



UNGA 75 and the Path to a Sustainable Future

We enter the historic 75th UN General Assembly during a pandemic that has laid bare the fragility of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite a concerted global response during this crisis, the recent [Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020](#) highlights the threats to our hard-earned gains and overall ability to accomplish the 2030 goals.

After a decade of great progress, 71 million people are projected to slide back into extreme poverty. 270 million people could face acute food insecurity by the end of 2020. This reality is heart-wrenching, but the pandemic has also demonstrated that we are capable of more than we could have dreamed of just months ago.

There has been significant effort to work together across sectors, borders, and systems in service of a common goal. We've seen unlikely partners band together to produce PPE at scale. Former competitors unite to share science and research. Governments fast-track solutions to accelerate public health responses. And we hope these many inspiring examples of collaboration translate into momentum for global cooperation.

This year for [Global Goals Week](#), more than 100 partners have joined together to meaningfully advance the SDGs. As a [recent report](#) noted, a majority of Americans want to see greater global cooperation and a future shaped by these goals. With such widespread support for collective action, now is the moment to redouble our efforts to shape a sustainable future together.

At the Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU) we have focused on promoting commercial diplomacy and expanding trade. But looking ahead, we all need to embrace an even broader set of strategies to ensure we achieve these essential goals.

1: Treat the SDGs Holistically

While the SDGs cover an array of global challenges, COVID-19 has demonstrated that each one is overlapping and mutually dependent. Disruptions in the food supply chain correlate with increases in non-communicable lifestyle diseases, connecting SDGs 2 & 3. Similarly, the closure of schools (SDG 4) for 1.6 billion children worldwide also hurts access to nurses, free meals, and health and nutrition services such as vaccinations, deworming and iron supplementation.

Moving forward, efforts should be made to address the SDGs in at least tandem or tridem. When a multinational IT company enters a remote market, they should work with the local public sector to share their offerings and improve agricultural insights and distance learning as well. And when a food and beverage company bridges the last mile with their products, their supply chain should be made available to help increase access to vaccines and medications, too.



2: Ignite Mass Innovation in Government

There are many examples of powerful government innovations that help ensure no one is left behind. In Indonesia, recyclable bottles can be used as a form of payment for public transit, reducing waste while making public transit accessible for those with less. The Mongolian government is working with the private sector to leverage blockchain and AI to detect counterfeit medicine and reduce a major cause of deaths and health complications in their country. And, with help from Code for America, California's district attorneys are clearing criminal records for activities that were once illegal but are now permitted, opening up access to better jobs and housing.

But accomplishing the SDGs requires that our governments establish a culture of mass innovation at a scale we have never seen before. It requires political will at every level to seek and establish partnerships with the private sector, NGOs and others based on the latest science and technology. Only then will we truly harness our collective innovation and maximize this widespread spirit of partnership.

3: Embrace Servant Leadership

We have [recently seen a commitment by CEOs](#) across industries to deliver value for all stakeholders. And there is genuine excitement among CEOs to live up to this bold promise. Doing so begins with embracing servant leadership and unlocking the door to a more inclusive world. We must hold ourselves accountable and rigorously measure how we are serving the highest priority needs of our people and communities. Leaders are stepping up not only by delivering economic opportunity, but also by using their shared scale, reach and expertise to drive positive impact around the globe and long-term progress on the SDGs.

Eight months ago, nobody could have predicted the combined challenges that the world would be facing. We've seen untold examples of camaraderie rise out of this trying time, but as part of this historic week it's more important than ever that we commit to a recovery that aligns with the SDGs. The pandemic and continued economic volatility reveal the very real stakes ahead, and only big thinking and bold leadership will ensure we reach these common goals. Against a backdrop of so much change and hardship, the depth of our commitment to collaboration and progress will determine the quality of our future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Tichansky". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Peter Tichansky
President and Chief Executive Officer