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# WFUNA

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# WISE Conference Report

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WFUNA Impact & Start-up Ecosystem  
Conference

Geneva  
2024

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World Federation of United Nations Associations

# **GLOBAL CITIZENS FOR A STRONGER UNITED NATIONS**

## **WHO WE ARE**

The World Federation of United Nations Associations(WFUNA) is a global nonprofit organization representing and coordinating a membership of over 100 national United Nations Associations (UNAs) and their thousands of constituents. WFUNA is the world's largest network of people supporting and engaging with the UN.

## **OUR VISION**

A United Nations that is a powerful force in meeting common global challenges and opportunities.

## **OUR MISSION**

We work to build a better world by strengthening and improving the United Nations through the engagement of people who share a global mindset and support international cooperation-global citizens.

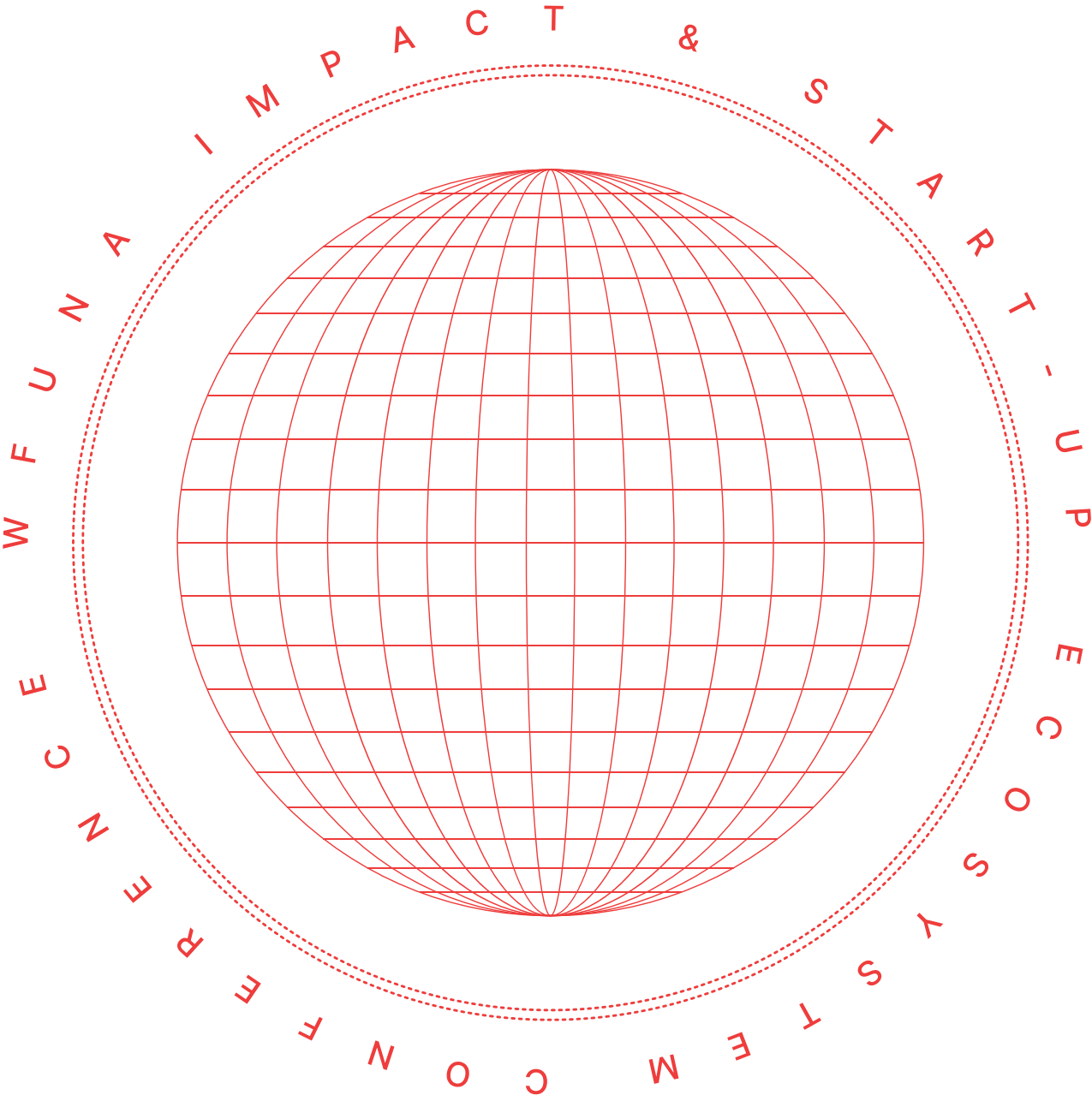
## **WHAT WE BELIEVE**

We believe that people's involvement on all levels of local, national, and global decision-making is essential in order to achieve the goals of the United Nations.

WFUNA

WISE Conference  
Report

WFUNA Impact & Start-up Ecosystem Conference Geneva 2024



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# I. Background

## A. Introduction to WFUNA

The **World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA)** is the largest global network of people supporting and engaging with the United Nations since 1946. WFUNA bridges the international community and the UN, fostering partnerships to achieve the UN's goals. Over the years, WFUNA has become a respected organization within the global community, actively facilitating dialogue and initiatives that align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). WFUNA holds **General Consultative Status** with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the highest level of recognition granted to NGOs. Among over 120 organizations with this status are notable entities such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Rotary International, and Zonta International. With this status, WFUNA actively engages with ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies. It has the unique ability to propose items for ECOSOC's provisional agenda, ensuring that issues aligned with WFUNA's mission is addressed at the international level.

WFUNA representatives, including those of its subsidiary bodies, can attend ECOSOC's open meetings as observers. This participation fosters collaboration and dialogue with UN Member States and other stakeholders. Additionally, WFUNA submits written and oral statements to ECOSOC, circulated as official UN documents, and shared with Member States. These opportunities enable WFUNA to amplify the voices of its global network and provide expert input on pressing global challenges. WFUNA is also responsible for submitting a quadrennial report to the UN Secretary-General detailing its activities and contributions to the UN's goals. This transparency reinforces WFUNA's role as a trusted partner of the UN. Moreover, with over 100 national UN Associations formal collaborations with key UN bodies such as UNDP, UNESCO, and UNICEF, WFUNA amplifies the voices of civil society, connecting grassroots organizations with global policymakers.

WFUNA's dedication to transparency and civil society engagement is evident in its work with the UN Security Council (UNSC). By facilitating UNSC Election Debates and Civil Society Dialogues, WFUNA promotes transparency and accountability in global governance. These initiatives bring together civil society and UN Member States to foster open dialogue about the election of non-permanent members and the broader functions of the Security Council.

WFUNA's Seoul Secretariat, established in 2015, serves as a regional hub for its projects in the Asia-Pacific. This office leads impactful initiatives such as Citypreneurs and Global Youth Impact Hackathon, enhancing global capacity-building efforts, particularly in impact entrepreneurship and youth leadership. At the core of the Seoul Secretariat's work is its flagship program, **Citypreneurs: Urban Innovation Challenge**, which promotes sustainable solutions to urban challenges. Citypreneurs empower entrepreneurs to develop scalable solutions aligned with the SDGs by fostering collaboration between start-ups, venture capitals, governments, and international organizations. The program encourages innovation through start-up competitions, capacity-building initiatives, investments, and policy dialogues while engaging policymakers to create supportive frameworks for sustainable development.

In addition to Citypreneurs, WFUNA organizes the **WFUNA Impact Start-up Ecosystem (WISE) Conference**, a platform dedicated to exploring the role of entrepreneurship in advancing the SDGs. This conference gathers diverse stakeholders, including start-ups, policymakers, and venture capitalists, to exchange ideas, share best practices, and develop actionable solutions. WISE solidifies WFUNA's leadership in driving impact entrepreneurship by fostering an inclusive ecosystem.

Also, the **Global Youth Impact Hackathon (GYIH)** allows young people from around the world to collaborate in teams, tackle shared global challenges, and showcase their potential on an international stage. The 2024 GYIH brought together participants from 10 countries

across the Asia-Pacific region. Central to the event were workshops utilizing the WFUNA SDGs Toolkit, designed to facilitate impact entrepreneurship education. Furthermore, participants received professional mentoring and feedback on marketing, business building, and UX/UI from judges based on their team projects. Through these sessions, participants developed and presented business solutions aligned with sustainable development, demonstrating the hackathon's role in fostering innovation and advancing the global sustainability agenda.

