SDGs 2026

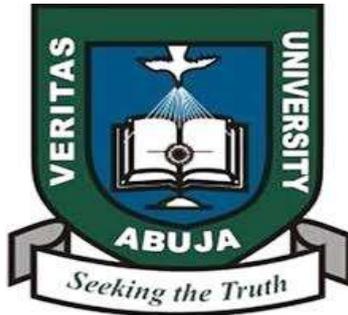**THEME:**
ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN AFRICA: PEOPLE, ENVIRONMENT AND INSTITUTIONS

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Executive Summary

The International Conference on "Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Challenges, Pathways, and Prospects for Africa" is a collaborative initiative between Veritas University, Abuja, and The Kukah Center, designed to create a robust platform for critical dialogue, knowledge exchange, and strategic action on the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in Africa. This high-level conference brings together academics, policymakers, development practitioners, civil society organizations, the private sector, and international agencies to examine the pressing challenges hindering the attainment of the SDGs across the African continent. This conference anticipates 1000 expected participants (In-person and virtual attendance) from all sectors. It will also explore innovative pathways and practical solutions tailored to Africa's unique socio-economic, political, and environmental contexts. The conference will feature keynote speeches, panel discussions, academic paper presentations, workshops, and networking sessions, all designed to generate actionable insights and foster cross-sectoral collaboration. Participants will discuss key themes including poverty reduction, education, gender equality, climate change, good governance, and partnerships for sustainable development. A central outcome of the conference will be the development of policy recommendations and strategic frameworks to accelerate SDG implementation in Africa. To ensure the success and impact of the conference, a comprehensive evaluation framework has been designed with clear indicators of success, including participant diversity, engagement levels, media coverage, policy impact, and follow-up initiatives. By providing a platform for open dialogue and solution-driven engagement, the conference aspires to contribute meaningfully to Africa's sustainable development journey and the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals, Africa, Nigeria,

Project Description

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, present a universal blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all by 2030. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals include: Ending poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-being, Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all, Gender Equality, Clean Water and Sanitation, Affordable and Clean Energy, Providing Decent Work and Economic Growth, Building resilient infrastructure, Reducing Inequalities, Building Sustainable Cities and Communities, Promoting Responsible Consumption and Production, Taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, Conserving and sustaining use the oceans, seas and marine resources, Protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, and Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, Promoting Partnerships for the Goals. With less than a decade remaining to meet these ambitious targets, many countries, including Nigeria, face significant challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, and governance deficits.

Recognizing the critical role of academia, civil society, and faith-based institutions in advancing sustainable development, Veritas University, Abuja, in collaboration with The Kukah Center, proposes to organize an International Conference on the

SDGs. The conference aims to foster dialogue, share research, promote partnerships, and galvanize actionable commitments towards achieving the SDGs in Nigeria, Africa, and globally.

Sub-themes
1. Eradicating Poverty and Hunger: Policies, Innovations, and Interventions
2. Climate Change, Environmental Sustainability, and Energy Transition
3. Quality Education and Gender Equality for Sustainable Development
4. Health and Well-being in the Post-Pandemic Era
5. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions: The Role of Governance and Civil Society
6. Financing the SDGs: Partnerships, Investment, and Accountability
7. Youth and SDG Leadership: Empowering Youth to Take Leadership Roles in Driving SDG Progress.
8. Faith-based organization and Interfaith Cooperation for SDGs: Exploring the role of faith-based organizations in promoting sustainable development.
9. SDG Progress and Challenges: Reviewing progress, identifying gaps, and discussing challenges in achieving the SDGs.
10. Innovative Solutions and Partnerships: Exploring innovative approaches, technologies, and partnerships that can accelerate SDG progress.
11. Sustainable Development in Africa: Focusing on Africa's specific landscape, challenges, and opportunities in achieving the SDGs.

Venue
New Theatre Hall, Veritas University, Abuja

Date
Wednesday, 3rd- Thursday 4th February 2026

Statement of the Problem
Despite the universal adoption of the SDGs, Africa remains one of the regions most at risk of missing the 2030 targets. Structural challenges such as extreme poverty, fragile governance, conflicts, environmental degradation, and inequality continue to hamper progress. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic, economic shocks, and climate-induced disasters have reversed many of the gains made over the past decade.

Current approaches have often failed to adequately address local realities, marginalized voices, and systemic inequalities. There is an urgent need to re-examine pathways to sustainable development through innovative, inclusive, and context-sensitive solutions tailored to Africa's unique socio-economic and political landscape.

