

# SUSTAINABILITY FOR UKRAINE

**a GLOBAL WEBATHON ON CREATING  
THE CHANGE WE NEED**

---



 Published July, 2022

 [Watch Session Videos Here](#)



## INTRODUCTION

Incrementalism must end. Resilience needs to be re-built into our systems. We must pay for the privilege of peace. Better inclusion is the only way to reliably build strong systems that work for all. Together we can super-charge the change we need.

These key messages came through loud and clear during the amazing 24 hours of discussion, inspiration and calls to action as members of the global sustainability community came together to take stock of recent events and discuss where we go from here. At a time when many of us find the relentless pace of shocking news hard to push through, this was a powerful intervention to spark hope, while raising hundreds of thousands of dollars to support the work of NGOs on the ground in Ukraine through the support of our sponsors and generous donations of individuals. For those who were not able to donate first time around, the platform is open for online donations [here](#) until 1st August.

Here we aim to capture some of the energy of these diverse sessions, highlighting discussions from sessions that you might not have been able to attend, while sharing the questions and insights that have unlocked action for global peers.

All session recordings are also available online [for free here](#), so please tap into the expertise generously shared. This summary report will cover the big picture story and five of the themes explored across the 24 deep dives, which we hope will help you take your next steps.

## PRESENTING PARTNERS



## SPONSORS





## **THE BIG PICTURE STORY**

We heard the new crises demand that we challenge ourselves to find new solutions beyond incrementalism, while this intimidating task is made possible by the exciting range of new partnerships that give everyone a space to make a difference in this all-hands-on-deck moment.

## **THE NEW CHALLENGE**

As António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations [memorably said last year](#), “we face the greatest cascade of crises of our lifetimes” – from COVID-19, climate change and conflict to the knock on effects on poverty, famine and the fragmenting of many systems. And now the war against Ukraine. This was highlighted across our sessions as the beginning of a period of unravelling as old structures buckle and shocks spread like waves through our systems. [The United Nations’ July report on progress against the Sustainable Development Goals](#) says they need “an urgent rescue effort” as too little is being achieved. Indeed, Georg Kell, the founder and former Executive Director at the United Nations Global Compact called this moment a “brutal wakeup call” for our old model of sustainable development that grew out of a period of relative geopolitical stability, where multilateralism was seen as the key to the gradual progress we could all achieve together. Now the rise in authoritarianism threatens to make this model obsolete.

We have created a system that is interdependent without being resilient, so any shocks like war and the growing impacts of climate change spread fast throughout the system. We sometimes say our systems are broken, but they often work well at what they are designed for – maximising short-term benefits for the already wealthy. We need to challenge the fundamental objectives and incentives of these systems. Meanwhile, incrementalism may have kept hope alive in the wake of the global recession 15 years ago, but it is now a major barrier to achieving the change we need at the speed we need it.



## **THE NEW SOLUTIONS**

While the speed of change is frightening, the speed of response gives hope – we heard about not just the radical shortening of the development of the COVID vaccine, but also the rapid pull-out of many companies from Russia in response to the unprovoked invasion. The speed at which huge companies have cut loose long-standing investments when they recognised the danger of being complicit is a sea-change from what we have seen in the past few decades. Traditionally, in the face of the costs for climate adaptation or tackling human rights abuses, business has said that they will do what they can, incrementally, without sacrificing sunk costs. Now we have seen that action can happen at speed and scale, both for a global health crisis and a geopolitical crisis – so it can and must change faster.

Our panellists also helpfully moved the conversation on from the traditional debate of “whether private or public are more effective actors” – the truth is that the public sector set unambiguous directions on COVID and Russian sanctions, then the private sector acted rapidly within that context. Going forward, business also needs to take a much more proactive role in advocating for policy and government actions that enable and create a more level playing field for adopting more inclusive, sustainable approaches. Otherwise, more progressive companies that tackle social and environmental damage often struggle to compete with their peers who leave the rest of society to pick up the costs.

But it is not just about the big actions in response to immediate crises – we heard about the urgent need for a new narrative and approach for sustainable development to replace our incremental multilateralism.