Through these initiatives, WFUNA inspires young people to take ownership of their futures and contribute to global efforts to achieve the SDGs. WFUNA is committed to building a more inclusive and sustainable world by fostering innovation and empowering youth. WFUNA's leadership, its General Consultative Status with ECOSOC, and its impactful initiatives—such as Citypreneurs, the WISE Conference, and the GYIH—are fostering an entrepreneurial ecosystem that contributes to a sustainable future. As a trusted partner to the UN, WFUNA continues to bridge civil society with the international community, ensuring innovative solutions are developed to address the world's most pressing challenges.

## B. Driving the Impact Start-up Ecosystem through SDGs

The **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, represent a collective framework addressing the world's most pressing challenges across social, economic, and environmental dimensions. With 17 goals and 169 targets, the SDGs serve as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure peace and prosperity for all by 2030. These goals are both aspirational and actionable, reflecting a commitment by nations, organizations, and individuals to build a sustainable future for humanity.

At the heart of the SDGs lies the principle of “leaving no one behind,” prioritizing inclusivity and equity in global progress. This principle highlights the need to tackle the root causes of inequality and marginalization, ensuring that even the most vulnerable populations benefit from sustainable development efforts. The SDGs are inherently interconnected; progress in one area often accelerates advancements in others, creating a cohesive roadmap for holistic development.

Among the SDGs, **Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth** stands out as a key driver of sustainability. This goal promotes sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, productive employment, and decent work for all. By fostering fair and equitable economic systems, Goal 8 serves as a catalyst for poverty reduction,

global stability, and prosperity. Its emphasis on quality jobs, labor rights, fair wages, and safe working environments highlights its role in improving lives, reducing inequalities, and fostering social cohesion. WFUNA's initiatives are closely aligned with the targets of Goal 8, demonstrating how entrepreneurship and innovation can create pathways to decent work and inclusive growth. Programs like Citypreneurs and the WFUNA Impact Start-up Ecosystem (WISE) Conference address specific aspects of Goal 8 through actionable strategies. For instance, Citypreneurs empowers entrepreneurs to develop scalable and sustainable business solutions by fostering collaboration among start-ups, venture capitals, public institutions, and international organizations. This program supports Target 8.3, which encourages policies for decent job creation and innovation, and Target 8.5, which advocates for productive employment for all, including marginalized groups like women and youth. Similarly, WFUNA's focus on youth engagement through initiatives like the GYIH equips young people with the skills to access quality jobs and youth entrepreneurship, addressing Target 8.6, which seeks to reduce youth unemployment. The WISE Conference, held in Geneva in November 2024, further underscored the importance of entrepreneurship in advancing Goal 8. The conference brought together stakeholders from governments, private enterprises, academia, and civil society to explore strategies for fostering decent work and inclusive growth. Discussions focused on integrating digital solutions, promoting sustainable business practices, and enabling social enterprises to scale.

Achieving Goal 8 requires collaboration as emphasized in **Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals**. WFUNA's initiatives demonstrate how partnerships can drive progress on both goals. Citypreneurs aligns with Target 17.3 by connecting start-ups to financial resources, enabling sustainable business development. The program supports Target 17.6 by promoting knowledge sharing and innovation among diverse stakeholders. The WISE Conference advances Target 17.16 by creating platforms for global partnerships, bridging grassroots innovators with policymakers. It also exemplifies Target 17.17, showcasing effective public-private-civil society collaborations to tackle urban challenges. Through programs like GYIH, WFUNA's focus on capacity building addresses Target 17.9, equipping individuals with the tools to implement SDG-aligned solutions. Additionally, WFUNA emphasizes transparency and data-driven impact, aligning with Target 17.19.

By fostering partnerships and aligning its initiatives with the targets of Goals 8 and 17, WFUNA demonstrates the transformative power of collaboration in advancing the SDGs. The outcomes of the WISE Conference and WFUNA's ongoing programs highlight a clear commitment to fostering decent work, inclusive growth, and sustainable development. These initiatives inspire further action,

underscoring the critical role of entrepreneurship and partnerships in creating a more equitable and resilient global economy.

### C. WFUNA's Role in the Impact Start-up Ecosystem

The World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) has established itself as a key player in fostering and advancing the impact start-up ecosystem, bridging the gap between innovative entrepreneurship and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By leveraging its global network and convening power, WFUNA plays a central role in connecting start-ups, policymakers, investors, and civil society to create collaborative solutions for global challenges.

WFUNA's unique position allows it to serve as a catalyst for collaboration, providing platforms for dialogue and partnership that align entrepreneurial innovation with the SDGs. Programs like Citypreneurs exemplify this approach by not only supporting start-ups in their early stages but also integrating their efforts into broader frameworks for sustainable development. Citypreneurs, for instance, goes beyond being a competition; it is a holistic ecosystem-building initiative that brings together young entrepreneurs, international organizations, and policymakers. This program enables impact-driven start-ups to address urban challenges with innovative business models while contributing to the achievement of goals like Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth.

One of WFUNA's key contributions to the impact start-up ecosystem is its focus on capacity building. Through tailored mentorship programs, training workshops, and resource-sharing initiatives, WFUNA empowers start-ups to develop business strategies that incorporate social and environmental impact alongside financial viability. This emphasis on the triple bottom line—balancing people, planet, and profit—ensures that these ventures contribute to systemic change while remaining sustainable. Moreover, WFUNA actively prioritizes inclusivity by providing targeted support for marginalized groups, including women, youth, and underserved communities. This approach not only aligns with the principle of “leaving no one behind” but also enriches the ecosystem with diverse perspectives and solutions.

WFUNA also recognizes the critical role of policy and ecosystem alignment in the success of impact start-ups. Through its global platforms, WFUNA advocates for policies that encourage social innovation and provide start-ups with access to funding, supportive regulatory environments, and market opportunities. Since 2017, WFUNA has co-organized annual regional policy dialogues on urban innovation challenges with UNESCAP as side events for Citypreneurs. The WISE Conference, held in Geneva in November 2024, exemplifies

this commitment. At this event, WFUNA convened stakeholders from government, private sectors, and civil society to discuss barriers to innovation and co-develop solutions for strengthening the global impact start-up ecosystem. The roundtable discussions underscored the importance of creating ecosystems where entrepreneurs can not only survive but also thrive and scale their solutions.

Another significant contribution by WFUNA is its focus on impact measurement and accountability. By helping start-ups align their metrics with SDG indicators, WFUNA ensures that their contributions to social and environmental goals are both measurable and meaningful. This focus on transparency and accountability builds credibility for impact start-ups, attracting socially conscious investors and fostering trust among stakeholders.

Through initiatives like the GYIH, WFUNA actively supports the integration of young entrepreneurs into the impact start-up ecosystem. GYIH fosters a new generation of leaders poised to drive innovation and sustainable development by providing opportunities for youth to develop and present innovative solutions to global challenges. This initiative underscores WFUNA's commitment to nurturing entrepreneurial talent and ensuring the continuous infusion of fresh ideas and energy into the ecosystem, advancing innovation and impact.

WFUNA's leadership in the impact start-up ecosystem is not limited to facilitation; it is about creating an environment where systemic change can occur. By integrating innovation, inclusivity, and collaboration into its programs, WFUNA continues to advance the potential of impact start-ups as drivers of sustainable development. Looking ahead, WFUNA remains committed to scaling these efforts, fostering ecosystems where entrepreneurial solutions can make meaningful contributions to the SDGs, particularly Goal 8. Through its work, WFUNA reaffirms the transformative power of impact entrepreneurship in creating a fairer, more inclusive, and sustainable world.

## II. Conference Highlights

### A. Overview of WISE Conference

The WISE (WFUNA Impact Start-up Ecosystem) Conference was established as a strategic platform to advance WFUNA's mission of promoting sustainable development and fostering international collaboration through impact entrepreneurship. Organized by the WFUNA as part of Partnership towards Impact Entrepreneurship initiative, the conference connects successful case studies from the Citypreneurs program with key stakeholders in the impact innovation ecosystems of Asia and Europe. This initiative builds on WFUNA's efforts in the Asia-Pacific region, which have accelerated over 300 start-ups, and connected 1,259 start-ups from 87 countries with opportunities for investment and innovation since 2017.

