



PROFESSIONAL PROFILE OF DR. KANDEH KOLLEH YUMKELLA

Hon. Dr. Kandeh Kolleh Yumkella is a distinguished development economist with vast experience in agricultural economics and energy transitions, and over 30 years of experience in international development. He is founder and CEO of The Energy Nexus Network (TENN), a regional ecosystem hub for sustainable energy solutions. He currently serves as Chairman of the Presidential Initiative on Climate Change, Renewable Energy and Food Security of Sierra Leone. He was a member parliament 2018-2023 and served on the Pan-African Parliament 2018-2020. He is a member of the High-Level Group of the Africa- Europe Foundation and co-chair of the Africa Europe Foundation Strategy Group on Energy.

Previously Dr. Yumkella served for two decades in the United Nations system including as Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sustainable Energy for All and founding chief executive officer for the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) Initiative (2013–2015), and Chair of UN-Energy (2007-2015). He also served two four-year terms as Director-General of the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO, 2005–2013). In these capacities, among other accomplishments, Dr. Yumkella mobilized global consensus for the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals 7 and 9. These deal with ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all, and building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation, respectively.

A member of pre-eminent global organizations, he is the recipient of numerous internal awards and honorary doctorates. He also serves in various international advisory bodies, boards, and commissions such as the Rocky Mountain Institute-Colorado, We Care Solar-California, World Bank ESMAP, Africa-Europe Energy Partnership AEEP-Germany, Climate Compatible Group-UK, University of Loughborough MECS Program-UK, Sustainable Energy for All Advisor Council, Women in Sustainability, Environment, and Renewable Energy (WISER-MASDAR, UAE), and Senior Adviser to the Director General of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). Dr. Yumkella holds a Ph.D. In Agricultural Economics from the University of Illinois Urban-Champaign (USA, 1991); Master of Science in Agricultural Economics from Cornell University (USA, 1986), and Bachelor of Science in Agriculture General Division One/Cumm laude, Njala University (Sierra Leone, 1982).

Convocation Address

Dr. Kandeh Kolleh Yumkella

Hon'ble Chancellor, Rev. Dr. James Arjen Tete, S.J., Esteemed Vice-Chancellor Rev. Dr. John Felix Raj, S.J., distinguished dignitaries on the dais, members of the teaching faculty, students and parents, distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen.

I am happy to be in Kolkata, a historically important city, which has given the world 6 Nobel Laurates. I am grateful to Rev. Dr. John Felix Raj, S.J. for inviting me to be part of this convocation as the chief guest. I deem it a great honour.

I would like to thank my former principal adviser Dr. Jebamalai Vinanchiarachi for being primarily instrumental for my presence here today. He used to speak volumes of the dynamic personality of Rev. Fr. Felix Raj and told me that this great university is the outcome of his unique blend of vision and action.

I wish to congratulate the graduands, who have worked hard to earn their degrees from one of the prestigious universities of India.

My topic of interaction "Opportunities for Energy Transition and Sustainable Development" is significant as you are graduating at a time of climate change, pandemics, economic shocks and volatility exacerbated by international conflicts and geopolitical tensions. All these crises pose real threats to sustainable development.

We in the global South are already experiencing the worst impacts of climate change though historically we are not the big emitters of greenhouse gases.

In November 2023, we concluded the 28th session of the UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP28) where the growing evidence from the global stocktake showed that the world has not been transitioning sufficiently fast to meet the 1.5°C target agreed in Paris. This was the largest conference ever held with about 80,000 delegates from nearly every country.

Some key outcomes of the conference were: world leaders pledged resource to a special fund for Loss and Damage to developing countries; they committed to tripling renewables by 2030, doubling rates of improvement of energy-efficiency; and establishing new standards to unlock global trade in hydrogen.

I will cite a few examples of positive trends that give me hope that human ingenuity and bold leadership will make your world a better place.

- The cost of renewable energy technologies has fallen by 60-80 percent over the last ten years. It is now cheaper to use wind or solar technologies than to continue with fossil fuel.
- There has been an exponential growth in the global electric vehicle (EV) market, with sales expected to more than double in 2030 from USD 388 billion in 2023 to USD 952 billion.
- Innovations in battery storage technologies have been advancing at a fast pace over the past three decades.

- There is a massive drive towards a new hydrogen economy by 2050 which could unleash major growth and decarbonization opportunities for green steel, ammonia and fertilizer production, and transportation.

That future starts today with you, our next generation of leaders, receiving the right set of skills to march forward. Using knowledge as an inevitable source and innovation as a dynamic force, you should be one step ahead of the march toward a better future.

We encourage a proactive approach to skills development and innovation, embracing change and harnessing the potential of new technologies for societal benefit. For example, when the computer was introduced, critics considered a computer as substitute for a typewriter. They never realized how computer related services could create millions of jobs.

Today, new knowledge is generated by institutions, exploited by the laboratories and commercialized by firms which constantly strive to capture new and dynamic sources of growth. A high degree of interactive framework between universities, laboratories and dynamic firms has become an integral part of national, sectoral and incremental innovation systems. Networking between university and industry has become crucial to unlocking the development potential of countries.

Therefore, as we look forward to 2050 two key drivers of change will be crucial (1) human ingenuity; and (2) political will and leadership. You, the next generation of Indian leaders have to lead the way, and I am confident St. Xavier's University, Kolkata has prepared you well to be change makers for the cause of better future by virtue of the excellent education you all had in this campus.

You should endeavor to be part of rapid, revolutionary and complete changes triggered by the disruptive technologies in the new era of creative destruction that seems to augur well for India to emerge as a mighty economic power in the near future. The ownership and leadership are yours.

Some of you might become great politicians, some of you may join the civil service. If you get a job in companies and departments, don't take your job as a vacation or occasion. Take it as a vocation and be sincere, dedicated, loyal, committed and honest.

Some of you may emerge as entrepreneurs. You should always monitor the new sources of business growth and understand your distance to the frontiers of best practice. Business people have a great moral responsibility to protect the planet and the people and other living things that live on it.

These are the values that St. Xavier's University, Kolkata has instilled in you. As you step forth to start a new journey to live with the ground realities of surviving in an internationally competitive environment, it is important to realise that it is not the question of the survival of the biggest, smallest or fittest but the fastest. Only those who keep pace with the rapidly changing facets of each profession would survive.

Your personal and professional response to convert challenges into opportunities and opportunities into sustainable sources of wealth creation for your generations is going to be a discovery process. I am sure, the graduates of St. Xavier's University, Kolkata, have been prepared well enough to cope with the discovery process.

Thank you.