The Heads of State met at the United Nations in New York in September 2015 to agree the ‘2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development’. This agreement includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets. These goals and targets replaced the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) and are different in a number of ways to the MDGs. Unlike the MDGs which were not negotiated by governments but drawn up by the UN the SDGs and their targets were agreed by governments with the active engagement of stakeholders who were participants throughout their development. Key other differences between the MDGs and SDGs were in particular MDGs had just been for developing countries while the SDGs applied to all countries. The MDGs addressed development and the SDGs addressed sustainable development. The MDGs addressed the problems and the SDGs addressed the symptoms and causes and finally the MDGs were silo focused and the SDGs attempt to address both silo and the interlinkages between them. The SDG targets are backed up by 232 global indicators.

The talk will put the SDGs in the historical context of sustainable development drawing on three of the books that Felix Dodds has written with others. His latest book Stakeholder Democracy: Represented Democracy in a Time of Fear was launched at the UN in July. It will focus down on the issues of interlinkages – or nexus approach. This is something that the Water Institute promoted during the negotiations for the SDGs through its 2014 Nexus Conference – Water, Energy, Food and Climate Change. The Heads of State will meet on September 24th and 25th 2019 to review progress on the SDGs and this lecture will take place after that meeting and so the talk will also address the progress to date and the challenges that have been identified that need to be addressed up to the midterm review in 2023.