The WISE Conference convenes 19 speakers across five sessions, representing diverse sectors, including local governments, venture capital firms, universities, public institutions, and international organizations from Europe and Asia. These sessions—Impact Start-up Showcase, Local Ecosystem, Open Innovation, Cross-Border Entrepreneurship, and SDGs & Impact—facilitate knowledge exchange, innovative strategies, and collaborative solutions to global challenges. By fostering transformative partnerships and leveraging WFUNA's general consultative status with ECOSOC, the conference ensures that its outcomes, including actionable insights and policy recommendations, contribute meaningfully to the achievement of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This initiative underscores the critical importance of global collaboration in driving tangible results for a sustainable and equitable future.

The conference was held from November 4 to 5, 2024, at three key venues in Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), International Conference Centre Geneva (CICG), and Crowne Plaza Geneva. Geneva's renowned hub for international organizations and multilateral cooperation provided the perfect

setting to foster dialogue and collaboration aligned with WFUNA's mission to advance sustainable development through impactful partnerships.

Day 1 at the WISE Conference featured sessions on Impact Start-ups Showcase, Local Ecosystems, Open Innovation, Cross-Border Entrepreneurship, and SDGs & Impact. In addition, 1:1 business meetings were organized to facilitate direct interactions between entrepreneurs and investors, fostering meaningful connections and exploring collaboration opportunities. The day concluded with a Networking Reception and Dinner Banquet, creating connections across industries and continents. Day 2 focused on a Roundtable Discussion at the UNOG, centering on strategies to enhance the global impact start-up ecosystem. Attendees included entrepreneurs, investors, and representatives from public institutions and universities, ensuring a diverse and impactful exchange of ideas. The day concluded with a luncheon, providing additional opportunities for informal dialogue and collaboration.

The WISE Conference 2024 brought together 119 participants from 15 countries, encompassing a diverse array of sectors and expertise. Attendees included entrepreneurs, corporate leaders, scholars, representatives from the United Nations, and venture capitalists, reflecting the broad spectrum of stakeholders essential to fostering a robust impact start-up ecosystem. With participation spanning continents, including Denmark, Finland, Republic of Korea, Germany and Switzerland, the conference facilitated a dynamic exchange of ideas and best practices. By connecting regional and global perspectives, the event highlighted the importance of partnerships in addressing global challenges and driving sustainable innovation. The structured sessions and networking opportunities enabled participants to explore actionable solutions and establish collaborative frameworks, laying the foundation for continued progress toward the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.



## Timetable

Day 1 2024.11.04		CICG (The International Conference Center Geneva)
10:00 UTC+2		Welcome Ceremony
10:30 (90')		Impact Start-ups Showcase * 1:1 Business Matching
12:00 (60')		Lunch
13:00 (60')		Local Ecosystem Local Ecosystem for Impact and Start-ups
14:00 (60')		Open Innovation Highlights the power of collaboration through partnerships
15:00 (10')		Break Time
15:10 (50')		Cross-Border Entrepreneurship Connecting Innovators: European-East Asian Entrepreneurship Synergy
16:00 (50')		SDGs & Impact SDGs and Sustainable Start-up Support
16:50 (10')		Closing Ceremony
<b>Crowne Plaza Hotel</b>		
18:30 (60')		Networking / Toast Remarks
19:30(90')		Dinner Banquet
Day 2 2024.11.05		Palais des Nations (The United Nations Office at Geneva)
10:00 (60')		UN Office VIP Tour
11:00 (60')		Round table for UN ECOSOC Proposal *Venue: Villa Le Bocage
12:00 (90')		Luncheon

## Acknowledgement

### Impact Start-ups



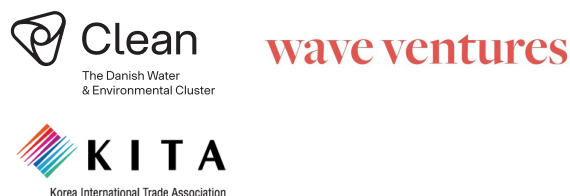
### Public Institutions



### Academic Institutions



### Innovation & Impact Organization



### International Organizations



### Organized by



## B. About the Sessions

WISE Conference featured five thematic sessions designed to address critical aspects of the global impact start-up ecosystem. These sessions included the **Impact Start-ups Showcase**, which highlighted innovative solutions from East Asian start-ups aligned with the SDGs; **Local Ecosystem**, where regional leaders shared strategies for fostering entrepreneurial ecosystems; **Open Innovation**, which explored the transformative role of collaboration in driving sustainable innovation; **Cross-Border Entrepreneurship**, addressing challenges and opportunities for scaling start-ups globally; and **SDGs & Impact**, which examined the role of start-ups in advancing inclusive social, economic, and environmental growth.

### 1. Impact Start-ups Showcase

The session highlighted pioneering start-ups from East Asia and Europe that developed innovative technologies to advance the Sustainable Development Goals. Discussions focused on strategies to reduce environmental impacts, enhance global security, and foster international collaboration, emphasizing the role of innovation in amplifying impact.

#### Speakers:

- Yunji Lee, CEO, Sovement
- Nicklas Lynge, Co-Founder, Linucare
- Ikhwan Kwon, CEO, SCHAFFENGOTT
- Karla Deza, Co-Founder, Quality by Images
- Ki Hyun Yoo, CTO, SIMPLE Planet

- a. Sovement  
KR No.1 Cigarette Butt Management Start-up  
Yunji Lee, CEO, Sovement

Yunji Lee, CEO of Sovement, leads an AI and IoT start-up specializing in smart waste management, particularly addressing cigarette waste. Under her leadership, Sovement secured a \$350K global contract and is expanding internationally with innovative solutions for sustainable cities. Yunji, a university student entrepreneur with prior experience founding and exiting a product brand exported to 12 countries, exemplifies impactful leadership.

During the session, Yunji discussed the role of Korea's impact start-ups in addressing global challenges through innovation. Using Sovement's AIoT-integrated smart cigarette waste management system as an example, she demonstrated how technology can drive meaningful social change. Sovement's success in PoC testing and real-world applications highlights the potential of impact-driven solutions to address pressing environmental issues.

She also analyzed the growth of Korea's start-up ecosystem, emphasizing key metrics and the ongoing challenge of quantifying social value. To address this, she advocated adopting frameworks inspired by the Impact Management Project (IMP) to measure and validate impact effectively.

Yunji stressed the critical role of understanding ESG principles and social value measurement in securing funding and gaining visibility for impact start-ups. She highlighted platforms like WFUNA's Citypreneurs program as vital for showcasing innovations, fostering partnerships, and scaling globally. Concluding her session, she called for continuous innovation, strategic benchmarking, and collaboration to position Korea's impact start-ups as sustainability and social innovation leaders.

- b. Linucare  
Together, we create safety.  
Nicklas Lynge, Co-Founder, Linucare

Nicklas Lynge is the co-founder of Linucare, a Danish tech start-up that has developed an innovative alarm app connected to a physical button that enables users to call for help quickly during emergencies. With just two presses, the app sends an alert, including the user's location, to their network—even in "Do Not Disturb" mode. After securing funding through Lions' Den and onboarding Tahir Siddique, former CEO of Livescore, as an investor, Linucare is preparing for an international launch to expand its safety solutions. The company provides tailored safety features for private users, such as family protection and small businesses, enabling quick alerts to neighboring shops in theft or emergencies.

During the session, Nicklas presented Linucare as a start-up addressing global safety challenges through technology aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By focusing on SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), Linucare aims to foster safer communities and enhance well-being. Its ability to bypass phone restrictions like silent mode and its integration with GPS navigation demonstrate how technology can provide rapid assistance in emergencies such as elderly falls and personal safety risks in high-crime areas or nightlife districts.

Nicklas emphasized that Linucare's planned expansion into India demonstrates its ability to adapt to diverse contexts. By developing a volunteer-based network that alerts the five nearest responders in emergencies, Linucare addresses critical safety challenges while fostering community resilience. These innovative solutions enhance urban safety and strengthen social connections, aligning with

global efforts to create sustainable and inclusive cities.

c. SCHAFFENGOTT

We hope that anyone, regardless of class or income, will benefit from smart city technology.

