



Charter

Enabling the International Decade of Sciences

Following the declaration of the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (IDSSD), the Executive Council and Advisory Committee of the International Year of Basic Sciences for Sustainable Development (IYBSSD) have launched the Earth-Humanity Coalition to foster and accelerate systemic transformation in current knowledge generation processes, in order to make them work towards equitable well-being for all on a healthy planet. This document briefly describes the vision, mission and strategy of the EHC in working for the Decade.

for Sustainable Development 2024-2033 (IDSSD)

CONTEXT

The International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (IDSSD, 2024-2033) was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in Resolution 77/326 on 25th August 2023. The proclamation was the outcome of the deliberations that occurred during the International Year of Basic Sciences for Sustainable Development (IYBSSD, 2022-2023) and in particular, the World Conference on Basic Sciences and Sustainable Development that took place during 19-22 September 2022 in Belgrade, Serbia.

Building on the achievements of and insights from the IYBSSD, a small group of its partners, including representatives from the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics (IUPAP), the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), the World Academy of Art and Science (WAAS), and The Club of Rome (CoR), elected to promote an international decade, that would go beyond the IYBSSD to harness within a transdisciplinary framework, all domains of knowledge, towards an equitable, habitable planet for all. With the decisive support of the Republic of Serbia and other UN Member States, this ultimately led to the proclamation of the IDSSD by the United Nations. Like the IYBSSD, the IDSSD is organised under the auspices of UNESCO, which as per the IDSSD resolution, will lead the implementation of the Decade, in collaboration with other stakeholders, including those involved in the IYBSSD.

The Resolution proclaiming the IDSSD (UNGA Resolution 77/326, 25th August 2023, emphasis added):

- *Acknowledges* that humanity is exposed to complex challenges, and that the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in all its dimensions requires **a more effective and inclusive approach based on synergistic cooperation of all sciences** – basic and applied sciences as well as social and human sciences, including traditional knowledge – enabling the development of technology, innovation, and education,
- *Emphasizes* that the evidence-based methodologies and the models of operation and collaboration used in research can **support policymakers in finding adequate responses to the present and future complex challenges**, and that open science can **help in promoting and strengthening international cooperation**, and
- *Recognizes* that developing countries face specific challenges in accessing new sciences



and technologies, stressing **the need to bridge the divides within and between countries**, and highlighting the importance of financing and capacity building.

In order to support the implementation of the IDSSD in the most effective way, the group of partners mentioned above, joined by the UNESCO-MOST BRIDGES Coalition, committed to promote the creation of the Earth-Humanity Coalition (EHC), as a large network of organisations committed to fostering a transformative role for the IDSSD that builds upon the outcomes of the IYBSSD.

The implementation plan of the IDSSD by UNESCO addresses a wide range of global challenges within the science-society nexus. Within this context, the EHC aims to concentrate on the specific mission of significant and concrete transformation in how the sciences and humanities, and indeed knowledge generation in general currently operate, in order to be convergent towards salutary societal transformation. This ambitious goal is elaborated further in this Charter. The mission and strategies are intended to be implemented in continuous coordination with UNESCO and in synergy with the efforts of a wider constellation of partners contributing the IDSSD under UNESCO's aegis. The EHC commits to contribute to the regular UNESCO reports to the UNGA on Decadal activities.

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

Science and technology have transformed the human condition, but differentially across humanity, because of a diversity of historical, economic, and socio-cultural stratifications and boundaries, both within and across nations. While some of the barriers to achieving equitable well-being for all have been mitigated, others have been aggravated and new ones have emerged, leading to additional perils and vulnerabilities, particularly for those with the least power in our societies. Examples are climate change, destruction of ecosystems and species, pollution of land, water and atmospheric systems, social fractures, dispossession and violent confrontations. We are thus at a moment where it seems as though modern knowledge institutions are largely failing society, especially the disenfranchised.

The EHC is of the view that the roots of this disjuncture lie in the fragmentation of and barriers between academic disciplines that have heightened over the past century, their alienation from societal challenges, insufficient and often ineffective interactions between knowledge generation, policy-making, and society at large, and knowledge producers shackled to pursue narrow individualistic goals of career growth. A sign of this disjuncture and dysfunction, is the commonly expressed public perception of academia as insular, elitist and extractive. Similar expressions of disconnection between citizens and policy-makers are common, contributing to a growing loss of confidence in societal institutions. In light of these widening gaps between knowledge generation, the wisdom to act, and the ability build public trust and mobilise action for positive change in our societies, there is an urgent need to systemically transform knowledge generation institutions and processes. Indeed, the current multiple crises can serve as a trigger for such a transformation.

VISION

The EHC's vision is the equitable well-being of all on a healthy planet.

The sciences, humanities and the arts, as intertwined expressions of human creativity, when channeled appropriately, can offer meaningful guidance towards achieving this vision.



The EHC is guided by principles of equity and justice that acknowledge, address and redress the disenfranchising legacies of historical imperialism and settler colonialism on people of the Global Majority, including indigenous peoples throughout the world. The EHC thus promotes the view that a flourishing planetary future for all the Earth's inhabitants depends upon developing conditions for inclusion of generally unheard and unseen actors across all the dimensions of marginalisation, to enable them to play a strong role in the transformative process. Such a future also depends upon imagining a new culture of well-being, grounded in leading edge science as well as traditional and local wisdom, in which relationships, collective responsibility, equity and creativity are central tenets. The gaps and divides within and between worldviews, cultures, communities, values and nations need to be bridged.

