Since the 17 SDGs were accepted by the 193 heads of states five years ago to become their new guiding compass it didn't take long until they were understood by parts of the finance community to find their path back to investors interested in combining investment with purpose. But while Pension funds, Sovereign Wealth Funds, private and public banks and finance service providers seem to embrace the overall target (which some of them had started following while they were still coined as ESG or CSR) the challenge for the next decade seems to be:

How can we accelerate?

Can new partnerships create even better returns?

And most important: who can make this work across the globe?

It is fascinating to see the Geneva Agape Foundation becoming more and more one of the cornerstones on this path. Our conference in Geneva opening a year which seemed to have been lost to Covid-19 – but instead could become the turning point for all who realize: most of the excuses to not combine ethics and finance where and are nothing else than cheap reasoning.

In July 2020 the German Authorities published a report stating that the Merkel Government has made zero progress on all 67 goals they announced to deliver on in order to make the 17 SDGs a reality by 2030. As these authorities are everything but for sure not members of the green party this is just one example highlighting what all decision makers in the investment community will experience sooner or later while presenting their annual results: double digits will no longer do the trick – when at the same time the return on investment in regards to SDG1, 2, 3 etc. is close to zero or even negative. To think this will only happen in Europe is a false hope in times where among the top 500 largest stock listed companies from all continents already 93% refer in their legal binding annual reports how they spent their budget in 2019 according to one or more of the SDGs.

While rankings on national levels in regards to the implementation rate of the SDGs are already normal and new ones on City level are in the making, the performance of finance sector in regards to SDG investments will become public soon as well. First Rankings such as the SCR500 will be followed by national, industry and SME rankings.

Therefore, the asks for double digit returns needs to accompanied by additional metrics illustrating how the investments in Africa, LATIM or Asia have contributed to the bottom line of an investor in Norway adding browni points in Climate, Zero Hunger and clean water which outweigh a ROI of "only" 7% in one year, because these investments "far away" on another continent actually help stabalize if not increase the own sales in one of the future growth markets, it secures the national budget as SDG 1, 2, 3 and 4 related investments reduces the risk factor caused by an instable world and one $ invest in climate related projects in other parts of the world can trigger 4$ return via carbon credits etc.

While in the 20th century the "It's the economy, stupid" slogan drove most of the investment decisions it doesn't take too much to realize, that resilient impact investment 2.0 has to follow a holistic set of values which are grounded in true'ism being part of the DNA of faiths across the world as well as a large number of family offices, Nordic states and the Indigenous communities – just to name a few.

Looking ahead I am optimistic that GAF has not only the goal but more important the members and friends with the spirit helping to catch up. As the first five years since agreeing on the SDGs have gone by at light speed – leaving us with only 10 more to succeed. If we take the courage of Beethoven, who's 250th anniversary was guiding us through the cliffs of 2020 we might be able to sign our future achievements as his mentor, Johan Sebastian Bach did after completing each of his music: Sole Deo Gloria SDG.