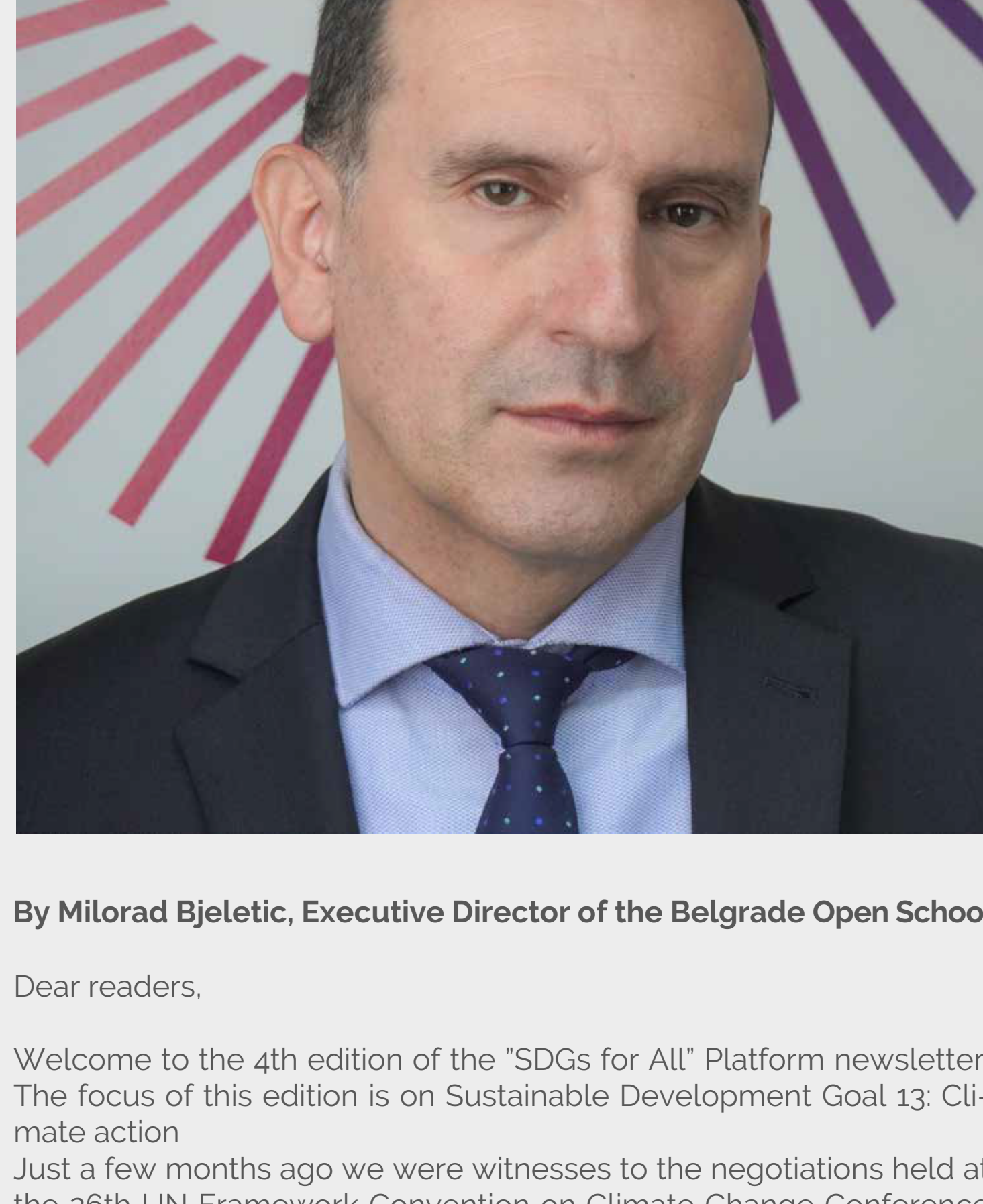




EDITORIAL



By Milorad Bjeletic, Executive Director of the Belgrade Open School

Dear readers,

Welcome to the 4th edition of the "SDGs for All" Platform newsletter. The focus of this edition is on Sustainable Development Goal 13: Climate action

Just a few months ago we were witnesses to the negotiations held at the 26th UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) hosted in Glasgow. The parties, i.e. their leaders, gathered to decide on the global future, on how to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement, as well as on the topic of this editorial - SDG 13 or climate protection.