While we do not have this narrative yet, we know some of the things it needs to do:

- It must more genuinely foreground a just transition of key systems that builds on the needs and experiences of under-represented people and nations, especially in the Global South and under-represented communities within all nations. This must give space for regional differences in execution.
- It must question the static view of the language of “sustainability” and the narrow risk-focus of ESG. Is this the status quo we want to sustain? What about progress and regeneration?
- It must have a robust response for how to deal with unchecked power and aggression.
- It must build on the diverse values and connections that communities have with nature – rooting into culture and practices so it is part of existing value systems – going beyond a vague globalist idea that struggles to connect with all audiences.



This is not just about the story we tell publicly – it is about the mindset we take into solving the problems day-to-day. In fact, a big opportunity lies in helping switch the mindsets of decision makers so they are spotting their own solutions, not just waiting for sustainability experts to prompt them with the next action.

## **THE NEW PARTNERSHIPS**

We heard throughout the sessions that building these new solutions will only work by inviting more people into the conversation so they can shape what they need and bring their skills and passion to bear. In fact, it is only with bringing in diverse perspectives that we can achieve the mindset shifts we need. Practically speaking, this means more focus on engaging stakeholders – not to slow progress, but to develop more inclusive and integrated solutions to tackling global and local challenges, being inspired by their needs to push faster.

We heard of activists who help connect company boards to the communities they serve. We saw companies like The Body Shop bringing in boards of youth advisors who have the most at stake in the future system and whose voices need to be heard. This effort was a small contribution to this aim of bringing diverse voices together and we hope you share the energy and inspiration that poured out of the sessions and can use this to make the next step you take even bigger.

## **SESSIONS THAT SHOWCASE THESE BIG PICTURE QUESTIONS:**

**Futerra & GlobeScan | The Global Sustainability Agenda: Challenges & Breakthroughs**

**Forum for the Future | The Future of Sustainability: Looking Back to Go Forward**

**GlobeScan | The Current State of the Sustainable Development Agenda in Africa and the Implications for Business and Society**

**CSR Ukraine, CSR Europe, GlobeScan | The Role of Companies in Fostering an Inclusive Just Transition**

## THE SESSION DEEP DIVES

As well as the big picture, the community tackled specific issues, highlighting the emerging solutions and the questions that can get us there faster. At the end of each section are links to the sessions you can go to for more information.

## LESSONS OF WAR: PRIORITISING PREVENTION AND RESILIENCE

We heard powerfully what it was like for Ukrainians on the ground. The horror of death and destruction has been seen in glimpses in media reports but hearing directly from those affected brings home the impact. Added to this are the unimaginable statistics like the \$98.7bn USD of damage to physical assets like houses and the \$9.6bn in lost assets for Ukrainian businesses – as we heard, “our financial sustainability and ability to survive is melting down” but “we are functioning.” So, under this cruel war, Ukrainian businesses, NGOs and governmental agencies work and plan to rebuild Ukraine.

Meanwhile, we heard the rallying cry from WWF that “nature is the silent victim of war” – and that this has knock on effects on people – from the uncontrolled forest fires sparked, to the land contaminated with heavy metals, killing wildlife and crops. What is needed is the money to rebuild – and the support to ensure the one-off rebuild leaves the country more resilient than before, rather than locking in more fossil fuel dependency and inefficient buildings. As our colleagues at CSR Ukraine and the NGOs they support highlighted, their ability to champion and support this recovery has been crippled as they have lost their much-needed funds given all the other urgent needs.

In addition to the generous donations from participants and individuals, this raised a powerful call to action – as Dr. Ndidi Nnoli-Edozien, Chair of Circular Economy Innovation Partnership remarked, as a movement, we have not clearly asked ourselves and articulated the value of peace.



“

*Looking at human history, we need to recognise that peace is not the default we should take for granted – it requires work and businesses need to play a stronger role in advocating for peace.*

— **Dr. Ndidi Nnoli-Edozien**, Chair of Circular Economy Innovation Partnership

This sounds simple, but it goes far beyond opposing war when it happens – it means helping pre-empt these problems early. That requires active support for strong institutions and the rule of law, supporting taxation needed to deliver this, opposing the growing economic inequality and wealth concentration that we know drives polarisation and fragmentation and being more genuinely “pro-poor” in the outcomes of advocacy work, in addition to the intentions.

When conflict does break out, we need to work on enhancing the rapid response networks of all sectors, for instance [the platform rolled out by Business Fights Poverty in response to the war against Ukraine](#).



