

Foreword

It is a great honour for me to be writing the foreword to this book. It is yet another wonderful example of the successful and long-standing cooperation between the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS). As the director of KAS Malaysia, I very much look forward to continuing and enhancing the fruitful cooperation between ISIS Malaysia and KAS in the future.

For KAS, there are important points of overlap with the topics and goals of the Agenda 2030. With an entire department specifically focused on the agenda, and with its regional programmes on energy security and climate change, KAS makes an important contribution to the current debate on sustainable development by providing analyses, and hence a basis for possible political action.

As Malaysia's premier think tank, ISIS Malaysia focuses on objective, independent and strategic policy research, and on fostering dialogue and debate among the public and private sectors and academia. It has a wide range of expertise from security, to economy, to social policy, and environmental and sustainability issues. "Making SDGs Matter: Leaving No One Behind" thus covers an area of high importance to both ISIS Malaysia and KAS alike.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are at the heart of the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development. We refer to sustainable development today when we talk about how best to shape the future of our planet. Achieving this is not only a principal joint responsibility, but also a challenge to all of us. It is important to continuously stress that sustainability refers to more than protecting the environment. Instead, achieving sustainable development requires fundamental changes across every major sphere, including the governance, institutional, economic, social and environmental sectors. That is why the SDGs were based on a holistic and global approach.

It is precisely ISIS Malaysia's cross-cutting expertise that makes it a credible institution to address the issue of SDGs as it takes far-reaching approaches into consideration to achieve true sustainability. By selecting the authors and topics included in this book, ISIS Malaysia ensured to shed light on the holistic complexity of the SDGs. All authors have different backgrounds and various fields of expertise. To break down the complex issue of the SDGs, the authors have analysed key issues and challenges based on four areas: rural development and food security; climate change adaptation; institutional strength and reform; and the rights of the indigenous people.

With regard to rural development and food security, the book suggests to rethink rural transformation in relation to the SDGs, especially stressing the need for an overall inclusive sustainable growth trajectory. Additionally, it underlines the responsibility that key stakeholders at all levels share for taking ownership and exercising commitment for Malaysia to realise its full potential.

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Looking at institutional strength and reform, the authors analyse how the political system of a country impacts its implementation of the SDGs. The role of civil society in localising SDGs, especially involving multistakeholder engagement to ensure “no one is left behind”, is also taken into account.

On the aspect of climate change, the book posits a new climate change policy for Malaysia; using carbon pricing for its future climate policy efforts. The authors also look at the adequacy of various climate change adaptation measures in place, and at other potential green growth initiatives, such as circular economy. The book offers a glance at projected future climate change in Malaysia and the need for a robust climate change policy to increase its climate resilience as the country further develops economically.

And with regard to the rights of the indigenous people, the authors examine such aspects as conservation tourism and the participation of local communities in formulating policy for positive socio-economic development. They also raise the question of how environmental degradation impacts the rights and livelihood of indigenous communities.

Overall, the book presents a unique collection of policy recommendations to address the issues and challenges identified. The authors propose solutions that can transcend local, national and international levels, and with that they demonstrate how the SDGs can be utilised to address the issues across the four policy areas.

As the world is facing a terrible pandemic that has the most devastating and destabilising effects on all of us, and caused tremendous burdens for health systems and the economy, it is likely that priorities might shift. However, it would be a big mistake to now lose focus on all of our sustainability efforts. Certainly, governments concentrate on short-term relief, but it is of utmost importance to not forget the ambitious SDGs. If anything, COVID-19 has shown us in unprecedented intensity how interconnected the world is and how global challenges affect all parts of the world. The same is true for achieving sustainability.

In September 2020 at the first SDG Moment, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said, “When the public appetite for change is matched with political will and smart policy choices, rapid progress is unstoppable.” He also stressed that with the year 2020, the crucial decade of action now lies right before us. With this book, ISIS Malaysia and KAS aim to contribute to identifying possible ways forward for action in Malaysia.



Miriam Fischer
Director, KAS Malaysia

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