Society for International Development, and the World Council of Comparative Education Societies. Dr. Yamaguchi holds a PhD in Economics of Education from Columbia University. She has authored or co-authored more than 200 publications and conference/seminar presentations.

Panelists

Ms. Lauren Stuart

Scientific Officer, World Meteorological Organization

Traditionally trained as a meteorologist with a solid foundation in the physical sciences, Stuart decided to pursue a master's degree in climate change and international development to better understand how weather and climate impact the lives and livelihoods of the world's most vulnerable populations. Previous internships with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Green Climate Fund and Habitat for Humanity International allowed her to gain valuable work experience in international climate policy and finance, project development and disaster risk reduction and response. As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Nepal, she refined her skills in community-led sustainable development while also living the impacts of the climate change at the local level, providing her with a new perspective and newfound urgency to address this global crisis. At Oxfam America, she coordinated NGO coalitions, educated Congress on various climate justice issues and lead the organization's policy work on adaptation, loss and damage and climate migration. She also learned how to be an advocate – a skill she will carry with her throughout her career. Now at the WMO, she is back in the science world providing technical, organizational and logistical support across the Science and Innovation Department. She also serves as the Department's focal point for strategic communications, lead the development of a high-level, multi-agency UN report, United in Science, and support the new WMO initiative, Early Warnings for All, which aims to ensure everyone on earth is protected by early warnings in the next five years.

Ms. Nyovani Madise

Director of Development Policy and Head of Malawi Office of the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP)

Nyovani Madise is the Director of Development Policy and Head of the Malawi office of the African Institute for Development Policy. Her role involves research leadership and strengthening the capacity among policymakers and researchers for evidence-informed decision-making to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs in Africa. Her personal research is focused on maternal and child health, nutrition, sexual and reproductive health and rights, food security and population dynamics.

Her previous roles were as Professor of Demography and Social Statistics at the University of Southampton where she also served as University lead for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity, Associate Dean (Research), Deputy Head of School of Social Sciences, Director of Public Policy and Director of the Centre for Global Health, Population, Poverty, and Policy. Nyovani's other previous roles include Senior Research Scientist at the African Population and Health Research Center in Kenya and Lecturer of Statistics at the University of Malawi. Nyovani has over 100 peer-reviewed publications focusing on the analysis of large surveys and untangling the relationships between poverty and health in the areas of maternal and child health, adolescent sexual and reproductive health, food and nutritional security.

Nyovani sits on a number of scientific advisory committees including the UK Department for International Development, UK Department of Health and Social Care; the Dutch SRHR programme of NWO-WOTRO, UK Research and Innovation committees (Global Challenges Research Fund and Medical Research Council Applied Global Health Board). She served on the WHO Strategic Advisory Group on Malaria Eradication, WHO advisory group which developed guidelines for a rights-based approach to family planning; and also served on a large number of UN advisory groups including review groups for International Conference on Population and Development, Sustainable Development Goals and others.

Nyovani has advised many governments including Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the UK. She is a trustee on several boards.

Dr. Ángel Cabrera

President, Georgia Institute of Technology

Ángel Cabrera is the 12th president of the Georgia Institute of Technology. One of America's leading research universities, Georgia Tech serves more than 45,000 students through top-ranked graduate and undergraduate programs ranging from engineering and science to business, computing, design, and liberal arts, and receives nearly \$1.3 billion in annual research awards.

Under Cabrera's leadership, more than 5,700 members of the Georgia Tech community contributed to a new 10-year strategic plan that launched in November 2020. The plan is grounded on a new mission statement that reaffirms Tech's commitment to "developing leaders who advance technology and improve the human condition."

As president during the Covid-19 pandemic, Cabrera led the Institute through one of the most critical times in its history to break records in student applications and enrollment, graduation rates, and research awards. Today, Georgia Tech is one of the fastest growing and most research-intensive universities in the nation.

Cabrera came to Georgia Tech on Sept. 1, 2019, after serving for seven years as president of George Mason University (GMU) in Virginia. During his presidency, GMU joined the top tier of research universities in the Carnegie Classification and was the fastest growing institution in the state. Before leading GMU, Cabrera was president of the Thunderbird School of Global Management, now part of Arizona State University, and dean of IE Business School in Madrid.

As a business educator, Cabrera has played a key role in advancing professional ethics, internationalization, and corporate social responsibility. In 2007, while serving as a senior advisor to the United Nations Global Compact, he was the lead author of the "Principles for Responsible Management Education" (PRME). A United Nations-supported initiative that advances sustainable development through management education, PRME has been adopted by more than 800 schools around the world. He is also a co-founder of the University Global Coalition, a global network of universities working in partnership with the United Nations in support of its Sustainable Development Goals.

Cabrera has been named a "Young Global Leader" by the World Economic Forum, a "Star of Europe" by *Bloomberg Businessweek*, a "Henry Crown Fellow" by the Aspen Institute, and a "Great Immigrant" by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. He has received honorary degrees from Miami Dade College and Universidad Politécnica de Madrid.

Cabrera serves on the boards of the National Geographic Society, Harvard College Visiting Committee, Atlanta Committee for Progress, Metro Atlanta Chamber, and Bankinter Innovation Foundation in Spain. He has served on the board of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, the advisory boards of Georgia Tech and Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey, and the corporate boards of three public companies.

Cabrera earned his M.S. and Ph.D. in psychology and cognitive science from Georgia Tech, which he attended as a Fulbright Scholar. He also holds a B.S. and an M.S. in computer and electrical engineering from Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. His academic publications have been cited thousands of times, and he has been featured or quoted in leading media around the world.

He is married to management scholar and Georgia Tech classmate, Elizabeth. Their son, Alex, is a Georgia Tech graduate and currently a Ph.D. student at Carnegie Mellon University. Their daughter, Emilia, is a graduate of Harvard University. Cabrera is the first native of Spain to serve as president of an American university.

Ms. Laurel Patterson

Director of the Sustainable Development Goals, UNDP's Global Policy Network

Laurel Patterson (Canada) is the Director of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) portfolio in UNDP's Global Policy Network. This multidisciplinary team leads policy innovation, data and futures intelligence for the SDGs.

Laurel was previously Senior Global Advisor for the SDGs in crisis contexts. Prior to joining the Global Policy Network, Laurel was Deputy Director of UN System Affairs leading on UN reform, and Deputy Director for Partnerships in UNDP's Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy.

Laurel held several field-based assignments, including in Somalia, Zimbabwe, Burundi and Angola, and regional advisory positions in Africa and Arab States regions. Before UNDP, she was the Associate Director of International Affairs at Simon Fraser University in Canada, where she led the university's international development portfolio. Laurel also worked with UN Women in Southern Africa, as part of their flagship women, peace and security portfolio.

Laurel has a MPhil Degree in International Relations, Cambridge University, UK. She lives in New York with her husband and three children.