Declaration of the Alpbach-Laxenburg Group
August 26, 2014

Seven decades ago, just weeks after the end of the Second World War in Europe, Alpbach, Austria hosted some of Europe’s leading thinkers to help chart a new course to a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Europe. Three decades later, at the height of the Cold War, leaders from both the East and West established the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) in Laxenburg, Austria, to bring systems science to bear on global problems that crossed political lines. In 2014, with the world at another crossroads, the European Forum Alpbach and IIASA have joined hands to help the world face this generation’s unprecedented challenges.

Leaders from across many sectors of society – politics, business, science, civil society, and the arts – have increasingly recognized the unprecedented dangers and opportunities of our age. Scientists have adopted the new term Anthropocene to indicate that humanity is changing the planet in dangerous ways: climate change, ocean acidification, destruction of biodiversity, and the over-use of land, water and other resources. Yet billions of people remain trapped in poverty or in low-incomes and yearn for economic improvement, while another billion or more people will soon be added to the world’s population. Our generation uniquely faces the challenge of combining the imperatives of economic development, social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

The opportunities are no less profound. We are inheritors of the greatest scientific and technological knowledge in human history. With advances in information and communications technology, public health, agronomics, earth sciences and other areas, humanity can accomplish goals that hitherto looked to be out of reach: ending extreme poverty; ensuring universal literacy; providing every child with the opportunity to complete a secondary education; ensuring access to modern energy for everyone.

In 2012, world leaders recommitted to the concept of Sustainable Development as the guiding principle for a new direction that combines the most vital economic, social, and environmental objectives. The leaders agreed that a new set of Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs, should be adopted by 2015 to help guide the world on this new course. They also declared in other forums that 2015 would be the year in which the world finally overcomes persistent divisions to adopt a global framework to control human-induced climate change and finance sustainable development.

The Financing for Development Conference (FfD) will take place in Addis Ababa, July 12-15. The Sustainable Development Goals are to be adopted at the United Nations in September 2015. The world’s governments are pledged to adopt a new climate agreement at the 21st Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris, 2015.
In view of the world’s pressing challenges and the urgent timetable of global diplomacy in 2015, the European Forum Alpbach and IIASA invited a select group of world leaders across the five main sectors of global society (political, business, science, civil society, and the arts) to form a new high-level group, the Alpbach-Laxenburg Group (ALG). The ALG will give active support to global diplomacy during the watershed year 2015 and thereafter to the implementation of the new agreements.

The Alpbach-Laxenburg Group began its work with a focus on Inequality: the stark fact that large parts of global society are still excluded from the many benefits of our era, and also face the greatest threats from the looming environmental dangers. We identify three groups in particular: the world poorest people, often forgotten and struggling daily for survival; the world’s women and girls, still facing legal and social barriers to full participation and empowerment; and the world’s young, facing the stark crises of high unemployment and seemingly diminished lifetime economic prospects. Yet the Alpbach-Laxenburg Group also emphasizes that the recent advances in science and technology – most dramatically the information and communications revolution (ICT) – have the potential to empower these groups and thereby promote societies that are fair, inclusive, and with broadly shared prosperity.

We are, in short, in need of a new global path towards sustainable development, guided by the SDGs, and bolstered by the 2015 agreements on finance and climate. These agreements must be grounded in equality, the fundamental principle embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that all individuals, of every country, race, gender, religion, and ethnicity, should have the opportunity to lead lives with dignity, opportunity, decent work, and the fulfillment of basic needs. Success will require the best of our science, technologies, culture, and human values.

The members of the ALG are committed to devote their efforts on behalf of these global objectives, and to work assiduously in their realization. The ALG includes leaders from all parts of the world, and all segments of society. They are not only thought leaders in their own respective fields but also members of key global networks of excellence. The ALG members are also committed to mobilize their respective networks to deepen the global cooperation to achieve equitable Sustainable Development.

**The Commitments of the ALG (to be regularly updated)**

**Institutions**

The *European Forum Alpbach*, led by President Franz Fischler, is pledged to hosting the ALG in the years ahead, providing a venue, annual forum, and access to European and global leaders.
IIASA, under the direction of Professor Dr. Pavel Kabat, is pledged to mobilizing global systems science, utilizing its own world-class staff, and its worldwide partnerships, to deepen the scientific understanding of sustainable development.

The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), directed by Professor Jeffrey D. Sachs, is pledged to mobilizing its global network of more than 200 universities and national chapters to support the UN General Assembly and member states in defining and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Individual Members will note many specific opportunities for the ALG in the coming months.

