

# Tomorrow Needs Us Today

IISD's 2020-2025  
STRATEGIC DIRECTION



International Institute for  
Sustainable Development

# Letter from the President

IISD works to fulfill a bold commitment: creating a world where people and the planet thrive.

As Canada's voice for sustainable development around the world, we continue to be inspired by the words of former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. Announcing the founding of IISD to the United Nations in 1988, he reminded world leaders that:

---

“Mankind is not destined to destroy itself; war is not inevitable; poverty can be alleviated; the environment can be preserved; injustices can be made right.”

---

Powered by this conviction, IISD has been a continuous force for change for 30 years, experiencing remarkable growth—nearly doubling in revenue since 2014—and making indelible impacts along the way. For example, we work with over 40 of the world's most vulnerable countries to adapt to climate change impacts, negotiate fair investment and trade deals, and transition to cleaner energy systems.

A clear lesson from our success is the power of partnerships in driving significant progress. IISD is increasingly known for leading major research and policy hubs, like the Experimental Lakes Area. Findings stemming from our unique freshwater research facility have influenced government and industry decisions around the world. Much of IISD's growth and impact has been driven by major collaborations like this and others, including the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) Global Network and the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining and Sustainable Development (IGF).

But as we celebrate our achievements, we also must recognize the current realities we face. We are in a time of deep disruption.

Even before the pandemic hit, the world was experiencing a phase of rapid transition brought on by increasing political polarization, inequalities, and climate and biodiversity crises. And in the few short months since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic, three things have become crystal clear:

- **Resilience is essential.** The lack of planning and preparation for the outbreak has starkly demonstrated the importance of resilience: the ability for human systems to anticipate, cope, and adapt. Lessons learned now can accelerate our efforts to become more resilient in the face of climate change and other stressors.

- **We must act on this moment to “build back better.”** As governments around the world race to implement support packages to keep individuals, businesses, and economies afloat, we must ensure these measures pave the way to a more sustainable economy and do not lock us further into a high-carbon future.
- **Inequality is magnified, offering a window for change.** The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented global shock that amplifies the corrosive impact of inequality, hitting the poorest and those without social safety nets the hardest. This has accelerated efforts to create more sustainable and inclusive economic systems that can improve wellbeing overall.



Photo: ©2017CIAT/GeorginaSmith (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

So, with all this in mind where do we go from here? Harnessing this moment to create a better, more sustainable world is our urgent task.

The next phase of IISD’s development will be guided by five priorities. We have focused externally on areas we deem ripe for transformation, where shifts in policy have the potential to change the nature of the game within this decade and where we have a proven record of making significant gains. Internally, we have highlighted areas for increased efficiency, effectiveness, and impact to ensure we can deliver on our goals.

Our first three priorities drive our research and policy work:

1. **Climate.** IISD must grapple with the biggest challenge facing the world today—climate change. We will drive clean energy transitions around the world with an immediate focus on opportunities arising from efforts to “build back better” after COVID. In all our climate work, we will leverage our expertise in shaping government and private sector investments through major initiatives like fossil fuel subsidy reform and climate adaptation planning.
2. **Resources.** Workable solutions are urgently needed to ease the severe pressure currently placed on our planet’s resources and biodiversity. IISD works to bridge divides; developing conservation efforts that support community livelihoods and providing research and tools to guide economic activity that supports ecosystems and social well-being. We will accelerate progress in this area by building on our unique strengths in sustainable freshwater management, agriculture and mining, where our cutting-edge partnerships are redefining the evidence base and building collective action.

3. **Economies.** IISD aims to be a leading voice in creating economic rules that treat inclusion and equality as central concerns and recognize the value of natural capital. Leveraging our work at the national, regional and international levels (where we drive reforms through bodies like the World Trade Organization and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), we will bring creative ideas to the table to counteract the erosion of global solidarity and shared visions.

