

*An intimate lunch with***PROFESSOR JEFFREY D. SACHS***President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network*[globalfoundation.org.au](http://globalfoundation.org.au)

The world is fracturing into geopolitical blocs just as existential challenges like climate change demand us to come together. The reform of international systems of governance to ensure more effective global cooperation is one of the Foundation's major priorities.

We were pleased to welcome Professor Jeffrey Sachs, a world-renowned expert and advocate of sustainable development, as our guest of honour at an intimate lunch held in Melbourne, Australia, on 12 October 2023.



Hailing from the United States, Professor Sachs is a long-time friend of the Foundation who currently serves as President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network and Director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University. At the Melbourne lunch he provided valuable contributions to the Foundation's ongoing discussion program on global governance reform, building upon the [Dialogue Between Civilizations on Global Commons](#) held at the Vatican in June 2023, at which Professor Sachs and our Secretary General, Steve Howard, were co-chairs and co-convenors.

The Melbourne lunch was kindly hosted by Ian Fraser, CEO APAC at GHD, a Partner of the Global Foundation, and attended by a cross-section of representatives from business, universities, faiths, and the not-for-profit sector.



Below is a summary of key themes and discussion topics from the session.

**RETHINKING THE DOMINANT  
PARADIGMS OF GOVERNANCE AND  
ECONOMIC POLICY**

According to Jeff Sachs, the laissez-faire model of economics may be good for creating wealth, but it is insufficient for solving global challenges such as climate change and extreme poverty. In other words, governments should address the following question: 'what makes a good society and how do we achieve it?' The notion of a good society is a very rich and nuanced discussion topic, but there are common goods we can all agree upon: we don't want people living in abject poverty, we want people to have access to adequate nutrition and clean water, we want children to have access to education, etc. The Sustainable Development Goals of the UN broadly follow this model.

Similarly, though nation states remain our most dominant and powerful political structures, they were not designed to protect the global climate. Because of this, there are significant gaps in the world's capacity to manage the climate crisis. Reform of governance structures is needed to close these gaps, and nation states will likely need to give up some of their power to institutions at other levels of governance.



The weakness of our international political institutions was a topic of Pope Francis' *Laudate Deum*, published only 10 days before the lunch.

## COLLECTIVE ACTION AND COOPERATION



Problems like climate change and extreme poverty require collective action at all levels: local councils, state governments, nation states, regional institutions, and global institutions. However, global cooperation seems to have fallen out of favour, with some of our leaders appearing more concerned with geopolitical power struggles than striving for

the global common good. We are wasting our time fighting each other rather than negotiating, settling, and cooperating with each other.

In *Laudate Deum*, Pope Francis refers to the role of civil society:

***“More than saving the old multilateralism, it appears that the current challenge is to reconfigure and recreate it, taking into account the new world situation. I invite you to recognize that many groups and organizations within civil society help to compensate for the shortcomings for the international community, its lack of coordination in complex situations, and its lack of attention to fundamental human rights.”***

Pope Francis, 2023

The private sector also has a role to play in solving the great challenges facing humanity. Rather than waiting for governments to take action, businesses can lead positive change and pioneer solutions. This is what the Foundation calls ‘business with purpose,’ a concept promoted by Dr Mark Cutifani, Chair of the Foundation's Global Advisory Council and former CEO of Anglo American.

Public and private sector cooperation is another form of collective action. The example of coffee production was raised. Experts can talk to governments about infrastructure and access to education in coffee farming regions, but major coffee producers and roasters must also do their part to improve the condition of farmers.



Another example raised at the lunch was Australia's Rural Research and Development Corporations, which allow the Australian Government and primary producers to co-invest in research and development, and collaborate on agricultural innovation. There is potential to bring this model to other parts of the world.

## A PLACE FOR VIRTUE AND LEADERSHIP

Creating new governance structures and agreements forms only part of the solution to today's global crises; fostering virtue among individuals and publics is also vital.

All governance structures have the potential to be "hacked" by bad actors, a problem that has troubled philosophers since the time of Plato. The problem highlights the importance of fostering a culture of virtue among citizens and leaders alike. We need virtuous leaders to

encourage virtue among the public, and we need a virtuous public to elect virtuous leaders.

At various points in history, great leaders have been able to make a difference within existing political structures. To take the United States as an example, Theodore and Eleanor Roosevelt played instrumental roles in the formation of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human rights, and John F Kennedy saved the world during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. However, that same political structure was able to be "hacked" by leaders with less virtuous intentions, such as when campaign financing was deregulated in the 1970s.



The Global Foundation extends its thanks to Prof. John Thwaites AM, Chair, Monash Sustainable Development Institute & Climateworks Centre, which sponsored the Australian visit by Professor Sachs, and to the generous luncheon hosts, GHD.

[A full list of participants can be found here.](#)