Ikhwan Kwon, CEO, SCHAFFENGOTT

Ikhwan Kwon, CEO of SCHAFFENGOTT, holds an MBA from Korea University Business School and is a visionary leader in innovation and technology. He has earned numerous accolades, including the CES 2023 Innovation Award, a Presidential Commendation on Procurement Day, and recognition from the Ministry of Science and ICT, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy, and the Public Procurement Service. He was also named a Regional Innovator by the Presidential Committee for Balanced National Development, received the Grand Prize at WFUNA Citypreneurs 2024 Ulsan, and was honored as an Outstanding Venture Entrepreneur by the city of Busan.

In the session, Ikhwan presented SCHAFFENGOTT's disaster safety solutions, designed to enhance safety and sustainability in smart cities, smart homes, and mobility. SCHAFFENGOTT combines advanced technologies such as AI, IoT, ICT, and chemical engineering to develop innovative products like the Tritona, which integrates fire detection, suppression, real-time monitoring, and emergency communication into one device. These systems address critical gaps in outdated fire safety regulations, offering affordable, high-performance solutions accessible to all, from luxury apartments to refugee camps, aligning with the UN's SDGs, particularly in sustainable infrastructure and safety.

Sharing his story of connecting a business model with the Sustainable Development Goals, he highlighted SCHAFFENGOTT's mission to democratize access to life-saving technology.

The company's innovations address residential safety, wildfire prevention, and lithium battery fire protection. By harnessing AI-driven data collection and digital thread technologies, SCHAFFENGOTT creates predictive models for disaster management and smart city planning. Highlighting the global importance of the inclusive and non-discriminatory daily care appliance for smart city technology, Ikhwan stated that SCHAFFENGOTT aims to bridge socioeconomic disparities and drive progress in safety and sustainability worldwide.

d. Quality by Images

We help the food industry to reduce food loss and increase profits.

Karla Deza, Co-Founder, Quality by Images

Karla Deza is the founder of Quality by Images, she holds a PhD in Food Science from the University of Copenhagen, and she has 10 years of experience in food quality and technology, image analysis, and data analysis. Karla is a scientist and entrepreneur who won the Innofounder grant for excellence innovative ideas from Innovation Fund Denmark in 2022. Currently, she is running projects with the Danish seafood industry in collaboration with Business Aalborg Spin-in ignite program in Denmark.

In the session, Karla introduced Quality by Images' innovative approach to addressing inefficiencies in the food industry's quality control processes. She highlighted the limitations of traditional visual inspections, which are labor-intensive and prone to bias, resulting in significant food loss and economic inefficiencies. Quality by Images developed an automated inspection solution powered by image analysis algorithms to tackle these challenges. This technology enables accurate, real-time product quality assessments, improving consistency and reducing waste across supply chains. Accessible through smartphones and tablets, the company simplifies quality control processes, making them scalable and adaptable for various sectors, including seafood, fresh produce, and agro-industries.

Karla emphasized their solution's societal and economic benefits, which align with sustainability goals by reducing food waste and supporting green transitions. Quality by Images helps the food industry reduce waste and boost profits while promoting green transitions, lowering emissions, encouraging circular practices, and creating jobs in the food sector. Its technology enhances operational efficiency and profitability without the need for specialized skills. By driving innovation in food quality control, Quality by Images underscores its commitment to sustainability and efficiency in the global food industry.

e. SIMPLE Planet

Sustainability, Food Security, Climate Tech, Impact

Ki Hyun Yoo, CTO, SIMPLE Planet

Ki Hyun Yoo is the CTO of SIMPLE Planet, a pioneering food-tech company specializing in cell-based alternative proteins through advanced suspension culture platform technology. He has an extensive background in biotechnology, immunology, stem cells, oncology, virology, and neurology. His commitment to sustainable solutions led him to join SIMPLE Planet, driven by the belief that cellular agriculture is essential for addressing global challenges posed by rising population demands and conventional meat production limitations. Ki Hyun aims to contribute to biodiversity conservation and resource efficiency in the food industry by

developing cell culture platforms and cell organization technology.

In the session, Ki Hyun introduced SIMPLE Planet's mission to address global challenges such as food insecurity and environmental sustainability through innovative food technology. The company specializes in developing functional cell-based ingredients like protein and fat, utilizing proprietary bioreactors and cutting-edge edible cell culture media. This approach significantly reduces production costs, improving the scalability and sustainability of cell-based food production. By aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Zero Hunger and Climate Action, SIMPLE Planet showcased its potential to revolutionize global food systems with highly concentrated, cost-effective, and nutritionally superior alternatives to traditional products.

He also emphasized SIMPLE Planet's dedication to collaboration and innovation. Backed by strong investments and government grants, the company is scaling its production to meet the demands of the rapidly growing cell-based food market. Through partnerships with academic institutions and industry leaders, SIMPLE Planet seeks to enhance its technological capabilities and expand its global presence, supporting the transition to a zero-carbon, sustainable future for food.

## 2. Local Ecosystems

The session examined how local ecosystems supported the growth of impactful start-ups by fostering collaboration and innovation. Representatives from regional institutions shared insights on policies and strategies that enhanced partnerships with start-ups and strengthened regional business environments.

### Speakers:

- Somi Shin, Managing Director, Seoul Metropolitan Youth Center
- Else Bech Barndorff, Spin-in Consultant, Business Aalborg
- Tanja Hovgaard, Entrepreneur Consultant, Business Aalborg
- Christine Kim, Manager, Suwon Convention Center
- Nicole Shim, Manager, Suwon Convention Center

- a. Seoul Youth Policy  
Impact Created in the Public Sector  
Somi Shin, Managing Director, Seoul Metropolitan Youth Center

Somi Shin is a Director of Seoul Youth Center (SMYC) and member of Seoul Social Security Committee, awarded Presidential Citation for contributions to youth policy. SMYC is the central hub for managing and supporting Seoul's youth policies, providing strategic guidance and resources to help young people overcome

challenges and realize their potential.

In the session, Somi introduced key programs such as Youth Policy Counseling, Shared Spaces, and Community Programs, which address young people's diverse challenges. She explained how these initiatives provide tools for personal growth, professional development, and building meaningful social connections. Somi emphasized that the successful implementation of these programs relies on the Seoul Metropolitan Youth Center (SMYC), which plays a critical role in connecting resources and ensuring their effective delivery. She argued that these efforts have positioned Seoul as a leader in youth-focused policies and initiatives, setting an example for other cities in fostering innovative and inclusive youth strategies.

Somi also discussed systemic challenges within the public sector, including administrative inefficiencies, limited budgets, and discontinuities in policy implementation, which can hinder the delivery of effective youth services. She underscored the importance of bridging these gaps by creating connections across resources and stakeholders to ensure all youth, regardless of their background, have access to opportunities. She concluded by reaffirming the center's dedication to fostering resilience, strengthening communities, and supporting young people in navigating the complexities of modern life.

- b. Welcome to Aalborg  
Else Bech Barndorff, Spin-in Consultant, Business Aalborg  
Tanja Hovgaard, Entrepreneur Consultant, Business Aalborg

Else Bech serves as a Spin-in Consultant at Business Aalborg, facilitating collaboration between start-ups and established companies. She brings extensive experience, having lectured at the University College of Northern Denmark (2015-2023) and worked in product and business development in the travel industry (2008-2015). Else holds a Master of Science in International Business Communication, PR & Spanish (2011) and is an NLP-certified coach/practitioner (2024).

Tanja Hovgaard is an Entrepreneur Consultant at Business Aalborg/Aalborg Municipality, a position she has held since 2019. With a solid background in finance, accounting, and business consulting, Tanja has consistently supported start-ups and driven business growth. Previously, she served as partner and CFO of Plejekompagniet ApS (2010-2018), where she led financial management and strategic planning. She earned a Graduate Diploma in Business Administration (Organization and Management) from Aalborg University (2021-2023) and is also

a certified NLP Coach Practitioner (2020).