Literature Review & Gaps

Globally, the SDGs represent an integrated framework of 17 goals designed to address interconnected development challenges (UN, 2015). Global progress has been uneven, with low-income countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, lagging. In Africa, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) has observed that most African countries are off-track in achieving key SDG targets, particularly those related to poverty (SDG 1), education (SDG 4), and inequality (SDG 10). Factors contributing to this include governance deficits, limited financial resources, and inadequate data for monitoring.

Concerning governance and institutions, scholars like Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) argue that inclusive institutions are crucial for sustainable development. Poor governance, corruption, and political instability remain barriers in many African states. Africa contributes the least to global greenhouse gas emissions, but is most vulnerable to climate change impacts (IPCC Reports, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023). Literature highlights the importance of resilience-building and renewable energy transitions in achieving SDG 13.

Achieving gender equality (SDG 5) is essential for broader development goals. Studies (UN Women, 2025) emphasize women's empowerment as a transformative force for achieving multiple SDGs. Emerging research underlines the role of digital technologies, fintech, and renewable energy in achieving sustainable development (World Bank, 2024). Limited research on the role of faith-based organizations and community-driven development in SDG realization. Inadequate focus on indigenous knowledge systems and their relevance to sustainability.

Aim and Objectives

This conference aims to bring together scholars, policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders from around the world to discuss progress, challenges, and opportunities in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The conference will provide a platform for sharing knowledge, experiences, and best practices, fostering partnerships, and identifying actionable solutions to accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

Specific Objectives Include:
   a. To critically examine progress towards the SDGs at local, national, and regional levels.
   b. To explore the intersection of governance, faith, policy, and development in achieving the SDGs.
   c. To provide a platform for sharing best practices, innovative solutions, and research findings.
   d. To strengthen partnerships among academia, government, private sector, NGOs, and faith-based organizations.

e. To issue a "Veritas-Kukah Declaration on Sustainable Development" as a roadmap for action.

Significance of the Conference

The conference is significant for several reasons:

a. Policy Relevance: It will provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers to design and implement effective strategies for SDG achievement.
b. Academic Contribution: It will enrich scholarly discourse on sustainable development, governance, and innovation in the African context.
c. Practical Application: It will highlight actionable solutions that communities, organizations, and governments can adopt.
d. Partnership Building: By fostering collaboration between diverse actors, the conference will enhance collective action toward achieving the SDGs.
e. Future Prospects: It will identify opportunities for Africa to leverage technology, demographic dividends, and green growth for sustainable development.

The conference outcomes will inform national development strategies and contribute to Africa's progress on the global development stage.

Justification

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations in 2015 marked a global commitment to ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring prosperity for all. However, Africa faces unique challenges that hinder its progress towards achieving these goals, including poverty, inequality, conflict, weak institutions, and climate change. This conference is justified by the urgent need to:
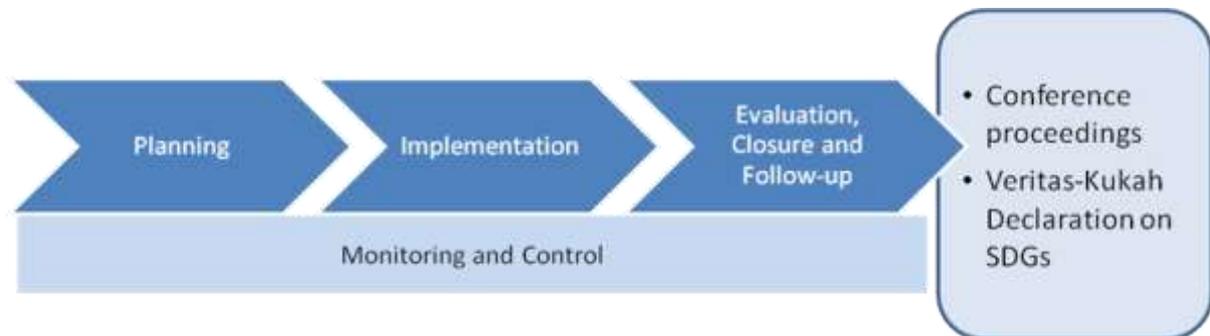
a. Examine Africa's specific developmental challenges through an SDG lens.
b. Foster dialogue between stakeholders (governments, academia, civil society, faith-based organizations, and the private sector).
c. Identify pathways and innovative solutions tailored to Africa's socio-political and economic realities.
d. Contribute to global knowledge while advancing regional cooperation and partnerships.