Statements of the Alpbach-Laxenburg Group

During the next year, the Alpbach-Laxenburg Group will issue short statements on vital issues. The first of these will be “Including the Excluded” (tentative title, September 2014). Other tentative statements include: “Holding the 2-Degree C Commitment” (November 2014), “Women’s Empowerment and Participation,” (February 2015), “Energy for All” (March 2015), “Education for All” (April 2015), “Financing for Sustainable Development” (June 2015), “Adopting the Sustainable Development Goals” (August 2015), “Success in the Paris Climate Talks” (November 2015). These statements will be delivered to world leaders and posted on the ALG website.

Upcoming Meetings

September 22, am, SDSN, Financing for Development, UN

September 22, am, SDSN, Deep Decarbonization, UN

October 9-10, SDSN and World Business Council on Sustainable Development (WBCSD), Low-Carbon Technology Pathways, Washington DC

November, 2014 Brussels Briefing with the new EU Commission

November 15-16, G20 Summit, Brisbane, Australia

March, 2015, IIASA, Laxenburg, Austria

August, 2015, Alpbach, Austria
Participants of Alpbach-Laxenburg Group Retreat:

H.E. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Former Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission for the Government of India

Ian Chubb, Chief Scientist of Australia and Professor of Biology

Jining Chen, President of Tsinghua University, China

Robbert Dijkgraaf, Director and Leon Levy Professor of the Institute of Advanced Study, Princeton, USA

Franz Fischler, President of the European Forum Alpbach, former European Union Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries and former Austrian Federal Minister for Agriculture and Forestry

H.E. Tarja Halonen, Former President of Finland

Clemens Hellsberg, President of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Austria

Pavel Kabat, Director General and Chief Executive Officer of IIASA, member of the Leadership Council for the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network and Professor of Earth System Science at Wageningen University

Pascal Lamy, Former Director General of the World Trade Organisation, former European Commissioner for Trade and Honorary President of the Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute, France

H.E. János Martonyi, Former Minister for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hungary

H.E. Mary Robinson, Former President of Ireland and President of the Mary Robinson Foundation Climate Justice

Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute, Columbia University, Director of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network and Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon

H.E. Irene Giner-Reichl, Austrian Ambassador to China

Peter C. Aichelburg, President of the Academic Council, European Forum Alpbach

Peter Balas, Head of the EU Group for Ukraine and former Deputy Director General of DG Trade for the European Commission

Chin-Min Lee, Special Advisor to the IIASA Director General and CEO, IIASA
Wolfgang Lutz, IIASA Program Director for World Population, Founder and Director of the Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital and Professor of Applied Statistics at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration

Nebojsa Nakicenovic, Deputy Director General and Deputy Chief Executive Officer of IIASA, Professor of Energy Economics at the Vienna University of Technology and Director of Global Energy Assessment

Philippe Narval, Managing Director of the European Forum Alpbach (EFA)

Kalypso Nicolaidis, Professor of International Relations and Director of the European Studies Center at Oxford University

Sonja Puntscher Riekmann, Vice President, European Forum Alpbach (EFA); Head and Professor, Salzburg Centre of European Union Studies, Paris Lodron University Salzburg

Andrä Rupprechter, Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management of the Republic of Austria

Ursula Schmidt-Erfurth, Department of Ophthalmology, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria

Björn Stigson, Former President of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and Special Advisor to the IIASA Director General and Chief Executive Officer

Vladimir Šucha, Director General of the Joint Research Center (JRC) of the European Commission and Professor at Comenius University Bratislava

Miroslav Veskovic; Rektor of the University of Novi Sad and EU Danube Strategy Priority Area 7 Coordinator

Jan Zielonka, Professor of European Politics, University of Oxford; Ralf Dahrendorf Professorial Fellow, St Antony’s College, Oxford
Alpbach-Laxenburg Group members unable to attend:

Fahad Bin Mohammed Al-Attiya, Executive Chairman of the Qatar National Food Security Programme and former Advisor to His Highness the Heir Apparent of the State of Qatar

Petr Aven, Chairman of the Supervisory Board at the Alfa Bank and former Foreign Economic Relations Minister of the Russian Federation

Peter Bakker, President and CEO of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, Switzerland

Ralph J. Cicerone, President of the National Academy of Sciences, USA

Vuk Jeremic, Former President of the United Nations General Assembly and President of the Center for International Relations and Sustainable Development, Serbia

Mario Molina, Nobel Laureate for Chemistry, President of Centro Mario Molina, Mexico, member of the U.S. President’s Committee of Advisors in Science and Technology and holder of the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom

Rajendra K. Pachauri, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), head of The Energy and Resources Institute and Director General of the Energy and Resources Institute, India

Michael Sandel, Political Philosopher and Professor of Harvard University, USA