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Enda Murphy
Aparajita Banerjee
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Partnerships and the Sustainable Development Goals

 Springer

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Preface

Partnership for the Sustainable Development Goals is a book that explores the crucial question of how the whole of society – including all its constituent actors and institutions – can collaborate and cooperate to assist with the transformation of our societies in the direction of a sustainable future. The world is facing many global challenges, some of which are existential in nature, including climate crisis, ecosystem degradation, poverty, unprecedented global inequality, as well as the apparent decline of multilateralism. These are all important embedded challenges of and for sustainable development.

Indeed, this preface is written in the shadow of yet another European war, in the midst of the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine in violation of the United Nations Charter. As we write, Russian military forces are bombing Ukrainian cities indiscriminately, killing and wounding innocent civilians, a gross violation of the Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian law. A humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding and has thus far produced more than 1.2 million refugees. As well as this, the war threatens nuclear and environmental disaster across Europe with the abominable Russian shelling of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.

It is correct to reflect upon and ask the question of how such a situation could have been avoided. In that regard, there are undoubtedly a number of answers. But one important avenue, crucial for the book's arguments, is through the pursuit of sustainable development. The uncomfortable reality is that the failure of progressive nations to transition more swiftly away from a reliance on fossil fuels has had significant unintended consequences. In economic terms, nations such as the Russian Federation are essentially oil and gas stations. By importing their fossil fuels, we not only destroy our ability to avoid catastrophic climate change but we also fund militarization and wars of the kind we are now witnessing – wars that are inducing unimaginable misery and an existential nuclear threat. In the midst of war, suffering, and destruction, it is also important not to lose sight of the extent of ongoing cooperation and partnership being pursued as the antithesis of unilateralism; European nations have demonstrated significant solidarity and cooperation through partnership to take responsibility for Ukrainian refugees.

As the world experiences this geopolitical reality that affects peace and security, it places an added premium on the ability of global multilateral partnerships to address the most important global challenges of our time. Based on the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, it is imperative that all nations work towards a United Nations that views global partnerships

around the world as the optimum way to prevent future conflict and deliver sustainable peace to every corner of the globe. This does mean a reorientation of nation states towards multilateralism and enhanced cooperation through partnership.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres outlines Our Common Agenda (2021) for global partnerships to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. This includes better social contracts between governments and people to deliver universal social protection, access to health and education, and to provide decent work and housing for all as well as the urgent reform of global finance. In terms of the climate emergency, the world is off track on limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, as outlined in the Paris Agreement on climate change. Global emissions must be reduced by 45 per cent by 2030. Global funds and partnerships must provide financial and technical support to allow developed and developing member states to address the related triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution by 2050.

Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) offers the 2030 Agenda immense possibilities, but partnerships must orient STI towards the global public good rather than for private benefit. At present, we see large investments in weapons of war and cybersecurity. There should be a drive towards a global digital compact, bringing together governments, the private sector, and civil society, to agree on key principles underpinning global digital cooperation.

To many people, it may seem that the chapters in this book are written by idealists and dreamers because their ambition is to produce widespread change in public policies, behaviors, and technology applications, supported by all stakeholders, to induce a sustainable peace, economic system, environment, society, and governance. The dream of course is that all nations will accelerate sustainability across all the pillars and ultimately realize the co-benefits it produces for sustainability. Together with other means of implementation instruments, partnerships are crucial for leveraging and accelerating societal transitions to a sustainable future.

Dublin, Ireland
March 4, 2022

Enda Murphy
Aparajita Banerjee
Patrick Paul Walsh

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Fourth, we thank the students in UCD's flagship MSc in Sustainable Development program, delivered in partnership with UN SDSN, for valuable debates on our live online classrooms on the role of partnerships in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The students on the (online) program are enrolled from nations all across the globe and provided important context-specific debates about the realities of global challenges for imple-

menting the SDGs. These debates have consistently challenged our thinking on SDG implementation and on the role of partnerships.

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