When we talk about the paradigms that anchor and steer sustainable development issues, we are compelled not to limit ourselves to restricted ways of measuring those paradigms. The palate of development discourse is complex and unrestricted to a certain kind of research. Poverty, peace, security, social inequality, environmental issues, etc., are issues that necessarily touch the life of the scientist, the development practitioner and the artist alike. Scientific research is always and always has been complimented by fiction and indeed other works of art because the world of the artist encompasses all the social issues that scientific research talks about in relation to the human condition. Today as in the past, there are numerous writers and artists that are voices of social change. John Dahlsen, a highly successful artist creates art to draw people’s attention to the current environmental changes the world is facing and is known for raising awareness on these issues. Fiction writer, political activist and Nobel Prize winner, Harold Pinter, has thousands of supporters that endorse his strong views on foreign policy and the necessary mechanisms for social change. Similarly the great renaissance artists captured the very essence of the era in which they lived and once again re-enforced positive social and political change across Europe at the time. In Pakistan, Faiz Ahmed Faiz and in India, Rabindra Nath Tagore have been such large and important voices of the social and political fabric of their countries and have been critics of the inequalities and inequities in their societies in their times, once again influencing thousands across the globe. They have not only captured the frailty of the human condition but have spoken out against the atrocities that they have witnessed in their countries.

Fiction writers are always in search of some kind of truth and the journey that they take in the quest for that truth is the world the reader becomes a part of. As Anais Nin said, “… the artist persists because he has the will to create, and this is the magic power which can transform and transfigure and transpose and will ultimately be transmitted to others” (Nin 2011). Every writer has an opinion, a certain view on life and every work of fiction is a reflection of that view which has the power to influence millions of people. Fiction is unrestricted to any kind of methodology and its scope is unlimited. Although the findings of research are pivotal in steering policies, it is unfortunate that these findings are generally restricted to smaller audiences that are generally only associated with the development sector, or the academia. This kind of research often fails to reach out to the common man. Fiction, however, reaches wide audiences and is accessed by people from all walks of life.

This panel will analyze the view that fiction is pivotal in endorsing and creating new policies at the highest level. Fiction writers are invited to send abstracts/papers discussing their contribution to sustainable development through their works of fiction and discuss how new linkages can be formed between the development world and the world of fiction to achieve our common goal of sustainable development across South Asia.
References:


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