Our final two priorities intersect with and extend the impact of the first three:

4. **Act Together.** Our greatest successes over the course of IISD's history resulted from diverse and strong partnerships. The challenges we face today are certainly too large and complex for any one organization or even country to tackle alone. We must act together. Building on our international network, IISD will continue to be a strong voice for multilateralism, supporting the Sustainable Development Goals and advancing our growing work on gender equality and empowerment. Acting together also means strengthening IISD's own internal capacities, including developing our people, processes, and fundraising.
5. **Engage.** Impact is a core value at IISD, as we deliver the knowledge to act. That requires us to engage – with policy makers, like-minded organizations, and increasingly social movements and younger generations – to share our insights and spark action on sustainable development. In the next five years, we will focus on sharper audience targeting and building a greater media presence and thought leadership in our priority areas. From a project perspective, we are reimagining the reach and impact of our flagship Earth Negotiations Bulletin, fundraising for a new public Centre for Climate and Lake Learning, and expanding our “Tracking Progress” platform to assist communities around the world to measure and manage their own efforts towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Together these five priorities—Climate, Resources, Economies, Act Together and Engage—form our CREATE strategy framework, presented in this document. They will guide our actions over the next five years.

Now more than ever, the global community faces choices that can either lead us toward or away from a more peaceful and prosperous future. Which will we choose?

For IISD, the answer is clear.

Join us, and let's create a more sustainable world together.

**DR. RICHARD FLORIZONE, PhD**  
President and CEO

## Vision

A world where people and the planet thrive.

## Mission

To accelerate solutions for a stable climate, sustainable resources, and fair economies.

## Values

### PEOPLE

Our primary focus is improving the lives of people and communities, fostering a more equitable and sustainable world.

### PLANET

We are committed to supporting the healthy ecosystems and biodiversity that underpin all thriving communities.

### EXCELLENCE

We produce work of the highest quality, and our independent advice is backed by evidence.

### COLLABORATION

We believe diverse partnerships produce better and more resilient outcomes.

### IMPACT

We aim for creative, bold solutions with significant impact. We create the knowledge to act.

Photo: Ed Wray for IISD





# Our strategic priorities

## CLIMATE



---

Address the drivers of climate change and adapt to its impacts.

---

- Directly support **clean and just energy transitions** in Canada and large emerging economies through advisory and advocacy work.
- Advocate for fossil fuel subsidy reform through our **Global Subsidies Initiative**.
- Increase the resilience of developing countries to climate shocks and stresses, including by growing the **NAP Global Network**.
- Drive action on **climate adaptation in Canada**, leveraging our global and Prairies-focused expertise.

## RESOURCES



---

Support the sustainable management of our natural resources.

---

- Sustain the world's most comprehensive long-term data set on **monitoring of freshwater ecosystems**.
- Expand research on the impact of **contaminants, invasive species, and eutrophication** on the world's freshwater resources.
- Optimize the benefits of mining through the **IGF** with a focus on taxation, environmental safeguards, local content, and small-scale mining.
- Lead global thinking on **the responsible sourcing of minerals and metals** for the energy transition.
- Drive policies and practices that build more **resilient food systems** and strengthen investment rules that advance food security in an inclusive and environmentally sustainable way.

## ECONOMIES



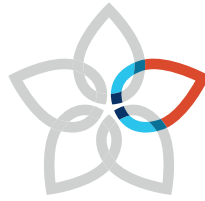
---

Foster fair and sustainable economies.

---

- Strengthen the capacity of developing countries to negotiate **fair and sustainable trade and investment agreements**.
- **Reform global governance on finance, trade and investment**, working directly with the WTO, OECD and other key multilateral organizations.
- Support governments to develop **sustainable and equitable economic recovery programs**.
- Promote public and private investment in **sustainable infrastructure, including nature-based solutions**.

## ACT TOGETHER



---

Build the capacity to act together on sustainability.

