Global Leadership in the 21st Century

PROJECT OVERVIEW

There is urgent need to fill the global leadership vacuum in order to address the complex, pressing challenges confronting humanity today. Leadership is needed at all levels in all fields. Leadership is a catalytic process that can accomplish what leaders cannot. The leadership needed must be inspired by universal values and visionary ideas, energized by high goals and awareness of untapped opportunities, given expression by courageous individuals, implemented by innovative organizations, and fulfilled by awakening and unleashing the aspirations of the whole society.

The World Academy of Art & Science, in partnership with the United Nations at Geneva, is conducting a multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral project highlighting innovative strategies and effective principles to accelerate the emergence of dynamic leadership for successful implementation of the SDGs. The project will involve consultations with IGOs, nation states, business, scientific research and educational institutions, civil society and youth organizations. It will culminate in a major two-day conference at UNOG in October 2020, followed by a report to the UN, educational and other outreach strategies. The overarching objective of the project is to become a catalyst to accelerate the emergence of dynamic leadership for global development. Its strategy is to consciously apply at the global level essential principles of effective leadership that have previously served as catalysts for rapid transformation at the level of organizations, nation states and international organizations.

The unanimous adoption of the SDGs by 193 countries is an unprecedented achievement affirming a global consensus regarding a comprehensive set of universal values and practical goals all nations commit to achieve. But the affirmation of these shared values and common goals represent only one essential element of what is required to realize them in practice. Other essential requirements for effective leadership need urgently to be addressed. Governments alone cannot provide the leadership required to achieve these goals. Global institutions are not sufficiently equipped, funded or empowered to be held accountable for realizing them. Development is a social process, not a government program. Realization of these goals will require unprecedented levels of commitment and coordination by all stakeholders in all sectors of society at the local, national and global level. Effective leadership is required to generate, unleash, align and integrate a vast multitude of initiatives. Inspiring ideas, individuals, innovative organizations and dynamic initiatives all have essential roles to play. A powerfully motivating vision of the world the SDGs can bring about is also needed to generate the energy and momentum required to overcome the resistance of vested interests, obstacles and inertia. A broad-based global social movement will be needed to fill the vacuum and achieve the goals in a timely manner.

In 2013 the World Academy of Art & Science was invited by the UN Office in Geneva to co-organize and conduct a highly successful conference of 200 political leaders, diplomats, scientists, educators and civil society leaders on the nexus of global challenges confronting humanity today. Since then WAAS has conducted over 30 conferences and roundtables around the world and published more than 100 papers examining different dimensions of these challenges. This new project represents the next step in a process designed to evolve a comprehensive effective strategy to address these challenges.

The current project will involve consultations and contributions from a cross-section of organizations and individuals to draw insights from successful leadership initiatives of different types, at different levels and in different fields that have served as effective catalysts for rapid social progress up to now. It will seek to make more conscious the deep drivers of social evolution to meet the urgent demands of the world today. The consultations will involve dialog with leaders of international organizations, government, business, academia, civil society, youth and the media. The research findings, conference conclusions and practical recommendations for implementation will then be presented in a final report. Perspectives and insights draw from the project will then be widely disseminated through creation of university level courses and the media.
Scope: The project will consist of six phases:

1. **Launch Phase** – to identify and forge partnerships with a cross-section of representative organizations and groups of individuals able to collaborate on the project;
2. **Consultation and Research Phase** – 14 working groups have been set up to examine selected themes and prepare position papers drawing insights from research papers, on-line consultations, workshops and e-conferences with representatives of international organizations, national governments, academic and research institutions, business, youth, media and NGOs;
3. **e-Conference Phase** – experts and participating partner organizations will be invited to present their research findings and recommendations during a multi-day, multi-session e-conference during the first half of June 2020 to serve as inputs to the project and consideration for inclusion in the final conference and report to the UN;
4. **Conference Phase** – to hold a two-day conference at the UN in Geneva on 27-28 October 2020 at the time of the UN 75th Anniversary celebrations;
5. **Report Phase** – to prepare a final report presenting insights, strategies, examples and practical guidelines for fostering global leadership; and
6. **Out-reach Phase** – to set in place educational and training courses on global leadership for delivery through universities and training programs and for dissemination through partners and academia with the support of the media.

Timeline: The first 5 phases will be completed by the end of 2020.

**World Academy of Art & Science:** WAAS is a non-governmental organization founded in 1960 by eminent intellectuals from around the world to develop new perspectives and innovative approaches to meet the global challenges confronting humanity. It presently has nearly 800 Fellows elected for distinction in their fields of work combined with distinguished service addressing global social challenges from a multi-disciplinary, integrated, value-based perspective. The Academy is incorporated as a tax-exempt organization in California and has been accorded special consultative status with ECOSOC and consultative status with UNESCO. It works in concert with and through a network of centers, partners, universities, national academies and other collaborating institutions.

**Partner Institutions:** The project will be conducted in collaboration with other leading organizations drawn from academia, business and civil society. In addition to the different agencies of the UN system, other institutions to be invited to collaborate include CERN, Club de Madrid, Club of Rome, IEEE Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Future Capital Initiative, International Centre for Advanced Studies on Civilization and Culture of the Levant, Inter-Academy Partnership, International Association of University Presidents, Millennium Project, Nizami Ganjavi International Centre, UN Global Impact, World University Consortium, World Economic Forum, media organizations and international youth networks.

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