When it comes to climate issues, people are the key factor. The ground-breaking Paris Agreement set the following goal: limit global warming to well below 2°C, preferably to 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels, in order to avoid risks and adverse effects of climate change. Science has made it clear that we have to get considerably close to 1.5°C if we wish to stop the irreversible and devastating effects of the climate crisis. However, as a result of the climate ambition of the adopted national policies, the world is heading towards an increase in the global temperature by 2.7°C by the end of the century. That is why we now need an urgent and joint climate action more than ever before.

What we saw in Glasgow gives us a glimmer of hope. Political leaders promised to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which, if achieved, could keep global warming at 1.8°C above the pre-industrial levels by 2100.

In order to achieve this, we need quick decarbonisation, accelerated renewable energy market development and, most importantly, we have to stop using fossil fuels. Coal is the most crucial source of greenhouse gasses contributing to the climate crisis. Hence, over 40 countries agreed to phase out the coal-based energy consumption. However, other countries agreed to only "phase down" the coal consumption instead of "phasing it out", but the wording was changed since China and India, two influential and biggest coal consumers, producers and importers, intervened at the last minute. Still, the fact is that the plans for reducing coal use are mentioned for the first time in the global climate agreement.

Some of the countries traditionally relying on coal, such as Poland, Vietnam, Chile and Indonesia, announced for the first time that they intend to stop using coal. In addition, countries, banks, companies and organisations agreed to end all investments in the new electricity production from coal, both nationally and internationally, to increase the production of renewable energy as soon as possible and make a fair energy transition so that it benefits all community members. Another important step was an agreement signed by 110 countries to end deforestation by 2030. These countries (USA, China and Russia included) own 86% of the world forest area.

What needs to be done entails calling for developed countries to improve the provision and mobilisation of financial resources, which is also entailed in the Paris Agreement, in order to provide aid to underdeveloped countries to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Climate justice, losses, damage and the growing concern of young people were also discussed at the COP26 conference.

What does all this mean for Serbia and our neighbours in the Western Balkans? Are we prepared to adapt? Do we do what is necessary to prevent climate change? The fact is that Southeast Europe has been identified as one of climate change hotspots. Even though greenhouse gas emissions are reduced at global level, the average annual temperature in the Balkans will increase by 2.0°C to 3.0°C by the end of this century compared to the current one. If, on the other hand, greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase globally, the temperature in the region will increase by 4.0°C to 5.0°C in comparison to the current levels. It means that already evident summer heat waves and droughts (both in number and intensity) will grow longer and the drying trend of our region will prevail by the end of this century. The annual distribution of precipitation will continue to change and cause floods that we have already seen in the recent past. It is likely that climate change will reduce drinking water supplies and the quality and quantity of agricultural yields, and increase the consumption of cooling energy in the summertime and be the cause of the possible spread of new diseases. This implies that a targeted climate action is urgently needed in the Western Balkans.