## KEY TAKEAWAY:

*Pay for the privilege of peace: companies must be an active part of supporting strong institutions and helping tackle inequality at all levels, in addition to rapid response to war.*

## SESSIONS THAT EXPLORE AND OFFER SOLUTIONS TO THESE QUESTIONS:

**CSR Ukraine | Sustainability and the War: Local and Global Challenges**

**GRI | Corporate Transparency and Due Diligence in Conflict-affected Areas**

**BSR | Human Rights in Conflict: A Business Response to Ukraine... and Beyond**

**Business Fights Poverty | Ukraine, Global Food Security and the Role of Business**

**WWF Eastern European Region | Preparing to Build Back Better in Ukraine: Nature-and Climate-positive**

**Futerra & GlobeScan | The Global Sustainability Agenda: Challenges & Breakthroughs**

**BLF CZ | Personalised Corporate Assistance to Ukrainian Colleagues and Their Families**

Conflicts escalate and have knock on effects across many supply chains, where corners are cut, so as the impacts of war change, companies need to adapt their monitoring to ensure they do not become complicit in abuses. For instance, this can mean ongoing and enhanced human rights due diligence approaches. Companies can respond not just by protecting staff but looking across their supply chains and engaging stakeholders to understand the impacts they are facing. Meanwhile they should focus on how to support those most in need and hold those accountable to justice – tailoring sanctions and actions to hurt those to blame, not just punish the citizens across multiple countries.



## SUPPLY CHAINS IN CRISIS

The war has sparked a surge in inflation and global crisis in food affordability that is already beginning to cause famine and will only get worse. \$4.3bn USD of damage has been done to Ukraine's agriculture sector so far – damaging the ability to export food to 400 million people. Humanitarian aid is especially badly affected, as the UN World Food Programme buys half of its wheat from Ukraine and the doubling price of grain threatens all relief work.

Meanwhile global vegetable oil prices have gone haywire – as Ukraine and Russia between them account for 77 percent of all traded sunflower oil globally. This is likely to lead to a lot more reliance on palm oil and the deforestation that unsustainable palm oil brings, since only 20 percent of all palm oil is certified RSPO.

But this did not come out of nowhere, nor was it just the fallout from COVID. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation food price index was already at a record high in February. We heard that volatility is the sum of systems optimised for efficiency that drives profit for the few, not resilience that protects and supports the many. And this is at the same time as climate change and extreme weather strain productivity.

Fixing this is partly about delivering on the broader sustainability agenda. That includes improving agricultural resilience, increasing productivity rather than increasing land under cultivation, while strengthening the institutions and infrastructure that can respond to crises and avert them early. There is a lot of investment in food, but too little is focused on improving resilience and tackling hunger. We need investment as “pre-emptive humanitarian aid,” bringing in smallholder farmers and SMEs, reducing their exclusion and sharing technological and scientific advances with them so they can be at the centre of the food system. Ambitious, radical collaboration is needed to overcome incrementalism and siloed thinking – the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit was one step on the way here, but we need much more. It also means building infrastructure within each continent, so products do not have to be exported for processing and re-imported at a much greater cost (and carbon footprint).

Another part of the solution is to tap into the growing availability of data to track issues live and pre-empt problems. This is true for commercial supply chains, but it can also be used by NGOs to pre-empt where emerging signs of labour abuses are.



Given the scale of the issues, and the limited progress in addressing them, we can also see many governments shifting from legislating on supply chains – from deforestation to human rights abuses – to creating hard regulation, enforcement and penalties. This should send the clear signals that will accelerate action, but it is also important for companies to speak out, advocate in support of these and demonstrate they can be achieved to a high standard, not simply as tick-box exercises. Only that will build the industry-wide change needed to create the resilience that every organisation and citizen requires.

Within advocacy, it is also critical to support not just the big initiatives, but the inclusion of civil society voices on the ground who are closest to the impacts. That way deployment will work with local expertise, rather than being trapped in a generalist, universalist model that can miss the local interventions needed.