Without targeted interventions and multi-stakeholder collaboration, Africa risks being left behind in the global pursuit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Overall Approach

For the conference to achieve the stated objectives, the event will undergo three phases, including a rigorous planning phase, a well-conducted implementation phase, as well as an evaluation and closure phase that includes ccomprehensive

stakeholder feedback and satisfaction analysis, measurable outcomes assessment, financial accountability, impact measurement, lessons learned documentation, and actionable recommendations.

Planning and Implementation
Phase I: Planning
- *May 2025*: Venue selection, date confirmation, initial budget allocation.
- *August 2025*: Conference theme, speaker selection, agenda development, marketing strategy.
- *November 2025*: Team assembly, vendor contracts, registration setup.
- *February 2026*: Speaker confirmations, promotional materials, sponsorship outreach.
- *March 2026*: Finalize logistics, communication with speakers and attendees, and venue walkthrough.
- *1 week before*: Confirm all arrangements, finalize speaker presentations, and conduct final walkthrough.
- *Day before*: Onsite registration setup, final venue checks, welcome team briefing.

Phase II: Implementation
- *Day 1*: Conference opening, keynote sessions, lead paper presentations, networking events, and awards.
- *Day 2*: Continued sessions, workshops, closing remarks, and feedback collection.

Phase III: Post-Conference
- *Post-conference survey:* Gather feedback for improvement.
- *Financial reconciliation:* Compare actual expenses to the budget.
- *Thank you notes:* Send to speakers, sponsors, and attendees.
- *Report:* Summarize conference outcomes and lessons learned.

Phase IV: Financial Reconciliation
- Detailed breakdown of all conference expenses.

Phase V: Evaluation
- Conducting monitoring and evaluation activities

Phase VI: Proceedings
- Production, Presentation, and dissemination of conference proceedings

Phase VII: Policy Advocacy
- Engaging with policymakers to advocate for supportive policies

Target Participants
The target participants for this conference include:
1. Academics and Researchers
2. Government Officials
3. International Development Agencies
4. Civil Society Organizations
5. Private Sector Representatives
6. Religious Leaders and Faith-Based Organizations
7. Youth and Women's Groups
8. Media Professionals

Conference Format
1. Keynote Addresses: Renowned experts and thought leaders will deliver keynote addresses.
2. Panel Discussions: Interdisciplinary panels will discuss specific themes and topics.
3. Paper Presentations: Selected papers will be presented in parallel sessions.
4. Workshops: Interactive workshops will focus on specific SDG-related issues.

Key Deliverables
1. Conference Report and Proceedings
2. Policy Briefs on Key Thematic Areas
3. Veritas-Kukah Declaration on Sustainable Development
4. Strengthened Networks and Partnerships

Ethical Considerations
While organizing this conference, several ethical considerations will be put into view to ensure a respectful, inclusive, and professional event. These considerations include:

1. *Inclusivity and Diversity*: Ensure diverse representation among speakers, attendees, and organizers. Avoid biases in selection processes.

2. *Accessibility*: Make the conference accessible to people with disabilities, provide accommodations, and consider virtual options.

3. *Transparency*: Clearly communicate conference policies, fees, and expectations. Be transparent about data handling and privacy.

4. *Respect and Professionalism*: Foster a respectful environment, enforce a code of conduct, and address any misconduct promptly.

5. *Intellectual Property*: Respect speakers' and attendees' intellectual property rights regarding presentations and shared materials.

6. *Financial Responsibility*: Manage funds ethically, provide clear information about fees and sponsorships, and ensure fair financial practices.

7. *Sustainability*: Consider the environmental impact of the conference and implement sustainable practices where possible.

8. *Data Protection*: Handle personal data responsibly and in compliance with relevant data protection regulations.

9. *Conflict of Interest*: Disclose any potential conflicts of interest, especially regarding sponsorships or endorsements.

10. *Accountability*: Be accountable for the conference's outcomes and impacts, and take responsibility for any issues that arise.

By addressing these ethical considerations, conference organizers can create a positive and productive experience for all participants.

Indicators of Success
Participation Indicators
   a. Number of participants: Target of 1000+ attendees from various sectors, including academia, government, civil society, private sector, and international organizations.
   b. Geographic diversity: Representation from at least 10 countries across Africa and beyond.
   c. Institutional representation: Attendance from universities, research institutions, government agencies, development organizations, and the private sector.