Else and Tanja emphasized Business Aalborg's commitment to fostering innovation and economic growth in Aalborg, Denmark. Initiatives like the Start-up Café provide essential resources, including consultation services, workspace, and networking opportunities, to support new businesses and strengthen the local entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The Spin-in Ignite program is a cornerstone of these efforts, a structured five-step collaboration model that bridges the gap between start-ups and corporates. This program allows start-ups to refine their business models, access valuable networks, and validate their products in real markets. Meanwhile, corporates gain innovative solutions, enhanced competitiveness, and exposure to the dynamic start-up environment. The program's success is exemplified by the collaboration between AgriNord and Akson Robotics, which accelerated growth and innovation for both organizations. By efficiently matching participants based on specific needs and providing hands-on support, Spin-in Ignite minimizes costs while maximizing the impact of partnerships. In closing, Else and Tanja emphasized that Business Aalborg's initiatives catalyze collaboration, foster mutual growth, drive innovation, and reinforce Aalborg's position as a hub for sustainable business development.

c. Suwon Special City

From Historical Innovation to a Global Hub for Start-ups  
Christine Kim, Manager, Suwon Convention Center  
Nicole Shim, Manager, Suwon Convention Center

Christine is a marketing manager at the Suwon Convention Center, where she leverages her expertise in convention services and marketing strategies to foster growth in regional industrial ecosystems. She is dedicated to positioning the Suwon Convention Center as a dynamic MICE hub, fostering regional connectivity, enhancing business opportunities, and establishing global partnerships to advance a sustainable future.

Nicole is a business event professional and destination marketer who acts as a bridge between Suwon City and various industries to promote tourism and regional growth. Her practical experience in planning, coordinating, and marketing international business events underscores her commitment to advancing the exhibition and convention field.

During their presentation, Christine and Nicole emphasized the Suwon Convention Center's innovative contributions to science,

technology, education, and the arts. By hosting collaborative events like South Summit Korea and WFUNA Citypreneurs 2024 Gyeonggi, the center serves as a platform for fostering advancements in AI, biotechnology, and green energy, aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These events connect local and global start-ups, driving economic impact and promoting sustainable innovation.

In conclusion, Christine and Nicole highlighted the Suwon Convention Center's initiatives, showcasing its dedication to promoting sustainable innovation and economic growth. By integrating start-ups into its programs and leveraging strategic partnerships, the center serves as a dynamic platform for cross-sector collaboration, reinforcing Suwon's position as a leader in sustainable development and a premier global convention hub.

### 3. Open Innovation

The session explored the transformative potential of partnerships in driving innovation through European-East Asian entrepreneurship synergies. Participants discussed collaborative approaches to addressing global challenges, with governments, associations, and start-ups playing key roles in fostering innovative solutions through international cooperation.

#### Speakers:

- WFUNA Research Team 1
- Hyungsuk Jin, General Manager, Korea International Trade Association (KITA)
- Philipp Bubenzer, Professor of Innovation Management, School of Management Fribourg (HEG-FR)
- Emilie Kamuk Christiansen, Senior Project Manager, Clean (The Danish Water & Environmental Cluster)

- a. Open Innovation in Korea:  
A Leap Toward Expanded Sustainability  
WFUNA Research Team 1

The presentation given by the analysis of WFUNA Research Team 1 explored the unique characteristics of open innovation in Korea, emphasizing collaboration between government, private corporations, and local communities. Two key examples illustrate this approach: POSCO's Idea Market Place (IMP) and SK E&S's Local: Rise Gunsan initiative. POSCO's IMP connects global events and start-ups and aligning with public and government initiatives amplifies innovation. POSCO plays a pivotal role in expanding the business ecosystem as a whole by supporting local start-ups, producing automobile steel coils, and manufacturing secondary batteries for EV parts. These efforts align with SDGs 9 (Industry,

Innovation, and Infrastructure) and 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), driving sustainability and innovation in the steel industry.

SK E&S's Local: Rise Gunsan initiative focuses on regional regeneration by supporting start-ups and small businesses in economically challenged areas. Through mentoring, networking opportunities, and resource provision, the program fosters local entrepreneurship and shifts the focus from sustainability to survivability. These efforts highlight how open innovation in Korea drives transformative change by addressing both global challenges and local needs. The research team 1 emphasized the importance of private companies moving beyond profit-making to actively collaborate with stakeholders, setting a benchmark for meaningful societal progress and sustainable development.

b. Open Innovation in Korea and KITA's Role and Implication as an Innomediary

Hyungsuk Jin, General Manager, Korea International Trade Association (KITA)

Hyungsuk serves as the Open Innovation Lead at the Korea International Trade Association (KITA), representing 76,000 multinational corporations (MNCs) and small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). With a PhD in International Trade, he also holds a directorship at the Korea Trade Business Association, specializing in service trade, open innovation, and start-ups. Founded in 1946, KITA is Korea's leading trade promotion organization, driving economic growth through trade and, more recently, supporting start-ups and global open innovation. Through collaborations with major brands like LG, GS, BMW, and LVMH, KITA has facilitated Open Innovation more than 3,500 1:1 Meetups matching a year and joint IR pitching to promote innovation over the past 7 years.

During the session, Hyungsuk discussed global trends in open innovation, focusing on the increasing importance of sustainability, decarbonization, and the integration of generative AI and deep tech into innovation strategies. He introduced the 'TestBed Korea' initiative, which capitalizes on Korea's dynamic consumer market, competitive culture, and world-class IT infrastructure to attract global innovation hubs. This initiative positions Korea as a leading testbed and innovation hub, enabling multinational corporations and start-ups to co-develop solutions to critical challenges. Especially in the context of international development issues such as the United Nations, two-way open innovation between global corporations and startups in developed and developing markets can contribute to the development agenda and problem-solving through the distribution of digital innovation.

Hyungsuk also highlighted KITA's role in fostering global collaboration through initiatives like NextRise, Asia's largest start-up fair. By facilitating thousands of one-on-one meetings, NextRise connects businesses, empowering them to address pressing global issues and drive sustainable growth. He emphasized how KITA's efforts foster bilateral innovation partnerships, addressing challenges such as climate adaptation and digital transformation while leveraging Korea's technological strengths to support businesses in creating impactful solutions.

c. Open, Radical Innovation in Switzerland  
Insights from Innosuisse's 'Innovation Boosters'  
Philipp Bubenzer, Professor of Innovation Management, School of Management Fribourg (HEG-FR)

Philipp is a professor of innovation management at HES-SO and a senior researcher at ETH Zurich, with over 20 years of experience in innovation. He has held executive roles at high-tech ventures, including founding a genomics biotech firm based on Nobel-laureate technology and successfully bootstrapping a patent data analytics company. As a researcher in leading management schools, he addresses real-world innovation challenges through corporate consulting and start-up coaching.

Under the 'Open, Radical Innovation in Switzerland,' Philipp shared insights on the Innovation Booster by Innosuisse, a program designed to enhance the innovation capacity of start-ups, SMEs, and academia. Unlike conventional funding-focused approaches, the program prioritizes skill-building, education, and counseling to foster sustainable innovation. It emphasizes clearly defining problems and cultivating the ability to address them—key components of achieving transformative innovation.

Philipp underscored the need for radical innovation over incremental improvements by encouraging a shift in perspective to rethink and redefine challenges. Rather than relying on genius ideas, he emphasized the importance of start-ups identifying and addressing core problems innovatively. True innovation, he noted, arises from understanding problems differently and focusing on the user, the problem, and rigorous testing.

The Innovation Booster equips start-ups to generate sustainable, transformative outcomes by breaking conventional frameworks and simplifying processes. Philipp highlighted how this approach positions start-ups as drivers of meaningful change, enabling them to deliver solutions that address critical challenges and foster long-term impact.



d. Clean

The Environmental Cluster, Denmark  
Emilie Kamuk Christiansen, Senior Project Manager,  
Clean (The Danish Water & Environmental Cluster)

Emilie leads the circular economy thematic area at Clean, Denmark's environmental cluster for water and environmental technologies. Clean brings together private companies, public actors, and research organizations to address pressing environmental challenges collaboratively. Emilie manages several international projects focused on circular economy, waste, and resource management.

In her presentation, Emilie emphasized Clean's role as a hub for innovation and collaboration in Denmark's green transition. Leveraging a triple-helix framework that includes over 7,000 SMEs, 90 universities, and 100 public authorities, Clean facilitates cross-sector partnerships to co-create solutions, support business growth, and drive sustainable development. Clean's work is centered on five key thematic areas: circular economy, water technologies, air, climate adaptation, and biodiversity.

Emilie highlighted Clean's unique approach to fostering innovation through matchmaking, co-creation, internationalization, and knowledge sharing. She showcased key initiatives such as the Systemic Solutions for Circular Cities project, which employs systems thinking to tackle circular economy challenges, and the Nordic Solutions for Global Cities Programme, which connects C40 cities with Nordic environmental solutions.

