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Opinion

Developing Global Alliances to Combat Climate Change

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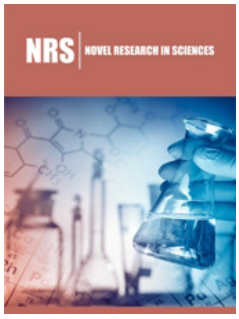

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Opinion

The 2030 Agenda came into force in 2015. There were 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, that needed to be undertaken in an integrated and comprehensive manner, promoting the collaboration between all sectors of society. It is worth mentioning that the different 17 SDGs are remarkably interconnected with each other and need to be addressed jointly holistically to resolve planetary problems such as gender equality and biodiversity conservation.

Out of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 17 is the one responsible for executing and revitalizing the partnerships for sustainable development. It encourages the right way of working between the different stakeholders, through the development of multi-stakeholder alliances, which are imperative to foster sustainable development. The assumption behind this point is that these types of partnerships can help promote the exchange of knowledge, experience, technology, and other resources between the different parties so to achieve the global development agenda of 2030. Furthermore, multi-stakeholder partnerships can encourage a greater degree of international cooperation and coordination [1].

In this short article we will review how SDG 17 "Partnerships for Development" may facilitate the implementation of SDG 13 "Climate Action" whose main goal is to reduce the impact of climate change on our planet. Climate change, as we all know is a planetary problem resulting in unprecedented rising levels of greenhouse gas emissions, severe fluctuations in global patterns and rising sea levels [2].

The main aim of the Paris Agreements (COP 21) that took place in December 2015 was to reduce greenhouse gas emissions limit global warming to 1.5 °C pre-industrial levels by the year 2030, just seven years away. The United Nations Former General Secretary Ban Ki Moon during adoption of the Paris Agreement in COP-21 in Paris noted that the Paris Agreement was a monumental triumph for both people and our planet, and that it set the basis to progress towards ending poverty, strengthening peace, and ensuring a life of dignity and opportunity for all. There is therefore an urgency for global economies to move towards becoming climate-resilient and achieving net-zero emissions [2].

What is important to emphasize and accentuate is that since the Paris Agreement negotiation and the SDGs are managed in different platforms, there is the complication that entails the lack of synergy with regard to data collection in the sense that as they cannot provide data and information that relate sufficiently to each other, and there is therefore still room for improvement in this regard.

The 17 SDGs (and 169 targets) incorporate certain elements of climate policy that are associated to:

A. Mitigation of greenhouse gases (GHG).

B. Adaptation to adverse impacts of climate change.

C. Finance.

D. Technology transfer for developing countries.

E. Capacity building for all stakeholders.

F. Encouraging cooperation and partnerships among all.

Ari [3] carried out an analysis on how the above elements were associated to the different SDGs, including of course SDG 17. It was observed that SDG 17 was the second SDG most interconnected with the Paris Climate agreements [3]. Also very much connected to the latter was SDG 17 "Affordable and Clean Energy". A certain way to mitigate climate change is to transition to renewable energies, in such a way that adverse effects on the environment may be avoided [4-6]. This transition towards renewables is necessary to be able to hold global average temperatures below 1.5 °C above preindustrial times as established by the Paris agreements. According to the United Nations, energy use is the main contributor to climate change, accounting for 73% of human caused greenhouse gases [4]. SDG 7 emphasizes that all planetary citizens should have access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy. Therefore, this goal, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are reduced thereby diminishing the effect of climate change.

An assessment is necessary to determine the synergies and trade-offs between climate impacts and climate action in relation to the 169 targets of the 2030 Agenda. It is of considerable concern that climate change might influence all facets of sustainable development, making it essential to understand how climate change can enhance the SDGs and vice versa. Although it is widely accepted that the two are related, however there is limited research at the SDG level regarding potential synergies and trade-offs [3].

What is clear at this point in the discussion is that knowledge and evidence dealing with sustainable development and climate actions appears to be rather disperse, and are divided between many different institutions, locations, and disciplines, both locally and internationally. This represents a critical obstacle towards achieving an integrated and holistic understanding of the potential impacts of the SDGs on climate action. Such shared knowledge and shared experience are essential for the development of awareness and policy support programs aimed at curbing the problem of climate change. Furthermore, there is a need for climate policy research to integrate methods and data from different disciplines such as the natural sciences, engineering, and humanities. Interdisciplinary research in this regard should therefore be promoted and further efforts are necessary for the development of practical frameworks to explore the associations among the different SDGs.

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