

Strengthening the Geographical Perspective for Global Sustainability – Call to support The Jena Declaration

It has become increasingly obvious that we cannot meet the timetable for the implementation of the SDG's if we do not make substantive changes in strategy. Indeed, this realization was what led to the launch of *The Jena Declaration* (<https://www.thejenadeclaration.org/>) three years ago. However, the urgency of the situation is now such that a more radical application of the geographical perspective is essential and, moreover, this must have the broad support of all geographers.

As one of its founding partners, together with the World Academy of Art and Science, the Club of Rome, the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences, and several national commissions of UNESCO, the International Geographical Union (IGU) endorses *The Jena Declaration* as a wake-up call for nothing less than a change of paradigm in sustainability policies.

What is *The Jena Declaration*? Put simply: because the current trajectory of progress towards the SDGs will fall substantially short of meeting its targets, we need to explore other possible routes to global sustainability. We need an alternative to overcome humanity's biggest challenges that have thus far exclusively been characterized by a top-down approach of international cooperation. However, to achieve the necessary support we need the engagement of everyone. This means full engagement by those who ultimately form the basis for establishing sustainable futures, i.e. the citizens of the planet, recognizing our responsibilities for each other.

Instead of just enforcing internationally agreed governmental policies and regulations in a one-size-fits-all approach, we need to listen first to the citizens in the places where they live. We need to know and understand their experiences, viewpoints, and insights. In short, we need to take into account and mobilize local and regional competencies in light of their cultural backgrounds and living conditions.

Therefore, when calling for global sustainability, instead of pushing people to engage in a pre-ordained global quest for sustainability, we need to approach key agents and try to develop a deeper societal transformation in a respectful way. This calls for what is, in essence, a double paradigm shift: from top-down to bottom up, and from a global logic to a local logic.

Mutual respect is fundamental to democratic cooperation and, in order to achieve global sustainability in a democratic way, respectful, insightful, bottom-up engagement should therefore be the first pre-condition for all sustainability policies.

The Jena Declaration, which is based on a global survey, calls for us to act together, focusing on the everyday worlds of people around the planet to work towards our sustainable common future. As Garry Jacobs, the President of the World Academy of Art and Sciences suggests, the declaration promotes the concept of "...a broad-based global social movement to change thinking and action for the transition

towards sustainable prosperity (that) requires fine tuning to local needs and conditions". Paul Shrivastava, the newly elected President of the Club of Rome adds: "In these times of poly-crisis we need *The Jena Declaration* and a focus on the cultural, aesthetic and spiritual aspects to be integrated with scientific, systemic analysis solutions for the flourishing of all".

To set up a broad-based global social movement of thousands of subscribers for sustainable prosperity from the ground up, *The Jena Declaration* calls for your support, dear geographers around the world, to join the 1000 signatories, including Nobel Prize Laureates, artists and, most of all, engaged scientists and citizens. In short: we invite you to empower *The Jena Declaration* for geographically and culturally sound global sustainability policies by signing it here:

<https://www.thejenadeclaration.org/sign>.

We are looking forward to meeting all those geographers who are signatories next summer in a special event at the IGC in Dublin 2024 aimed at reinforcing the IGU's engagement in this project together with its global partners.

Michael Meadows, President of IGU

Benno Werlen, Founder of TJD, UNESCO and IGU Commission Chair