## KEY TAKEAWAY:

***Shift from narrow efficiency to resilience for the many – drive investments that double as pre-emptive humanitarian aid to reinforce the system.***

## SESSIONS THAT SHOWCASE THESE BIG PICTURE QUESTIONS:

**Net Positive | No Time for Despair: Fixing Our Broken Food System**

**Business Fights Poverty | Ukraine, Global Food Security and the Role of Business**

**ELEVATE | A New Era for Business-driven Sustainability in the Supply Chain**

**WWF Singapore | Russia-Ukraine War Heats up Vegetable Oil Prices**

**Sustainability Connect | Building Resilience in a Disrupted World**

## DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES UNLOCK INCLUSIVE RESULTS

Escaping this one-size-fits-some approach means bringing in more people to the conversation – especially when the sustainability agenda has been so historically dominated by wealthy Western voices. From the genuinely global conversations, we heard again the need to make the just transition central to any discussion of progress, ensuring those who have suffered from colonialism are not punished a second time.

As we heard from Chris Turner, Executive Director of B-Lab UK, this means challenging the nature of governance:

“

*“It is mad to think that businesses should be able to disregard interests of a broader set of stakeholders. Not only can they choose to do that in the current system, they are set and incentivised to do that.”*

– **Chris Turner**, Executive Director of B-Lab UK

Tackling this means challenging the stubborn orthodoxy of shareholder primacy and exploring other organisational structures, like B-Corporations. These are not just growing in Europe and America where the structures were created, but also in Latin America, where Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay and Panama have all passed laws to allow the creation of their own version of Benefit Interest Corporations, with more bills in progress in Chile, Argentina and Uruguay.

We also heard a call to rethink the obsession with growth. For Yoshiko Ikoma, Vice Chair of Japan Ethical Initiative, ethical management is about making the time to rethink and reassess – building a society in which children and adults are given time to think through who and what they want to be as human beings. For activists like Daze Aghaji, this looks like degrowth economics for the wealthy West where societies learn to break free from the

need for more stuff, spending time on connecting with each other rather than spending time to get money to spend on a carousel of disposable goods.

But what are some of the practical steps here?





Technology companies are one of the driving forces of the global economy currently – not just unlocking solutions but evolving and cementing world views that shape society. And yet this sector often shows limited diversity, particularly by gender, so broadening the range of perspectives here is especially valuable. We heard about the need to make more women feel welcome in technological degrees since the number of female graduates is part of the challenge to address.

But more than that, business cultures need to be changed so a range of people feel they can belong, not only “lean in” to the established model, therefore helping evolve the culture so it works for all.

## **KEY TAKEAWAY:**

*Reshape our systems so they do not just listen occasionally to stakeholders but invite a diverse range of views in to challenge and remake structures so they serve everyone better.*

## **SESSIONS THAT EXPLORE AND OFFER SOLUTIONS TO THESE QUESTIONS:**

**B Lab | Can We Have Stakeholder Capitalism without Stakeholder Governance?**

**SB Japan | Why Ethical Perspectives Are Essential in Business**

**Maala | Innovative Approach to DEI in Israel  
AuctusESG | Financing a Just Transition: A Focus on Ukraine**

**AuctusESG | Financing a Just Transition: A Focus on Ukraine**

**Forum for the Future | The Future of Sustainability: Looking Back to Go Forward**

## THE INDUSTRY IMPERATIVES – DATA AND ENGAGEMENT

Technology and inclusion were also recurring themes of the industry deep dive sessions. The need for sharper data and stronger involvement of the end users was repeatedly emphasised. For electric vehicles, we heard that “data is everything” – because that will dictate where charging infrastructure should be built, based on the movement patterns of different communities. This is important from an equity perspective so we do not default to going where the money is today, sustaining the transport inequalities seen now. In other words, we need to ensure that EVs and other more climate or environmentally friendly solutions also lead to improving access and opportunities for under-served groups that have often been marginalised by transportation infrastructure of the past.

That also means engaging communities with how they want to move, live, work and play, to craft the right solutions. Indeed recent analysis from Sweden, as showcased in *Invisible Women* by Caroline Criado-Perez has showed that by only considering men’s work commute, transport design can be inefficient and actively dangerous to women.

The same need for engagement is seen in building design. Science tells us we must create a new form of development that brings in ecosystem services to make cities greener, cooler and more resilient, while enhancing biodiversity and liveability. For instance, today air conditioning uses up roughly 25 percent of all energy in the built environment. Reducing this means adapting design alongside the habits and expectations of users. Redesigning works best when communities are brought in so they can shape these new benefits, they understand the value it brings and therefore that they will work in practice, not just in perfectly designed models.

