

On December 5th, UVM hosted a dynamic Vermont Global Exchange meeting of guest speakers, VGE members, UVM faculty and UVM graduate students, who were keen on this gathering and future events.

Here are Fran Stoddard's notes of key ideas discussed.

Chris Williams, Director of NY office of UN Human Habitat Settlements Programme

UN Habitat is based in Nairobi. Chris runs the New York & N. American liaison office for the Nairobi office

New Urban Agenda 2016-2036 offers guidance to countries about urbanization
30-50% Urban now is predicted to become 80% for non-industrialized countries

How to make that economic and climate challenge

Sustainable Development Goals for are now everyone, not just under-developed countries

All countries have shared challenges and prosperity

Inequality issues are key

There are more targets (147+ now, compared to MDGs that had only 21)

SDGs must be owned by wide numbers of people, corporations, governments

UN only one of many orgs involved, facilitator, but more outside involvement

Local efforts are key now

Local 2030 : volunteer local reviews: to use for planning and for monitoring

Race to Zero.

There is a focus on and funding for integration of crossover SDGs

UN did bring together ministries to use resources to improve sanitation

Discussions on how to use existing funding for better use of existing resources
for water resources for the benefit of health, women, environment

Headwinds have slowed down SDG work to meet 2030 goals: Covid, political
environment; no consensus now,

Our Common Agenda looks 75 to 100 yrs out.

COP 27

Mitigation vs Adaptation needs more attention and funding. Damage issues were key.

We are dealing with 1.0 issues with 2.0 frame

Asim Zia, UVM Professor, recently returned from COP 27

How do we keep carbon in the ground? Developing countries would have to make major commitments to make 1.5-degree goals.

How do we re-envision development? Housing, food, etc. can't be done the way we have done in the past.

40B pledged by developed nations, 100B is the goal, but is not enough

And there is no funding for loss and damage

Climate injustice at the core of the struggle

We will *all* suffer, but there is still climate denial. And, most predictions have been underestimated; the consequences will be much more dire.

We need to look at issues more holistically. The social SDGs are getting attention and improvement, but the climate SDGs initiatives aren't working well; goals aren't being met and that is putting the social SDGs at risk. The goals and work toward them need to be more interconnected.

Blend early warnings with early actions

Trust young professionals

Must reduce greenhouse gas by over 40% and even higher for US

Biodiversity: loss of 70% Tropical forest conservation essential.

Climate red cliffs system

Agencies are often unsuccessful; displacement of people is unavoidable.

Partnerships are hopeful, especially with indigenous groups

Yacouba Jacob Bogre, ED, AALV

AALV has worked with immigrants from numerous countries.

Vermont has had several influxes of immigrants in roughly this order:

Vietnam

Balkans

Sudan, Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia

Syria

South Asia, Burma, Bhutan

Afghanistan, Ukraine

Focus is on peer-to-peer support for purposes of common language and culture

Mental health support for PTSD are critical

New Americans get stuck between public assistance and work requirements

We need to allow professionals to get jobs, get certified more quickly

Develop programs to make certification accessible and streamlined

It is difficult to get the proper protections for health, etc.

What can help?

Private sponsorship

Access to land

Skill training

Refugees: 30% end up in refugee camps. The other 70% end up in cities, in slums

Sweden has done well with bold policies and integrating immigrants, but it is politically risky

Open discussion

Nation states are still powerful although local involvement is key and growing. UN needs to be more active to give local voices more influence.

Free market of humans (not just markets)

Corporations are acting like nation states. Capitalism is extractive; the economic system is problematic.

COP 27 had more lobbyists for fossil fuels than NGOs that are trying to do something.