Additionally, she underlined Clean's role in promoting global collaboration through the International Cleantech Network Open Innovation Platform. This platform connects stakeholders worldwide, enabling them to address complex challenges and develop scalable, impactful environmental solutions.

#### 4. Cross-Border Entrepreneurship

The session addressed the complexities of establishing start-ups on a global scale, focusing on adaptability, scalability, and the importance of strategic partnerships. Participants highlighted essential strategies for overcoming challenges and seizing opportunities in cross-border entrepreneurship.

##### Speakers:

- Chirine Sunderland, Freelance Consultant
- Zechen Ma, Investor, Wave Ventures
- Jessie Yan, Head of Strategic Partnerships, Global Learning Lab; Adjunct Professor, International University in Geneva

- a. Europe-Korea Cross-Border Activities:  
Bridging Innovation and Opportunities  
Chirine Sunderland, Freelance Consultant

Chirine is an international affairs and trade specialist with expertise in fostering bilateral relations between the Korean Peninsula and Europe. With extensive experience in export promotion and business expansion in foreign markets, she recently returned from South Korea, where she served as the Start-up and Innovation Manager at the Korean-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KGCC/IAHK Korea). Her previous roles include Trade Officer at the Swiss Business Hub Korea and Switzerland Global Enterprise and Consultant at KOTRA in Zurich. She holds a Bachelor's in Korean Studies from SOAS University of London and a Master's in East Asian Business from the University of Sheffield.

In her presentation, Chirine examined the dynamics of the start-up ecosystems in Germany, South Korea, and Switzerland, emphasizing their shared strengths in innovation. These include high R&D investment, robust talent pools, and leadership in biotech, AI, and industrial automation industries. She highlighted the decentralized nature of start-up hubs in Germany and Switzerland, supported by strong federal systems, compared to South Korea's more centralized ecosystem around Seoul. However, she noted that South Korea is evolving through initiatives like the K-Start-up Grand Challenge, which aims to attract international talent and investment. Chirine emphasized the complementary nature of these ecosystems, pointing to opportunities for collaboration in areas such as mobility, logistics, and renewable energy. She shared examples of successful cross-border collaborations, including Germany's Digital Hub Initiative and Switzerland's Innovation Park, which promote innovation and partnerships across regions.

Despite these opportunities, Chirine acknowledged challenges, including regulatory barriers, cultural differences, and limited networking opportunities for Korean start-ups. To address these issues, she underscored the importance of leveraging key stakeholders, government programs, and networking events to foster connections and deepen global market understanding. Chirine concluded with a call to action, advocating for enhanced communication and collaboration between start-ups, corporates, and government agencies to unlock the full potential of innovation across these regions and create a more interconnected and thriving global start-up ecosystem.

- b. Cross-border Entrepreneurship

Zeichen is an investor at Wave Ventures, Europe's largest student-led venture capital fund, focused on supporting ambitious Gen Z founders at the earliest stages. Wave Ventures is Finland's most active early-stage fund, backing 80% of VC-supported young founders in the region. Before joining Wave, Zeichen managed the main stage program at Slush, curating founder-focused sessions with top leaders from companies and funds such as Twitter, PayPal, Spotify, Sequoia, a16z, and Accel. He holds a bachelor's degree in Industrial Engineering and Management from Aalto University. In his presentation, Zeichen outlined three key factors driving the success of the Nordic start-up ecosystem: strong government support, a collaborative culture, and a robust local investment network.

He emphasized the impact of government grants and investments in ensuring equitable funding access for start-ups. A collaborative ecosystem led by young, ambitious leaders further strengthens this foundation. Zeichen highlighted role models like the founders of Skype and Spotify, who inspire new generations of entrepreneurs, fostering high levels of participation and ambition among students and young innovators—critical elements for building globally competitive start-ups.

Zeichen also addressed the importance of connecting ambitious founders with international networks and investors. While the Nordic region excels in early-stage funding, he noted that later-stage funding often requires partnerships with global investors. Wave Ventures bridges this gap by linking founders with top-tier investors worldwide, enabling them to scale successfully.

He underscored the need for more opportunities for young talent to engage with global ecosystems. Zeichen emphasized that world-class companies require world-class networks and collaborations to thrive, calling for sustained efforts to connect the next generation of founders with the resources and partnerships they need to compete globally.

c. Cross-Border Entrepreneurship:

Bridging Asia Pacific and Europe Jessie Yan,  
Head of Strategic Partnerships, Global Learning Lab;  
Adjunct Professor, International University in Geneva

Jessie is a seasoned executive and academic currently serving as an Adjunct Professor of Business Management at the International Institute in Geneva and as Head of Strategic Partnerships at Global Learning Lab. With over two decades of experience in global

organizations such as the World Economic Forum, GAVI, and various Fortune 500 companies, she brings extensive expertise in leadership, organizational studies, and public-private partnerships. Her academic credentials include an Executive Master in Global Leadership, an MBA with distinction from Oxford Brookes University, and ongoing doctoral studies at Paris Dauphine University.

In her presentation, Jessie examined the evolving dynamics of cross-border entrepreneurship between the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region and Europe, highlighting both opportunities and challenges. She identified three major trends shaping the entrepreneurial landscape in APAC. First, technological innovation is transforming the region, with rapid advancements in digital payments, artificial intelligence (AI), and e-commerce driving start-up growth.

Second, government-led financial inclusion initiatives, such as Singapore's Smart Nation and South Korea's K-Start-up, foster robust ecosystems supporting entrepreneurial ventures. Third, youth-inclusive entrepreneurship programs, such as Youth Co by UNDP and the Citi Foundation, have empowered over 280,000 young entrepreneurs, creating a vibrant and inclusive start-up environment. Jessie emphasized how these trends collectively establish a dynamic platform for start-ups and SMEs looking to expand across borders.

However, Jessie did not shy away from addressing the significant challenges faced by entrepreneurs in these regions. She pointed to cultural and communication barriers, regulatory hurdles, and operational complexities as key obstacles. For instance, Indonesia's data localization laws and Thailand's consumer protection requirements often complicate e-commerce operations. Drawing on case studies, such as Grab's transformation from a ride-hailing service to a super app, she demonstrated how adaptability, regional partnerships, and tailored solutions can help businesses navigate diverse regulatory landscapes effectively.

Jessie concluded her presentation by encouraging entrepreneurs to embrace sustainability, collaboration, and digital transformation as critical pillars for success. She highlighted the importance of leveraging sustainability initiatives to align with global goals and attract impact-driven investments. Building strategic partnerships was another key recommendation, fostering collaboration and enabling businesses to gain deeper insights into regional markets. Finally, she stressed adopting digital platforms to achieve scalable growth and streamline cross-border operations. Through these strategies, Jessie offered a roadmap for entrepreneurs to overcome challenges and seize opportunities, fostering innovation and



development in an interconnected global market.

## 5. SDGs & Impact

The session emphasized the critical role of start-ups in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by advancing sustainability and innovation. Discussions showcased multi-stakeholder efforts to promote inclusive social, economic, and environmental growth across both developed and developing regions.

### Speakers:

- WFUNA Research Team 2
- Adriana De Oro, Innovation Lead, Office of the Director, Division of Country Programs, International Trade Centre
- Ruby Lambert, Associate Economic Affairs Officer, United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

- a. K-SDGs: Solution for Achieving Global Goals Through Agile Innovation  
WFUNA Research Team 2

The presentation by WFUNA Research Team 2 introduced the Korean Sustainable Development Goals (K-SDGs) as a tailored framework designed to address South Korea's unique challenges while aligning with the global UN SDGs. With a focus on five key strategies—Environmental Sustainability, Inclusiveness, Resilience, Human Rights & Peacebuilding, and Global Cooperation—the K-SDGs aim to integrate sustainable development into Korea's national policies through a multi-stakeholder approach involving government, industries, NGOs, and academia.

Team 2 highlighted start-ups as key drivers of innovation and growth, supported by substantial government funding and private sector initiatives. These efforts are geared toward fostering an innovative ecosystem that contributes to the achievement of the K-SDGs. The presentation also emphasized the importance of balanced accountability, suggesting that Korea adopt Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) to complement its progress reports, ensuring transparency and continuous improvement in achieving both the K-SDGs and the global SDGs.

