UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM STAFF COLLEGE

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ONLINE

03 FEB 2026 - 26 FEB 2026

Navigating Complexity: Political Acumen and Strategic Negotiation for Sustainable Development



Governance and Human Rights

Sustainable development and the SDGs

LANGUAGE
English

DURATION
4 weeks (8 live 90-minute online classrooms) from February 5 to February 26, 2026

ENROLL BY
15 Jan 2026

PRICE
2,500 USD

LOCATION
ONLINE

TARGET
UN Only

CONTACT sustainable-development@unssc.org

Step into a high-impact learning experience designed for senior UN leaders navigating today's rapidly evolving global environment. Over 4 weeks, this interactive online course equips you with the political insight and negotiation strategies needed to lead effectively in complex, multi-stakeholder settings.

- Strengthen your strategic foresight
- Navigate political dynamics with confidence
- Apply advanced negotiation techniques
- Learn directly from expert faculty and peers through live sessions, real-world casework, and practical simulations.

By the end of the course, you'll be empowered to unlock impasses, influence outcomes, and deliver sustainable impact in even the most challenging contexts.

Introduction

In today's rapidly shifting global landscape, United Nations(UN) leaders operate in environments marked by **deep financial uncertainty, geopolitical tension, and accelerating change**—conditions that pose profound challenges to sustainable development. From fragile peace processes to multi-stakeholder negotiations, leaders must navigate **complex systems** where economic stability, environmental resilience, and social inclusion are deeply interconnected. The challenges are rarely linear—and the stakes are always high.

This **4-week online course** equips senior UN leaders with the political insight and strategic negotiation skills needed to lead effectively amid complexity. It explores how to read power dynamics, build coalitions, and negotiate outcomes that are both principled and pragmatic—ensuring that agreements foster **long-term sustainable development** rather than short-term compromise. Through **real-world simulations and peer learning**, participants will strengthen their ability to anticipate challenges, influence outcomes, and drive **inclusive and sustainable impact** in some of the world's most demanding governance contexts.

Designed as an **interactive online classroom**, the course provides a platform for participants to engage with top experts while addressing their **real-world political economy challenges**, many of which are directly tied to achieving sustainable development outcomes. Using a **negotiation-focused lens**, participants will work with faculty and peers to refine and practice crucial skills that lead to sustainable development impact. **Emphasis is placed on understanding the interests, incentives, and power relations** of key actors, and on developing strategies that **unlock impasses, build alignment, and drive progress** toward sustainable development. The courses focuses specifically on:

- **Strategic foresight for sustainable development:** Applying strategic foresight, **identify leverage points**, anticipate unintended consequences, and design strategies that drive holistic, long-term solutions for sustainable development.
- **Political acumen:** Navigating institutional landscapes and individual players to align sustainable development with political priorities, advocate for change, and influence transformative action.
- **Negotiation:** Building multi-stakeholder agreements that balance competing interests, secure commitments, and ensure that sustainable development efforts remain viable, inclusive, and impactful over time.

Objectives

By the end of this course, participants will be able to:

- Identify and apply key political acumen tools and frameworks, leveraging a structured roadmap for strategic action.
- Employ advanced negotiation techniques in high-stakes discussions, fostering stronger partnerships to accelerate sustainable development.
- Apply strategic foresight to address the present and future strategy and policy for sustainable development.

Course methodology

The course employs a blend of interactive online sessions, case studies, and practical exercises. Participants will engage in discussions, group work, and simulations to apply theoretical knowledge to the real-world scenarios where they work. The methodology is designed to foster active learning and peer-to-peer interaction.

This online classroom comprises 8 interactive 90-minute sessions spread over 4 weeks (two per week). In addition, it is estimated that around two hours per week of additional individual study will be needed to complete the course. Participants are given access to an online training platform, which provides online documents and links to recommended reading. Participants are expected to attend sessions (two sessions per week) and do essential reading and assignments.

Course contents

- **Week 1:** Introduction to Political Economy Dynamics in Sustainable Development: Laying the Groundwork for Stakeholder Analysis Through Techniques and Tools
- **Week 2:** From Analysis to Action: Strategy, Influencing, Negotiation and Decision-Making in Highly Political Contexts
- **Week 3:** Looking Forward: Feedback from Experts, Strategic Foresight and Measuring Future Progress
- **Week 4:** Fine Tuning your Approach and Applying your Political Acumen, Negotiation and Strategic Foresight to your Roadmap

Target audience

This course is designed for senior UN professionals engaged in policy-making, strategic planning, and leading teams for the implementation of sustainable development activities. It is ideal for those looking to strengthen their ability to analyse and respond to challenging and uncertain political contexts.

Cost of participation

The course fee is 2500 USD. This includes access to all online materials, interactive sessions, and instruction and support from experienced instructors.

Enroll by January 15, 2026 to secure your place in this essential course and enhance your skills in political acumen and negotiation for sustainable development.