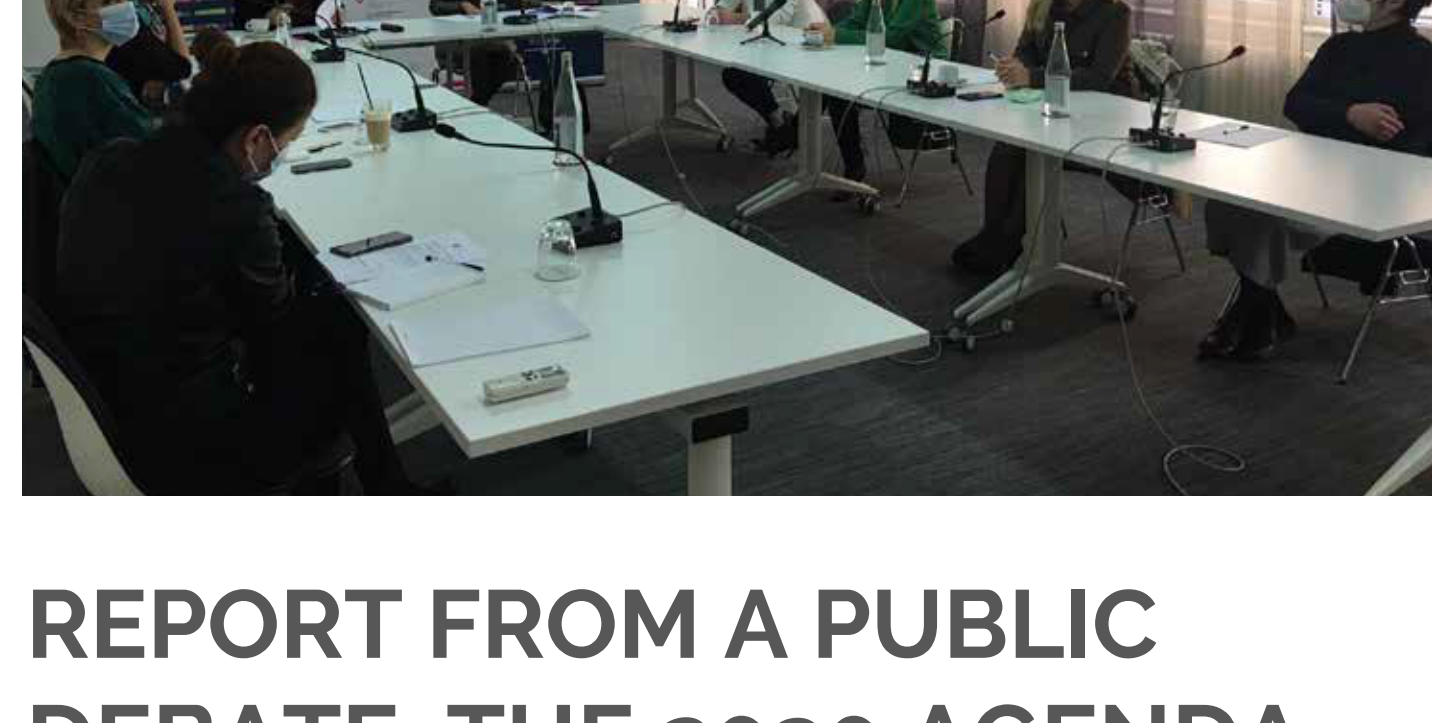
However, when we look at the statements of the Western Balkan countries' delegations in Glasgow, we can only see declarative commitment that is not promising when it comes to an actual climate action. The efforts made by the countries from this region have been poor so far and lagging behind in every way. Only North Macedonia adopted transparent plans to gradually phase out coal usage, whereas other Balkan countries have either a neutral approach or they are even planning to build new coal capacities in spite of the proclaimed political commitment of the regional leaders. An evident political initiative along with an actual climate action are urgently needed to be taken in order to ensure long-term decarbonisation by 2050, which is defined in the Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans signed by the Balkan leaders at the Sofia Summit in November 2020.

Serbia did not announce any climate targets at the Glasgow negotiations. Moreover, **Serbia has not set any climate goals since 2015**. Serbia neither updated its nationally determined contribution by the agreed deadline in September this year nor it adopted a low-carbon development strategy. Some policies are being drafted (e.g. integrated National Energy and Climate Plan and National Climate Change Adaptation Plan) and new laws have been adopted (e.g. Law on Climate Change, Law on Renewable Energy Sources). However, when it comes to their application, it is not easy to say how and whether these laws will support the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change in a reasonably feasible manner.

After announcing the results of the Glasgow negotiations, UN Secretary-General António Guterres emphasised it was time to go "into emergency mode", end fossil fuel subsidies, phase out coal, put a price on carbon, protect vulnerable communities and deliver the USD 100 billion climate finance commitment. "We did not achieve these goals at this conference. But we have some building blocks for progress", he said. As a result of the Glasgow summit, those building blocks should lead the world to a climate-secure future, which not only will help to achieve SDG 13: Climate action, but it will also contribute to the 2030 Agenda as a whole.

How will Serbia adapt to these climate policies and climate change? How will it respond to coal "phase down" agreed in Glasgow since 70% of country's electricity is produced from low-quality lignite? Is the Glasgow deal indeed a "game-changing agreement", a sign that the "death knell for coal has been sounded", as the host and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said? Does this agreement mean that the death knell has also sounded for electricity generation and energy security in Serbia or it offers a new beginning and a healthier future? Due to growing climate, environmental and development issues in Serbia, there is no time to wait. We will continue to address the causes and effects of climate change using our own resources, such as the Sustainable Development for All Platform. We will also keep on holding our decision-makers accountable with the support of our citizens, in order to ensure a responsible, transparent, efficient and equitable policy that responds to the urgency of climate change and can benefit all Serbian citizens.