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MISSION:

The mission of the EHC is to foster and accelerate systemic transformation of knowledge generation processes, in order to make them work towards equitable well-being for all on a healthy planet. This implies intentionally going beyond the status quo of merely continuing the existing processes of research, innovation and knowledge dissemination. This is a mission with significant implications for the structures and mechanisms of knowledge generation. The EHC aims for the joint mobilisation of all domains of knowledge, including active interdisciplinary collaboration between traditionally separated disciplines, as well as grounded, non-hierarchical and fertile collaboration with indigenous, traditional and local knowledge systems. The EHC also aims to foster the articulation of knowledge generation outcomes moulded with and for all strata and sections of society across the diversity of conceptual borders, including governance and policymaking, in order to enable co-constructed pathways for transformation.

By the end of the Decade, society at large must become capable of addressing the emergencies facing humanity and life on Earth, with a greatly enhanced ability to navigate corresponding processes of societal transformation, while facilitating implementation of constructive, peaceful responses to vulnerabilities and conflicts.

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STRATEGY

We identify the following objectives to enable the new role of knowledge generation in and for society:

- 1. IDENTIFY, VISIBILISE and ensure PROLIFERATION** of the wide array of organisations and formations all around the world, that are active at the local, national, and global levels, both within and outside of academia and mainstream institutions, that are striving to address humanity's existential challenges by engaging in transdisciplinary knowledge generation for equity and sustainability. Such already existing **SEEDS OF THE NEW** face many unfair obstacles and are mostly unheeded and ignored, which are barriers to affect change at greater scales of impact.
- 2. CO-CREATE the Web of Earth-Humanity Sciences**, a worldwide network of thousands of transdisciplinary hubs which are the seeds of the new referenced above. The first task of the Web is to acknowledge such exemplary initiatives as resources and showcase their sector-crossing and transdisciplinary production of knowledge and action for equity and sustainability. The web aims to support knowledge as a public good, and will promote context-grounded spaces for transformative exchange, integration, resonance, and fruitful

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collaboration across geographies, cultures, and disciplines, as well as externally directed engagement with all other societal actors, enhancing the project's collective intelligence and outreach.

3. Redress **BARRIERS** to **EQUITY** within the processes of knowledge generation itself.

4. **ENGAGE** with academia and their funders and policy-makers in a joint process to **ADVOCATE** for shifting academic priorities, and reframing their roles in, with and for society, while drawing lessons from the growth (or lack thereof) of the exemplary seeds of the new, in order to enable convergent knowledge generation to take root and flourish.

5. Promote the reframing of the agendas and **FUNDING INSTRUMENTS** used by public and private actors in the domain of research and innovation, in order to channel them towards equitable, sustainable human development, and peace.

6. **CONCEIVE, CO-DESIGN AND CO-CONSTRUCT** the pathways, processes and organisational structures required for the fulfilment of the goals described above, including credible and practical instruments of orientation to navigate the processes of transformation to sustainable development, in active collaboration with policymakers, public and private actors as well as with citizens at large.

7. Foster **MUTUAL LEARNING PROCESSES** to build capacities everywhere, especially among younger generations, and bring insights from transdisciplinary knowledge generation, for critical thinking, questioning, and collective action. Learning cannot be said to have occurred until we have changed our patterns of behaviour. The EHC aims to foster processes of learning across the many chasms of fragmentation characterising the current state of the world, including within the dominant paradigm of knowledge generation, i.e., across the chasms of gender, socio/economic status, cultures, geographies, age, disciplines and worldviews.

8. Formulate in novel ways the **QUESTIONS** critical to the overall goal of equitable well-being and habitability on a healthy planet. Originality in these formulations will derive from the use of a multiplicity of lenses across all knowledge systems and scientific domains, including the humanities and the arts, as well as from prioritising challenges that perilously affect life on Earth.

9. Use **DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURES** to facilitate the unfolding of strategic vectors for implementation. The Web of Science platform will serve as a central nexus for the transdisciplinary hubs to exchange and communicate effectively, for sharing knowledge and approaches. Existing collaborative and open global knowledge-generating infrastructures that have emerged in Big Picture Science and have the potential to seed the infrastructure for such a web will be drawn upon.

10. Foster **SCIENCE DIPLOMACY** to enhance the role and the spirit of integrative and transdisciplinary sciences to overcome fractures created by geopolitical conflicts (many of them related to availability of resources).

11. Promote the development of effective **SCIENCE-POLICY-SOCIETY INTERFACES**, as a specific activity aimed at transforming the relationships between sciences and policy-making processes at multiple levels, as, e.g., already initiated by the Montpellier Process.



12. Contribute to the evolution of **SCIENCE-SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT** from one-way science communication into processes of multi-dimensional engagement and dynamic co-creation of scientific agendas and approaches to challenges of societal relevance.

Guided by the above strategies, the EHC will prioritise a fundamental role for the **joint programming of activities** together with its members and other like-minded entities. The EHC will focus on bringing added value to already existing initiatives at local, regional, and global levels, by fostering collaborative practices and creating the conditions for the emergence of a worldwide, lively ecosystem of organisations and individuals committed to the transformation of knowledge generation processes towards equitable well-being for a healthy planet.

Funding for the activities of the EHC will be sought from the membership of the General Assembly with ability-based contributions, as well as from a variety of other potential sources, public and private, all to be agreed upon.

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