

Include UN goals in TN50

THE National Transformation 2050 (TN50) will succeed Vision 2020 as the nation's guiding blueprint for development into the future.

It is a laudable initiative by the Government to help steer the country towards a sustainable and prosperous future.

A future which many expect to be replete with challenges and tribulations. One major challenge is the ever-rising global competition.

As the world population continues the climb towards an estimated nine billion people by 2050, it is not only the fight for scarce resources that will drive world competition, but also the rise in the number of countries joining the economic race.

It is inevitable that many newly developed economies will eventually join the struggle to claim a share of the world economic pie.

As the resources of the world continue to deplete, arising mainly from massive overconsumption and wastage by our own doing, expanding the world economic pie will become even more prohibitive and challenging in the coming years.

Energy is a major case in point. In an era when economic expansion is driven very much by the thirst for energy, the traditional source of world energy, namely the fossil fuel, is showing signs of depleting.

Unless something is done to arrest the decline, the growth of the world economies will be stunted. This is where the UN Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) have included clean and affordable energy as an important goal of the 17 listed.

This is also the reason why improving energy efficiency is one of the major callings of the SDGs. The World Energy Council has introduced the trilemma of world energy viz securing supply, making costs affordable and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Pushing for more positive climate actions is another important goal of the SDGs. To many, it may be the goal which shapes all the other goals.

If the greenhouse gas levels in the atmosphere are not sufficiently maintained at a healthier level, the world is destined for catastrophic repercussions.

We are all familiar with sea-level rise which may even obliterate most low-lying island nations from the world map and extreme weather conditions which have already made their presence felt in many parts of the world.

But there are other complications related to diseases including tropical maladies encroaching into the non-tropics and the emergence of new debilitating diseases from their disturbed natural habitats.

Under TN50, the young should

be alerted on the serious implications of non-action over climate change.

Reducing world poverty is another major goal of the SDGs. Undeniably, poverty is not only a major seed of global discontent, but also a major contributor to environmental decline. Nowadays, poverty is no longer confined to the rural areas. Increasingly, the incidence of urban poverty has become commonplace in many countries of the world.

This has come about as a result of the almost unstoppable rural urban migration which imposes significant constraints on the resources of the cities and towns.

This is further exacerbated by the popular practice of concentrating development in the urban areas despite policy pronouncements to bring more infrastructure and industry to the rural areas. But a more important issue of global poverty concerns the continuing growing gap between the rich and the poor and the consequent inequitable distribution of global wealth.

Putting an end to world hunger also counts as a SDG goal which also deserves deliberation at the TN50 engagements. World hunger is not merely a consequence of poverty. Studies have shown that accessibility to food is a more compelling reason.

There has long been the claim

that the world does produce enough food for the world but effectively distributing them to those in need has remained a major challenge. But with the advent of climate change, even the world capacity to produce food may be reduced.

This is made even worse by the fact that there are groups who continue to oppose the better ways to increase food yields, for example, through the deployment of the GMO crops.

Water will feature prominently when we talk about the future. Water after all is the essence of life. But the sustainability of clean water poses serious threat to our future. We are all aware of our own problems with water.

Every day we hear of a new river being added to our list of polluted waterways. It is therefore not surprising that the availability of clean water and sanitation is a critical feature of the 17 SDGs.

The message is clear. When we talk about guaranteeing progress and prosperity for future generations, the 17 SDGs can be considered complete. It is therefore highly pertinent for the TN50 initiative to make the SDGs the centrepiece of all deliberations with the youths of the nation.

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