---

- Support **collaborative, multilateral institutions and solutions** in an increasingly polarized world.
- **Advance gender equality and social inclusion** in sustainable development policies and investments by growing our work across programs.
- Build new partnerships and sources of support for IISD's work through expanded **friend-raising and fundraising efforts**.
- Increase our ability to attract, develop and retain world-class staff by developing and implementing a **People Plan**.
- Improve efficiency and effectiveness by developing a refined **Information Strategy** that best supports our work.

## ENGAGE

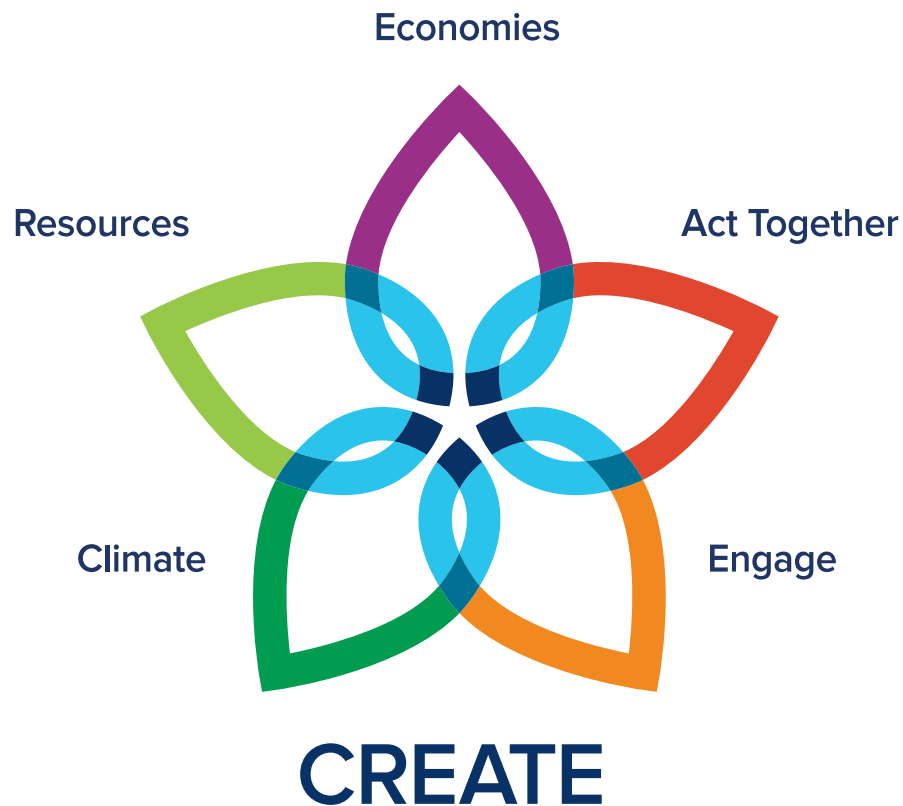


---

Deliver insights that spark action on sustainable development.

---

- Engage the Canadian public on the importance of freshwater sustainability by building IISD-ELA's **Canada Centre for Climate and Lake Learning**.
- Extend the reach and impact of the world-renowned **Earth Negotiations Bulletin**.
- Empower communities to define and **track progress towards sustainability** through building a global network of community platforms.
- Bring our vision and mission to life and increase the impact of our work by developing and implementing a **Brand and Communications Strategy**.



IISD's **CREATE** strategy framework, with its focus on **C**limate, **R**esources, **E**conomies, **A**ct Together and **E**ngage, forms the basis of our collective action, measurement, and reporting over the next five years.

©2020 The International Institute for Sustainable Development  
Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development.

**Head Office**

111 Lombard Avenue, Suite 325  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Canada R3B 0T4

**Tel:** +1 (204) 958-7700

**Website:** [www.iisd.org](http://www.iisd.org)

**Twitter:** @IISD\_news



[iisd.org](http://iisd.org)