- b. International Trade Centre  
Transforming trade. Changing lives.  
Adriana De Oro, Innovation Lead, Office of the Director, Division of Country Programs, International Trade Centre

Adriana leads Innovation at the International Trade Centre (ITC), a joint agency of the UN and WTO that supports small businesses in developing economies, leveraging trade to foster inclusive

and sustainable prosperity. With nine years of experience across innovation teams in the humanitarian and development sectors at the United Nations, Adriana has spearheaded initiatives to enhance the effectiveness of these fields. She is an active member of global innovation networks, including the Geneva Innovation Movement Association and the UN Innovation Network. Originally from Colombia, Adriana holds a degree in International Relations from Externado University, a Certificate of Advanced Studies from EPFL in Switzerland, and a Master's in Innovation for Sustainable Development from the University of Sussex, UK.

In her presentation, Adriana outlined ITC's mission to empower small businesses, which account for 90% of enterprises globally, by promoting trade as a driver of inclusive and sustainable growth. She highlighted ITC's collaborative approach, working with governments, business support organizations, and international buyers to address strategic, managerial, and policy needs, ensuring small businesses can effectively participate in global trade.

Adriana also showcased ITC's Innovation Lab, which employs human-centered design, agile frameworks, and lean start-up practices to enhance organizational processes and better support entrepreneurs. Through training programs, peer-to-peer learning opportunities, and AI-driven tools, ITC fosters a culture of experimentation and continuous improvement. These initiatives help small businesses succeed in global value chains while aligning their efforts with sustainable development goals.

By emphasizing the critical role of innovation and collaboration, Adriana demonstrated how ITC builds resilient ecosystems that enable small businesses to thrive and contribute to inclusive, sustainable economies worldwide.

- c. Multilateralism and Innovation for Inclusive Growth  
Ruby Lambert, Associate Economic Affairs Officer, United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

Ruby is an Associate Economic Affairs Officer at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), working within the Office of the Secretary-General as a speechwriter. She is originally from Singapore and specializes in sustainability standards and gender-inclusive provisions in international trade and value chains. Previously, she served as an advisor to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), where she published a Compendium of Sustainability Standards Best Practices.

In her presentation, Ruby emphasized the vital role of multilateralism and multi-stakeholder collaboration in addressing

global challenges such as climate change, poverty, and inequality. She outlined UNCTAD's mission to support developing countries in achieving equitable benefits from the global economy through its three key pillars: data and analysis, consensus building, and technical assistance. Ruby highlighted that multilateralism fosters shared responsibility and trust, which is essential for promoting peace and advancing sustainable development. She also stressed the importance of engaging diverse stakeholders—governments, private sectors, academia, and civil society—in collaborative efforts to achieve the SDGs.

Ruby highlighted the private sector's role in leveraging science, technology, and innovation to decouple economic growth from resource depletion and accelerate SDG progress. However, she pointed to key challenges, including limited digital connectivity in least-developed countries, job displacement risks from emerging technologies, and the concentration of power among a few global tech giants in the digital economy.

To address these challenges, Ruby discussed UNCTAD's initiatives, such as Empretec and eTrade for Women, which empower entrepreneurs through capacity-building programs. These initiatives foster innovation, create jobs, and add value in commodity-dependent economies, providing tangible solutions to bridge the digital and economic divides.

She concluded by emphasizing the urgency of reimagining the global development narrative. Ruby called for harnessing innovation and fostering collaboration to overcome systemic barriers, bridge divides, and achieve inclusive, sustainable growth for all.

# III. Roundtable Insights

## A. Overview of Round Table

On November 5, 2024, the UNOG VIP Roundtable was held at Villa Le Bocage, located within the United Nations Office in Geneva, as part of the WISE Conference 2024. The roundtable focused on two pivotal questions aimed at advancing the global impact start-up ecosystem. These questions were designed to extract actionable insights and generate strategic recommendations to enhance the ecosystem's ability to address pressing global challenges.

### Participants:

- (Chair) Yongjae Kim, Chief Regional Coordinator for Asia-Pacific, WFUNA
- Boran Choi, Partnership Associate, WFUNA
- Chirine Sunderland, Freelance Consultant
- Christine Kim, Manager (MICE Marketing Team), Suwon Convention Center
- Emilie Kamuk Christiansen, Senior Project Manager, Clean (The Danish Water & Environmental Cluster)
- Hyungsuk Jin, General Manager, Korea International Trade Association (KITA)
- Ikhwan Kwon, CEO, SCHAFFENGOTT
- Karla Deza, Co-Founder, Quality by Images
- Ki Hyun Yoo, CTO, SIMPLE Planet
- Nicklas Lynge, Co-Founder, Linucare
- Nicole Shim, Manager, Convention Bureau (Suwon City Branding), Suwon Convention Center
- Philipp Bubenzer, Professor of Innovation Management, School of Management Fribourg (HEG-FR)
- Somi Shin, Managing Director, Seoul Metropolitan Youth Center
- Yunji Lee, CEO, Sovement
- Zechen Ma, Investor, Wave Ventures

## B. Key Questions & Expected Outcomes

### 1. Key Questions

- a. What insights and lessons did you gain from the WISE 2024 Geneva Conference?

This question invited participants to reflect on their key takeaways from the conference. Discussions focused on best practices, innovative approaches, and success stories that emerged during the event, particularly those with potential for replication or scaling. The objective was to distill actionable insights that could shape future initiatives and foster impactful collaborations within the start-up ecosystem.

- b. Considering the challenges and needs in your professional area, what key expectations and recommendations should international organizations pursue to strengthen the impact start-up ecosystem?

This question encouraged participants to share their perspectives on specific barriers and opportunities within their fields. It aimed to identify practical recommendations for international organizations to address challenges, foster inclusivity, and create scalable solutions to strengthen the impact start-up ecosystem globally.

### 2. Expected Discussion Outcomes

The roundtable provided a collaborative platform for diverse stakeholders, including innovators, policymakers, investors, and representatives from international organizations, to exchange perspectives and co-create a vision for empowering impact entrepreneurs. Participants emphasized the importance of partnerships, resource accessibility, and capacity-building initiatives in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The roundtable generated a wealth of insights that will inform WFUNA's ongoing efforts to support the impact start-up ecosystem and catalyze sustainable development initiatives worldwide by centering the discussion around these two strategic questions.

## C. Reflections & Findings

At the VIP Roundtable, participants shared reflections and insights from the WISE Conference's collaborative space, where diverse stakeholders explored innovative solutions to global challenges. Key themes included the importance of collaborative ecosystems for start-up success, the value of practical guidance on regulatory challenges and scaling strategies, and the role of global platforms in connecting local start-up ecosystems with international networks to drive scalable solutions.

### 1. Reflections on the WISE Conference

#### a. Start-ups as Change Agents

Discussions highlighted the pivotal role of start-ups in driving innovation and sustainable development. Participants noted that start-ups' ability to rapidly adapt and innovate positions them as key contributors to addressing SDGs, particularly in areas like youth empowerment, digital transformation, and inclusive growth.

#### b. Value of Multisectoral Collaboration

The conference emphasized the importance of partnerships across sectors. By bringing together stakeholders from governments, international organizations, and the private sector, the event demonstrated the value of shared resources, diverse perspectives, and collective problem-solving in creating impactful start-up ecosystems.

#### c. Overcoming Structural Challenges

Participants discussed the structural barriers start-ups face, including regulatory hurdles, funding gaps, and a lack of access to networks and mentorship. These challenges underscore the need for systemic support mechanisms that enable start-ups to navigate complex ecosystems more effectively.

#### d. The Power of Storytelling and Networking

Attendees recognized the importance of sharing success stories and creating opportunities for dialogue. By exchanging insights and experiences, participants gained fresh perspectives and identified new avenues for collaboration. The networking opportunities provided by the conference were particularly praised for fostering meaningful connections and sparking innovative ideas.

#### e. Insights into Scaling and Global Impact

Scaling impact-driven businesses emerged as a recurring theme. Participants emphasized the need for start-ups to align their scaling strategies with global goals to maximize their impact. Discussions also highlighted the importance of equipping start-ups with tools to measure and communicate their contributions to the SDGs.