NEWS



REPORT FROM A PUBLIC DEBATE: THE 2030 AGENDA AND THE LAW ON GENDER EQUALITY – HOW TO ENSURE THEIR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

On 29 October 2021, the Centre for Democracy Foundation and the Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation organized a public debate on how to use the 2030 Agenda to accelerate the implementation of the new Gender Equality Law. The starting point for the debate was the analysis "Gender Equality in the Context of Sustainable Development and Solutions Contained in the Law on Gender Equality" developed by the thematic group Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls. Within the thematic group on gender equality, two additional debates will be organized in the next few months, to discuss various issues in the field of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls and to contribute to a more efficient implementation of the Law on Gender Equality.

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THEMATIC SOCIAL DIALOGUE ON AMENDMENTS TO THE LAW ON NATURE PROTECTION HELD

A social dialogue Improvement of the Legislative Framework for Nature Protection was organised on October 1, 2021, by the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue in co-operation with the Belgrade Open School, World Wide Fund for Nature Adria (WWF), the Biodiversity Research Centre and Young Researchers of Serbia and through the support of the Balkan Trust for Democracy, the BFPE Foundation for a Responsible Society and the Royal Norwegian Embassy. The dialogue ended with issuing the text of binding actions, calling for a regular review of the nature protection system in the Republic of Serbia highlighting the commitment of the Ministry of Environmental Protection to implement the Law of the Law on Planning System and to ensure public participation in legislative processes and underlining the need for civil society to participate in all processes of drafting public documents at the invitation of the Ministry of Environmental Protection.

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WORKSHOP OF THE THEMATIC GROUP FOR THE PLANNING OF LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The economic pillar of the "SDGs for All" Platform held a workshop on October 5 2021, as part of a series of discussions at both national and local level, dedicated to the planning of economic development by the local communities. The objective of the workshop was to highlight the importance of the ownership of economic development processes by the local self-governments and to discuss how local self-governments can support the achievement of SDGs. The event brought up several important topics that will be further elaborated through upcoming discussions with a number of local development actors.

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AWARD CEREMONY AT THE END OF THE "SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS WEEK"

A "Business SDGs Week" was organised by the Responsible Business Forum and Smart kolektiv in November 2021 in order to emphasize the importance of incorporating SDGs more firmly into the corporate sector activities and to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda among the companies. The event brought together participants from the public, business and civil sectors, including a large number of small and medium-sized enterprises.

A week-long programme also included a prize giving ceremony Sustainability Champion, awarded to the companies that in 2020 and 2021 implemented projects contributing to achieving SDGs and as such, provided best practice examples.

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THEMATIC SOCIAL DIALOGUE ON SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP HELD

A thematic social dialogue on "The concept of social entrepreneurship and best practices in the Republic of Serbia", was organized by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, on October 18. The event was organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, under the German-Serbian Development Cooperation Projects "Social Services for Vulnerable Groups" and "Public Finance Reform – 2030 Agenda", implemented by GIZ. It was pointed out that the most recent draft Law on Social Entrepreneurship was expected to lay the groundwork for further development of Serbia's solidarity economy, making it easier for the most vulnerable to find employment and setting the clear criteria for the solidarity companies to acquire their legal status.

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TEXT OF THIS ISSUE

SUSTAINABILITY CHAMPIONS - EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE OF THE BUSINESS SECTOR CONTRIBUTION TO THE 2030 AGENDA



The business sector has been recognized as one of the key factors that, through its activities, can on the one hand considerably contribute to, or on the other hand significantly slow down the achievement of the SDGs. In order to draw attention to specific examples of the Serbian business sector contribution to the 2030 Agenda implementation, which can serve as inspiration and motivation for representatives of a wider business community to further engage and take action, the Responsible Business Forum and Smart kolektiv recognised and awarded the examples of good practice within the "SDGs for All" Platform at the end of the recently held "Sustainable Development and Business Week". We are presenting to you the projects implemented in 2020 and 2021, which are an integral part of business strategies and long-term goals based on which these companies show their commitment to the 2030 Agenda implementation.

"By recognising examples of good practice, we draw attention to the importance of the business sector contribution to the 2030 Agenda and to the fact that Sustainable Development Goals are compatible with business strategies and deeply ingrained in business activities. We hope we will have more Sustainability Champions in the upcoming period, which will pave their own way to sustainability by building a responsible attitude towards the environment and the innovation in which they do business by taking the initiative and introducing innovative engagement models", said Neven Marinovic, the CEO of the Responsible Business Forum and the Executive Director of Smart kolektiv.

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INFOGRAPHICS



Member companies point out the following corporate priorities:

