

‘This is our moonshot moment’

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AS SOUTH African universities gear up for another volatile year, parties at the World Sustainability Forum in Cape Town urged African universities to take the lead in achieving the world’s sustainable development goals.

The forum, which wrapped up on the weekend, called on universities to solve the challenges of sustainable development through education and interdisciplinary research.

The 17 sustainable development goals, such as zero hunger and affordable and clean energy, were adopted as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the UN in September 2015.

World-acclaimed economist Jeffrey Sachs said: “I regard this as the breakthrough period to end extreme poverty on the continent and for Africa to become one of the most dynamic centres of the world economy.

“Achieving the SDGs is the moonshot for our generation. Like the moonshot of the 1960s, these are tough, bold and achievable objectives,” he said.

“When 193 governments agree on something that is important, and when they agree on something as important as sustainable

‘African universities must take the lead

development, that is really something for us to grab hold of. That is a lifeline.”

Universities, business and government must work together to achieve these goals, said the international and South African participants at the forum.

Aldo Stroebel, an executive director at the National Research Foundation, said it was key to strengthen the academic framework that reached into policy and rural environments.

Mamokgethi Phakeng, deputy vice-chancellor for research and internationalisation at the University of Cape Town, said only a few African countries prioritised research.