

Editorial

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The year 2015 was particularly important for global action on sustainable development. In September 2015, the 193 countries of the UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 Development Agenda titled Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Agenda included 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its associated 169 targets. While the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted some fifteen years ago at the initiative of the then Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, the sustainable development goals have been adopted by the General Assembly after long deliberations and negotiations and hence are associated with much higher level of commitments by national governments. It is expected that the world would see a much better performance vis-à-vis the achievements that were made with respect to MDGs.

In December 2015, the global community took another landmark decision during the 21st Annual Conference of the Parties (COP) to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the 11th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. The participating 195 countries agreed, by consensus, to the final global pact, the Paris Agreement, to reduce emissions as part of the method for reducing greenhouse gas. Such an agreement was expected much before 2012 when the first commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol ended. The members agreed to reduce their carbon output "as soon as possible" and to do their best to keep global warming "to well below 2 degrees C".

Achieving the SDGs as well as the goals set in the Paris Agreement, however, will not be easy and they will necessitate a series of actions on several fronts, including creation of knowledge and innovation. While on SDGs, much of the action will need to happen in developing countries, developed countries have to extend full cooperation. On climate change, however, much of the action, particularly on mitigation, will need to happen in the developed world. Developing countries, though will do their best in climate change mitigation, they will need to give more emphasis on climate change adaptation compared to developing countries as they are more vulnerable. Securitization of climate change, hence, though has become a global issue, it is more important for the developing world.

Much of the climate change concerns revolve around production and use of energy. Hence, the world needs technologies that help production of energy from sources that are climate friendly and those that offer significant gains in energy efficiency. While, significant climate mitigation can be achieved with diffusion of existing technologies, it is also quite obvious that they will not be enough to achieve the climate change mitigation goal as set in the Paris Agreement. We therefore need faster innovations and their deployment.

While we talk about cleaner technology, we must not lose sight of the fact that about 3 billion people in the world do not have access to adequate energy. Moreover, the energy they use is not clean enough and causes serious health problems. One of the SDGs, is, thus to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and clean energy for all. Nearly all of those without access to clean energy rely on biomass for their cooking energy needs and they use it in such a way which is hazardous. It is not going

to be easy for all of them to stop using biomass and shift to some cleaner fuel like electricity and gas. However, they need not use this form of energy at the cost of their help as solutions are available that are affordable as well. The challenge is how such solutions reach the people who need them.

Along with emphasizing on combating climate change and protecting forests, oceans, and biodiversity, SDGs aimed at ending poverty and hunger, improving health and education. These will require more production and consumption which in turn, may cause more ecological stress. Hence, SDGs also highlighted the need for making cities more sustainable and promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns. Key to these will be minimization of waste generation as well recycling of waste to add value. Such waste can be used for generation of energy, habitat development, and even energy efficiency, particularly in space conditioning. While waste to energy has received a good deal of attention over the last few years, the latter uses are not so talked about.

This note is not intended to provide a comprehensive discussion on what is needed to address the objective of SDGs and climate change goals, but rather, it highlights some of the issues that this journal normally deals with. The articles in the current volume make an endeavour to improve our understanding on some these critical issues.