### 2. Findings from the WISE Conference

#### a. Start-ups Thrive in Collaborative Ecosystems:

The event reinforced that effective ecosystems depend on collaboration among diverse stakeholders. Platforms like WISE are instrumental in facilitating these connections.

#### b. Focus on Practical Guidance: Participants appreciated the practical discussions around regulatory challenges and strategies for scaling, which provided actionable insights for overcoming systemic obstacles.

#### c. Bridging Global and Local Efforts: The conference illustrated how global platforms can bridge the gap between local start-up ecosystems and international networks, enabling more robust and scalable solutions.

According to the participants of the VIP roundtable, the WISE Conference 2024 offered a comprehensive overview of the current state of the impact start-up ecosystem. By fostering collaboration, sharing actionable insights, and addressing key challenges, the conference demonstrated the potential of start-ups to drive meaningful progress toward the SDGs.

## D. Recommendations

Participants of the roundtable provided various actionable recommendations to strengthen the global impact start-up ecosystem and advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These recommendations focus on fostering collaboration, addressing systemic challenges, and empowering start-ups to achieve sustainable growth and meaningful impact.

### 1. Foster Open Innovation and Collaboration

- Emphasize open innovation to address global challenges by fostering cross-border knowledge sharing and partnerships.
- Create collaborative platforms that connect start-ups, governments, venture capitalists, and international organizations to facilitate resource-sharing, mentorship,

and best practices.

- c. Strengthen WFUNA's role as a central enabler, establishing it as a hub where stakeholders can co-develop SDG-aligned initiatives with measurable outcomes.

## **2. Support Scaling and Resource Development**

- a. Provide start-ups with practical tools and guidance, including input from experienced founders and industry experts, to help them scale sustainably.
- b. Develop and distribute toolkits to assist start-ups in navigating regulatory frameworks, aligning their operations with SDG metrics, and accessing venture capital.
- c. Prioritize start-ups that align their scaling efforts with SDGs, emphasizing sustainable practices to maximize global impact.

## **3. Engage Policymakers and Strengthen Ecosystems**

- a. Actively involve policymakers and government decision-makers to establish supportive regulatory frameworks and create funding incentives for impact-driven start-ups.
- b. Facilitate regular dialogues between start-ups, regulatory experts, and public-sector leaders to align priorities and overcome systemic barriers.
- c. Ensure decision-maker's participation in future events to foster actionable collaborations and implement meaningful solutions.

## **4. Empower Youth and Underrepresented Groups**

- a. Develop youth-focused programs that offer mentorship, funding, and networking opportunities to young entrepreneurs committed to the SDGs.
- b. Establish dedicated platforms in innovation hubs like Suwon and Aalborg to support youth-led and grassroots start-ups.
- c. Promote inclusivity by creating opportunities for women, marginalized communities, and underrepresented groups to actively participate in the impact start-up ecosystem.

## **5. Enhance Education and Capacity Building**

- a. Address knowledge gaps by offering tailored educational resources and training on integrating SDGs into business strategies and operations.
- b. Equip start-ups with frameworks to align their product

development and processes with relevant SDGs, fostering resilience and creativity.

- c. Introduce initiatives focused on collaborative problem-solving and innovation to empower start-ups to tackle complex global challenges.

## **6. Promote Impact Measurement and Transparency**

- a. Develop standardized frameworks to help start-ups measure and report their social and environmental impact effectively.
- b. Encourage transparency in practices to build trust and credibility with investors, stakeholders, and global partners.

These recommendations highlight the diverse strategies to foster a resilient, inclusive, and impactful global start-up ecosystem. Participants have outlined a clear pathway to empower start-ups to drive sustainable development by focusing on collaboration, education, and systemic support.

## IV. Next Steps

### A. Contributions to the ECOSOC Partnership Forum

Building on the WISE Conference 2024 outcomes, WFUNA is submitting this report to the ECOSOC Partnership Forum to highlight the transformative role of impact start-ups in addressing global challenges and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The WISE Conference serves as a platform to showcase the impact of the East Asian start-up ecosystem and foster collaboration among innovators, investors, and UN officials. With its General Consultative Status at ECOSOC—the highest level of recognition granted to NGOs—WFUNA actively utilizes its unique privileges to amplify diverse voices in global discussions, propose actionable solutions, and facilitate meaningful commitments.

This report underscores the critical importance of SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) in tackling global challenges and fostering sustainable development. SDG 8 promotes inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all. At the same time, SDG 17 emphasizes the role of global partnerships and multi-stakeholder collaboration in accelerating the achievement of the SDGs. These goals highlight the need for innovative and cooperative approaches to long-term sustainability.

The WISE Conference, held in Geneva on 4th-5th November 2024, brought together key stakeholders from governments, private enterprises, academia, and civil society to explore strategies for fostering inclusive growth, creating decent work opportunities, and building effective partnerships. The conference's discussions centered on integrating digital solutions, adopting sustainable business practices, and scaling social enterprises as essential strategies to address global challenges and build resilient economic systems.

Through its submission to the ECOSOC Partnership Forum, WFUNA aims to deepen international dialogue and collaboration. This report emphasizes the potential of impact-driven entrepreneurship to create innovative and sustainable solutions by presenting the key insights and recommendations from the WISE Conference. WFUNA envisions

this report as a catalyst for advancing global discussions on the vital role of start-ups and partnerships in sustainable development.

By fostering collaboration and leveraging its consultative status, WFUNA continues to champion the transformative power of entrepreneurship and partnerships in building a more inclusive and resilient global economy.

### B. Further Supports on the Impact Start-up Ecosystem

WFUNA is committed to strengthening the global impact start-up ecosystem through targeted initiatives and innovative strategies that foster collaboration, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development.

#### 1. Expanding the Citypreneurs Program Globally

Citypreneurs has established itself as WFUNA's flagship program, connecting local governments, private companies, and entrepreneurs to develop innovative solutions for critical social challenges. WFUNA has ambitious plans to expand Citypreneurs into different regions, including Southeast Asia, strengthening cross-border partnerships, and providing tailored support to address diverse cultural and regional challenges. Through its extensive international network, WFUNA aims to empower start-ups to address global issues, positioning Citypreneurs as a transformative model for sustainable urban development and inclusive growth worldwide.

#### 2. WFUNA as a Global Impact Hub

WFUNA seeks to solidify its role as a global impact hub by fostering partnerships with international organizations, local governments, and private sector leaders. As a central platform for capacity building, knowledge sharing, and resource facilitation, WFUNA aims to empower a broader range of impact-driven initiatives. This vision reflects WFUNA's dedication to driving innovation and delivering sustainable solutions that create measurable social and environmental impact.

### 3. Rebranding the SDGs Toolkit

WFUNA plans to rebrand its SDGs Toolkit, initially developed in collaboration with UN Academic Impact in 2017. The toolkit's primary goal remains unchanged: to empower individuals and organizations to create innovative start-ups that provide actionable solutions aligned with the SDGs.

To achieve this, WFUNA will focus on practical enhancements to improve accessibility and usability:

- a. Structured Visual Educational Materials: Simplify complex concepts and guide users through the innovation process step-by-step.
- b. Online Platform or App Development: Create a digital platform to make the toolkit accessible, interactive, and user-friendly for diverse audiences.

By retaining its core seven-step framework—problem, analysis, approach, method, profit, strategy, partner—while integrating modern digital tools, the rebranded toolkit aims to enable aspiring innovators to build sustainable, SDG-aligned start-ups. This approach ensures that WFUNA can support more users effectively while advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### 4. Establishing the Annual WISE Conference

Building on the success of the 2024 event, WFUNA plans to establish the WISE Conference as an annual platform for dialogue, collaboration, and knowledge sharing. The conference will address emerging challenges and track progress toward the SDGs by connecting global stakeholders—including innovators, investors, and policymakers. Through fostering partnerships and monitoring advancements, the WISE Conference will play a crucial role in strengthening the global impact start-up ecosystem and amplifying the role of entrepreneurship in sustainable development.

## C. Looking Ahead

Through these initiatives, WFUNA demonstrates its unwavering commitment to supporting impact start-ups as catalysts for sustainable development. By expanding programs, fostering global partnerships, and enhancing tools like the SDGs Toolkit, WFUNA aims to maximize the contributions of impact start-ups to global progress. These efforts reflect WFUNA's dedication to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and building a more inclusive, innovative, and resilient global economy.

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