Engagement Indicators
   a. Active participation: High level of engagement during Q&A sessions, workshops, and breakout discussions.
   b. Social media interaction: Minimum of 10,000 engagements (likes, shares, comments, views) across conference-related social media posts.
   c. Online streaming metrics: Number of virtual participants and views of recorded sessions.

Content and Knowledge Indicators
   a. Quality of presentations: 85% of attendees rated the quality of keynote speeches, panel discussions, and academic presentations as "Excellent" or "Very Good."
   b. Number of papers presented: At least 25 academic or policy papers presented.
   c. Policy relevance: Production of a clear conference communiqué or set of policy recommendations.

Media and Publicity Indicators
   a. Media coverage: At least 20 mentions in newspapers, radio, TV, and online platforms.
   b. Visibility of the conference theme: Increased public awareness of SDG challenges in Africa through media exposure.

Collaboration and Partnership Indicators
   a. Number of partnerships formed: At least 5 new institutional or cross-sector collaborations initiated as a direct result of the conference.
   b. Follow-up initiatives: Number of joint research projects, publications, or advocacy campaigns launched post-conference.

Satisfaction and Impact Indicators
   a. Participant satisfaction: At least 85% of attendees expressed high satisfaction with the event's organization, content, and logistics.
   b. Application of knowledge: At least 50% of surveyed participants reported that they plan to apply the knowledge gained in their work or community.
   c. Policy impact: Adoption or consideration of conference recommendations in policy discussions within six months.

Expected Outcomes
   1. Knowledge Sharing: Exchange of experiences and best practices among stakeholders.
   2. Partnerships: Identifying potential partnerships and collaborations to accelerate progress on the SDGs.

3. Policy Recommendations: Development of policy recommendations for governments, international organizations, and other stakeholders.
4. Capacity Building: Capacity building for young leaders and practitioners on SDG-related issues.
5. Proceedings: A book of proceedings will be produced at the end of the conference with details of presentations.
6. Declaration: Veritas-Kukah Declaration on Sustainable Development

Collaboration/Partnership

a. Directorate of Research, Veritas University, Abuja

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The research is domiciled in the Directorate of Research at Veritas University, Abuja (VUA). Established in 2007, VUA is a private university recognized by the National Universities Commission of Nigeria. The Office of the Director of Research coordinates and facilitates all research activities within the university, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration and community-engaged scholarship. The mission of the Directorate is to foster innovative research that addresses pressing societal challenges, with a particular focus on sustainable development, environmental conservation, and improving livelihoods in local communities. The Directorate has a proven track record of successfully managing large-scale, multidisciplinary research projects and translating research findings into actionable policies and community interventions.

b. The Kukah Centre

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The Kukah Centre is a Nigeria-based policy research institute, founded by Most Rev. Matthew Hassan Kukah, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Sokoto. The Centre has offices in Abuja and Kaduna and treats political leadership as a collaborative exercise that requires multiple governance structures at various levels – individuals, households, small businesses, the organized private sector, NGOs, and government. Inter-faith dialogue is at the core of the Centre's work and involves actively promoting conversations among Nigeria's faith communities, as well as between leaders in faith and public policy. The Kukah Centre aspires to become

Nigeria's leading institution for the promotion of an active and engaged citizenry by providing support for inclusive dialogue and advocacy initiatives. Believing that the pursuit of the common good of all citizens should be the basis for the existence of government and that citizen participation in their affairs should be at the heart of governance, we shall aspire to set up a mediating institution for achieving this. The Centre seeks to conceptualize, design, clarify, and articulate proactive mechanisms that will increase policy proficiency, effectiveness, and efficiency, and public participation and input for the attainment of the common good and pursuit of the ideas of good governance. It aspires towards the attainment of a more humane, democratic, and free society where citizens can live in real and true freedom, unencumbered by any structures of exclusion based on ethnic, religious, social status, economic, or gender differences.

Conclusion

The realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is critical for Africa's long-term social, economic, and environmental well-being. This International Conference, organized by Veritas University in collaboration with The Kukah Center, offers a timely and strategic platform to examine the complex challenges facing the continent, explore innovative pathways, and chart actionable prospects for achieving the SDGs by 2030. It will foster multi-disciplinary dialogue, cross-sector collaboration, and evidence-based policy development. The conference outcomes, including policy recommendations, collaborative partnerships, and research outputs, will serve as practical tools to guide both national and regional efforts in accelerating the implementation of the SDGs.

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