

PREFACE

ALLAM AHMED

World Association for Sustainable Development, UK

World Sustainable Development Outlook 2023 includes a selection of the best papers presented during the 21st International Conference of the World Association for Sustainable Development (WASD), held in London, United Kingdom, 13-15 November 2023. The papers selected had tremendous scope in both focus and source, covering a broad geographical spectrum including Africa, America, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, and the Middle East.

The conference brought together a wide range of academicians, researchers, government officials, development practitioners and policy-makers from all over the world to participate in a forum that allowed them to share experiences, develop innovative approaches, and create partnerships to enhance knowledge sharing and international scientific cooperation.

The theme of the conference was carefully chosen to discuss the theoretical and practical aspects of the role of human capital in the new digital transformation (DT) era towards achieving the **UN's 2030 Agenda** and its **17 SDGs**. Human capital (*knowledge, abilities and skills*) is considered to be a stimulus to the innovation process for economic growth and development. Moreover, DT is a key driver of knowledge creation and economic growth. It empowers individuals, groups and organisations to find solutions to social and economic challenges. In this conference, participants learned about the importance of DT in the transformation of human capital towards achieving the UN Agenda 2030 and its 17 SDGs.

The conference participants also addressed the question of how DT can contribute and enhance competitiveness for graduates. Job creation, economic diversification and the act of inventing new products and services are increasingly seen as vital for a country's future development. Policy-makers seek to ensure that national economies benefit from the digital revolution by building capacity for the creation of new ideas, technologies, organisational know-how and innovation.

The structure of the conference's myriad knowledge and learning events were designed to foster maximum peer-learning and experience sharing. The format allowed for panellists to present their views on specific topical issues followed by a question and answer session.

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This provided opportunities for delegates to effectively engage in dialogue and share their individual experiences and perspectives on the given issue or topic.

The conference was a great opportunity for all scholars, government representatives and policy-makers to get an external, unbiased point of view on the matters relating to their fields of practice.

Similar to previous conferences organised by WASD, the response to our call-for-papers was very high with more than 68 abstracts and papers submitted covering a wide range of focus and scope of the theme of the conference.

To this end, the selected chapters have emphasised the importance of creating an enabling environment for DT and innovation and creativity to accelerate the pace of achieving the SDGs. The different papers selected for the conference have tremendous scope in both focus and source, covering a broad geographical spectrum from across the world.

The main topics of the papers are: *Human Capital; Education, Knowledge and Learning; Artificial Intelligence; Business and Entrepreneurship Development; Digital Planning and Technologies in Construction; and Sustainable Housing.*

We hope that the ensemble of papers presented in this volume will help to stimulate debate amongst scholars, researchers and policy-makers, and that you will find this volume interesting and thought-provoking.

We would like to congratulate the authors for their valuable contributions, and we are grateful to our track chairs and many reviewers for graciously offering their invaluable comments that have enriched the quality of the papers in this volume, and for making available to us their valuable time and efforts. Our most sincere thanks go to all of the keynote speakers and presenters who shared with us their expertise and knowledge.

Finally, we would like also to thank all the members of WASD organising committee, particularly Mrs Janet Snow (International Co-ordinator and Editor), Revathy Kumar, Sundar Maruthu and their team at Medlar (Typesetting and Design), Kumar Gaurav (Webmaster), Souheil Zaied (Graphic Designer), N. Joseph Navinraj (ePublishing), Dr Samar Ahmed (WASD Executive) and Lena Alam (Youth Champion), and all the volunteers from across the world for their continuous and endless assistance and support to the conference.

We hope that you will find this volume informative and engaging. Any feedback you can provide will be greatly appreciated as we are always looking at ways in which we can improve your experience.

Allam Ahmed

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