

Expansion project in Montréal

**The international organization Future Earth is leveraging digital innovations to achieve global sustainability and explore solutions to threats like COVID-19**

**Montréal, March 4, 2021** - The potential of digital solutions in fighting global crises such as COVID-19 or achieving global sustainability is broad. But how can technological trends, such as artificial intelligence, be harnessed to change our approach to social justice and climate action? To find answers, the Montréal Hub of Future Earth is announcing the next steps of the Sustainability in the Digital Age (SDA) initiative, with the appointment of Dr. Éliane Ubalijoro as its new executive director, and the creation of five new positions.

SDA is a unique collaboration that bridges technology, research, and science policy. Hosted at Concordia University, the new initiative draws on its partnerships with Mila, the International Science Council, and the German Environment Agency (UBA). Dr. Ubalijoro will seek to expand this strong network internationally.

“COVID-19 is forcing us to pause and reflect on our global footprint. We urgently need to leverage digital innovations to enhance our sustainability practices,” said Dr. Ubalijoro. “I am honoured to join SDA and follow in the visionary work of Dr. Amy Luers to investigate how digitalization can help us achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Our human and digital intelligence must be harnessed to achieve global sustainability.”

Dr. Ubalijoro brings a wealth of knowledge to SDA’s projects. These include studying global perspectives on the deployment of technologies like digital surveillance to combat global crises, such as COVID-19 or climate change. SDA is also investigating what role Canada should play in advancing post-2020 global biodiversity targets, and how machine learning can enhance the process. Another ongoing project focuses on guiding philanthropic investments to achieve climate goals. In the coming months, SDA will be organizing an online dialogue series across Canada to increase awareness of the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals and explore how innovators across the country are mobilizing digital transformations for sustainability.

This expansion is carried out in collaboration with Montréal International, with financial support provided by the Government of Canada, the Government of Québec, the City of Montréal, the Québec Research Funds, and the ClimateWorks Foundation.

Quotes :

“Montréal boasts the highest community of international organizations in North America, after New York and Washington. We are proud to assist an organization such as Future Earth in carrying out its valuable mission to achieve global sustainability. Montréal has a rich history in artificial intelligence and technology research, and it is exciting to see it intersect on the significant



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issue of global sustainability.”

- **Stéphane Paquet**, *President and CEO of Montréal International*

“The Government of Canada has made concrete commitments to demonstrate that a strong economy and a healthy environment go hand in hand. Among other actions, we are making strategic investments in clean technologies. By helping SMEs and international organizations in Montréal to become more innovative and competitive and by boosting innovation to develop greener technologies and products, we are also preparing Canadians for the jobs of today and tomorrow.”

- **The Honourable Mélanie Joly**, *Member of Parliament for Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages and Minister responsible for CED*

“The fight against climate change, the protection of biodiversity and the sustainable development of our societies are among the key issues of our time. Applying artificial intelligence to these sectors can lead to innovative and concrete solutions, which is why the Government of Québec, through its Hospitality Policy for international organizations, is pleased to support the development of Future Earth’s “Sustainability in the Digital Age” program. Moreover, the program will be able to benefit from the strong artificial intelligence and sustainable development research ecosystem that is already established in Québec.”

- **Nadine Girault**, *Minister of International Relations and La Francophonie, Minister of Immigration, Francization and Integration and Minister Responsible for the Laurentides Region*

“More than ever, we must ensure that the digital revolution contributes to the transformation of our society into a more sustainable and equitable one. In the context of the current pandemic and of the climate crisis, we believe that it is essential for the city to support the Sustainability in the Digital Age (SDA) initiative, thus also reinforcing Montréal’s position as one of the global leaders in the field of artificial intelligence. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Éliane Ubalijoro, on her appointment as Executive Director of SDA and Global Hub Director for Future Earth in Montréal.”

- **Valérie Plante**, *Mayor of Montréal*

“Our digital era comes with its challenges, but also affords great opportunities in terms of discoveries, development and growth. While we can leverage this momentum, we must do so with a view to achieving sustainability by placing the highest priority on respect for individuals and the environment. The UN Sustainable Development Goals, which are more prominent than ever in our societies’ agendas and of renewed interest for the scientific community, chart the roadmap for this development. And this is all the more necessary within the context of the post-pandemic recovery. I welcome the appointment of Éliane Ubalijoro as the executive director of Sustainability in the Digital Age and global hub director of Future Earth in Montréal. Indeed, it gives a strong new impetus to these organizations, which facilitate digital research and innovation focused on sustainability.”

- **Rémi Quirion**, *Chief Scientist of Québec*

“Following Concordia’s signing of the Montréal Statement on Sustainability in the Digital Age, the appointment of Dr. Éliane Ubalijoro to helm this trans-disciplinary initiative further advances our ongoing mission of harnessing digital innovation to bolster the imperative of global sustainability.”



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Éliane's wealth of experience in non-profit governance, science-policy, and expertise at the intersection of innovation and sustainable development makes her the ideal candidate."

- **Graham Carr**, *President and Vice-Chancellor, Concordia University*

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