## KEY TAKEAWAY:

*Harness data, but do not rely on it alone – make sure it is paired with engaging the right stakeholders to understand what the data mean and how to act effectively.*

## SESSIONS THAT EXPLORE AND OFFER SOLUTIONS TO THESE QUESTIONS:

**GreenBiz | EV Charging: Is the EV Transition in Jeopardy?**

**ReThink | Reshaping the Spaces We Live, Think, Work and Play In**

**CBSR | Fast & Furious: Mandatory Climate Disclosure**





## CATALYSING CHANGE WITH CITIZENS AND CONSUMERS

This theme of not just citizen education, but two-way dialogue came through strongly in the sessions focusing on the general public. We saw from [GlobeScan's 2021 global survey](#) that 36 percent of people from 27 countries around the world feel personally “greatly affected” by climate change already, and this is growing year on year. During the pandemic, people started to feel increasingly guilty over their own environmental footprint, yet there is a sustained gap between the 46 percent of global citizens who want “a great deal” to change their lifestyle to be more environmentally friendly and the 22 percent who feel they have been able to make “major changes.” This gap is seen across every continent. We are seeing positive signs of more environmentally friendly living in some areas, but these are still too slow, and mostly concentrated in affluent countries like the US which have the biggest gaps between current lifestyles and sustainable lifestyles.

So how do we accelerate this change? We heard that people do not know the changes they can make, so corporates and governments need to give clear, consistent guidance on the first steps they

can take. Currently, this is too often this is seen as complicated, expensive and with competing demands. These need to be part of a coherent picture that demonstrates how everything adds up to a common cause of building a sustainable and equitable future that leaves no one behind. By building this shared understanding, it opens the opportunity for discussion and collaboration, which is important for leading to greater and more significant transformations.

What role should brands play in this? We are currently in a transitional time, where brands can step up and act as catalysts for social change and impact – but that means reimagining what brands can and should do. We saw [five paradigm shifts laid out that show how to create a regenerative brand](#). This means shifting more voice, choice and ownership to those affected, while closing the gap between the people who make products and those who use them. Brands need to work on generational impact, not just quarterly sales, asking questions and encouraging views rather than claiming to have all the answers. And tying this all together, they must recognise the interdependence of communities and ecosystems, looking to enhance mutual support. As Sanjay Khanna, BBMG's Futurist-in-residence said, taking an inclusive, intersectional approach



can shift leaders from feeling overwhelmed by separate issues to finding hope, empowerment and avenues for social change by seeing the common shared solutions.

## **KEY TAKEAWAY:**

*Build regenerative brands that create a shared understanding of a common cause, inviting people to be part of the way forward without expecting them to do all the hard work.*

## **SESSIONS THAT EXPLORE AND OFFER SOLUTIONS TO THESE QUESTIONS:**

**Akatu Institute | Socio-Environmental, Democracy and Solidarity Movements – How to Better Engage?**

**BBMG | Regenerative Leadership: Five Paradigm Shifts for Today's Brands**

**GlobeScan | Global Consumer Research on Sustainability: A Focus on Chinese, Indian and Asian Attitudes and Behaviours**

## CONCLUSION:

The moment we share now can be frightening and desperate, given the scale of the challenges we face, but it is in coming together that we build support and hope for those most in need – from our sisters and brothers in Ukraine, to those suffering the food shortages that Russia’s invasion has unleashed.

These 24 hours of round-the-world inspiration and action were a rallying call for us all to challenge incrementalism, to create a new and more powerful vision of the change we need and to bring in the voices of those most affected to shape better solutions. We also found it an energising opportunity to connect with the likeminded advocates who are investing their time and energy in creating this change.

This was just a taster of the full 24 hours of inspiration and action – all of which is [available to watch](#) in your own time, while the fundraising platform for the hard-hit Ukrainian NGOs is [accepting donations](#) until 1st August for those who did not have a chance before.

We hope you have found the ideas, provocations and evidence of action inspiring and that you can turn this shared moment into concrete action. We will leave you with the same questions we are asking ourselves:

- How will you bring into your work a perspective that is not heard enough? How will you encourage genuine collaboration with stakeholders?
- What new approaches, mindsets and narratives will you explore to catalyse substantial, not just incremental change?
- What are your practical next steps?

***If you have questions or comments about this report or the event, please email: [insight@globescan.com](mailto:insight@globescan.com)***

## PRESENTING PARTNERS



## SPONSORS

