

Preface (Volume 53, Issue 4, 2023)

The 2023 New York SDG Summit Outcome

As a plenary organ of the United Nations (UN), the General Assembly (GA) has invoked its principal instrumentality of resolutions to address a variety of global problems. The mirage of being called “recommendations” (Article 11, the UN Charter) has never come in the way of finesse with which the Assembly has invoked its resolutions to address contemporary common concerns. It came out vividly in the adoption of resolution 78/1 of September 29, 2023 that endorsed *Political Declaration of the New York SDG Summit* (September 18-19, 2023) of the high-level political forum on sustainable development organized under the auspices of the UNGA. The process sought to reaffirm and give a boost to implementation of the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) at a half-way mark (2015-2023-2030). The SDGs were adopted by the UNGA resolution 70/1 of September 25, 2015. It has become major global action plan and a milestone in the long line of engagements often laced with normative *halo*. At the mid-way of the 15-year cycle (2015–2030), the performance assessment of 17 Goals shows that the promise of leaving “no one behind” is in peril. In view of the reality of the world we live in and multiple interconnected planetary scale crisis situations, the UN member states have floundered in giving effect to the promises laid down in the 2030 Agenda.

The UN Secretary-General’s report (April 27, 2023) called for a resolute rescue plan for people and planet. The progress came to be reviewed at the 2023 New York *SDG Summit*. The available data (*Revised Zero Draft* of June 8, 2023), underscored the gravity of the situation since, out of 140 targets, “only about 12 per cent are on track; more than half, although showing some progress, are moderately or severely off track; and some 30 per cent have either seen no movement or regressed below the 2015 baseline”. The *Political Declaration* (Annex to the UNGA reso. 78.1 of Sept. 29, 2023) has sought to work out a rescue plan considering the UNSG’s stimulus plan and taken the “pledge to act now, for present and future generations”.

It is in this backdrop that the EPL issue covers a lead article on the 2023 New York SDG Summit Outcome: Rescue Plan for 2030 Agenda as a Wake-up Call for the Decision-makers (B. H. Desai). This article evaluates the process, the promise, the pledge and the SDG rescue plan for the remaining period of the cycle (2023–2030). It suggests that the outcome of the 2023 New York *SDG Summit* would also impinge upon the prospects for the 2024 *Summit of the Future* (New York: September 22-23). The EPL issue contains other articles that have linkages with various components of the SDGs: (i) The Transition to a Circular Built Environment in Australia: An Analysis of the Jurisdictional Policy Framework (Usha Iyer-Raniga et al.); (ii) On Regulating Chinese Consumer Environmental Behaviour to Reduce Global Warming: Some Reflections (Feiyue Li et al.) (iii) Leveraging Artificial Intelligence in Strengthening the Legal Framework for Regulation of Wildlife and Forest Crimes in Nigeria (O. A. Gbadegesin); (iv) Building the Concept of Just Transition in Law: Reflections on its Conceptual Framing, Structure and Content (Hana Müllerová et al.); (v) Green Economy Policies in the Digital Transformation of Forest Management in Indonesia (A. M. Rohmy et al.).

In view of the planetary level crisis at work and the graphic reality of the world we live in, the UN member states will need to resolutely adhere to the solemn *Political Declaration* of the 2023 New York *SDG Summit* for “leaving no one behind”. It would call for bold, ambitious, accelerated and transformative actions for a sustainable world for people and planet. It remains to be seen as to how the UN member states earnestly walk-the-talk to stand by the planet Earth.

- **Bharat H. Desai**