

Ombudsman Peter Svetina's contribution to the Festival Proceedings "When I teach, I build" with a central theme on the future of the planet, subtitled and subtitled "How do we inspire young people to act sustainably?".

Peter Svetina

Dear Participants,

The rich programme of this year's conference "To learn is to build", with its central theme focused on the future of the planet and designed to inspire young people to act sustainably, shows that awareness of the need for green development in Slovenia is growing. I am happy about that! Climate change is a reality and the world is facing major challenges to curb greenhouse gas emissions and achieve zero emissions by 2050. In Slovenia, we are (sometimes) aware of the steps we need to take in this area. However, we have enshrined the transition to a low-carbon circular economy, among other things, in our medium- and long-term development goals. But despite some promising data - for example, this year's report on the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is prepared by the United Nations and ranks Slovenia 9th out of 165 countries in terms of eradicating extreme poverty, ensuring decent work and economic growth, and strengthening peace, justice and institutions - we are still not doing enough in practice, because we are not taking care of all the members of our community properly.

In order to achieve a situation in which the general well-being of humanity is not dependent on the exploitation of fossil fuels, it is essential to increase the share of renewable energy sources in the energy supply system, without neglecting the proper protection of human rights. We are already experiencing prolonged droughts, desertification and a simultaneous rise in sea levels due to extreme weather events, with the consequent loss of diverse habitats, fertile farmland and forest areas, which threatens, among other things, the security and supply of drinking water and food. All these risks, in addition to the wider economy, have a major impact on already vulnerable populations, especially the poor.

Living in a clean, orderly and healthy environment is a basic human right, which is why strong climate action at all levels is essential. We need the inclusive participation of all people to make a difference for the better. A precondition for this is a climatically or sustainably and environmentally-conscious community, which can only be built by empowering them - that is, by strengthening education. I am delighted that you are pursuing this goal by putting young people at the centre of this conference. Many of them are today courageous environmental ambassadors and initiators of various initiatives that demand decisive action from decision-makers. But to be truly successful, we need the right level of general social consensus. The hardships faced by individual groups in the face of climate change are multifaceted - from the short term, such as job losses in traditional production sectors, to the medium and long term, such as reduced reliability and security of drinking water and food supplies, rising energy costs, health problems due to rising temperatures, increased likelihood of being affected by extreme weather events - which, as a human rights and human rights defender, I find totally unacceptable.

The social and human dimensions are therefore crucial in the context of sustainable action. People must be at the heart of what we do, and if Slovenia is to remain a green oasis in Europe in the future, caring for the well-being of all its people, it will not be enough to have a smart strategy or plan, but it will be important to implement it properly and effectively.

We can only build a better and easier tomorrow, especially for the most disadvantaged, a tomorrow that inspires hope and confidence, together. Let people and human rights be at the heart of our efforts to green the transition and build a fairer future for all.

Good luck!

Peter Svetina
Ombudsman