

Guidelines for Discussants

Sustainable Development Conference

Purpose of the Role

The Discussant plays an important role in strengthening the intellectual quality of the session by offering an informed, independent and constructive assessment of the presentations.

The purpose of the intervention is not simply to summarise what the speakers have said. Rather, the Discussant should identify connections across the presentations, interrogate important assumptions or evidence, highlight areas requiring further consideration and draw out wider policy or research implications.

Constructive debate is central to the Conference. Comments should be candid and analytically rigorous while remaining respectful and solution-oriented. This reflects the original intention that discussants should be 'sharp but constructive' and provide presenters with useful insights.

1. Before the Session

Please review the latest Conference programme and, where available, the session concept note, speaker profiles, abstracts, papers or presentations.

Session information will be available at www.sdpi.org/sdc/ or may be requested from the Panel Organiser.

For an in-person session, please arrive **10-15 minutes before the scheduled start**.

For an online or hybrid session, please join **at least 10 minutes before the scheduled start** to allow time for an audio, video and connectivity check.

2. Preparing Your Remarks

Discussant remarks should normally be limited to **10 minutes**.

Rather than commenting on every presentation in equal detail, please consider focusing on three or four substantive issues.

Your intervention may:

- identify important contributions or areas of agreement;
- compare or connect findings across presentations;
- question assumptions, evidence or methodology where appropriate;
- identify issues that may have been overlooked;
- assess the feasibility or implications of the recommendations presented;
- connect the discussion to wider national, regional or global policy debates; and
- pose one or two questions that can stimulate the subsequent discussion.

Where criticism is necessary, it should be specific, evidence-based and constructive.

3. During the Session

Please listen to all presentations and adjust your prepared comments where necessary to reflect the discussion that has actually taken place.

Avoid repeating the speakers' presentations or introducing an entirely separate presentation of your own.

Your intervention should help the audience understand: *What have we learnt? What remains unresolved? What should policymakers, practitioners or researchers consider next?*

4. Question and Answer Session

Following the Discussant's remarks, the Moderator will ordinarily open the floor for questions and comments.

The Discussant may contribute further where relevant but should allow adequate opportunity for speakers to respond directly to questions concerning their work.

5. Time Management

SDC sessions are generally scheduled for **90 minutes**. Strict adherence to the allotted time is important.

The Moderator or Chair may signal when your remaining time is limited.

Thank you for contributing to the quality and depth of the SDC.