

A large, diverse group of people, identified as Villars Fellows, are gathered for a group photo. Many are waving and smiling. In the foreground, a black banner with the Villars Institute logo is visible. The background shows a grand, multi-story building with classical architectural features.

# Villars Symposium 2026

## Advancing Systems Leadership

The defining challenge of our time is to secure **human prosperity within planetary boundaries** while repairing the damage already done to the Earth's life-support systems. Biodiversity loss, climate change, food insecurity, and the energy transition are not isolated crises but **deeply interconnected challenges** that call for new ways of thinking, valuing nature, and organizing our economies and societies. Meeting them requires systemic, interdisciplinary, and intergenerational solutions. At a moment of accelerating environmental risk, rapid technological change, and growing geopolitical fragmentation, global responses remain uneven and insufficient. Solutions are too often siloed across sectors, nations, and generations, while the scale and complexity of these challenges demand coordination, long-term thinking, and shared responsibility.

Addressing planetary challenges requires a new generation of **systems leaders** - capable of navigating complexity, bridging divides, and working across generations to redesign the systems shaping our shared future. Moving beyond awareness, we must **unlock youth agency** in partnership with experienced leaders to accelerate meaningful action.

## Empowering the Next Generation of Leaders

The Villars Symposium is the Villars Institute's flagship event, anchored in the [Villars Fellowship](#), a lifelong learning program that equips next-generation changemakers from around the world to lead in complexity. Villars Fellows are nominated by [Learning Partners](#), representing leading international schools, educational organizations, and innovative learning initiatives that are rethinking education in service of **planetary health**.

The Symposium themes are informed by the [Global Issues Survey](#), an annual publication capturing the perspectives, priorities, and knowledge gaps of the growing Villars Fellows community.

## A Unique Setting and Program Experience

This year's Symposium will take place on **14-18 June** in the historic Villars Palace, in the beautiful setting of Villars-sur-Ollon in the Swiss Alps. Participation is by invitation only and limited to 300 guests including Villars Institute partners, leading academics and scientists, institutional leaders, and entrepreneurs developing solutions that enable systems change from the ground up, alongside 150 Villars Fellows. The program combines plenaries, workshops, and informal exchanges into a carefully sequenced learning journey that **connects insight with implementation**.

Designed to foster **trust, intellectual rigor, and intergenerational collaboration**, the experience challenges participants to rethink assumptions, bridge perspectives, and identify **levers for systems change**. By bringing together scientific expertise, institutional leadership, and entrepreneurial action, the Symposium creates a space to test ideas, challenge assumptions, and accelerate solutions across systems. Experts also contribute through in-depth videos featured on the [Villars Institute YouTube Channel](#). These curated dialogues extend the Symposium's reach, enabling young leaders, educators, and institutions worldwide to engage in ongoing learning and access **cutting-edge thinking on planetary health and systems leadership**.

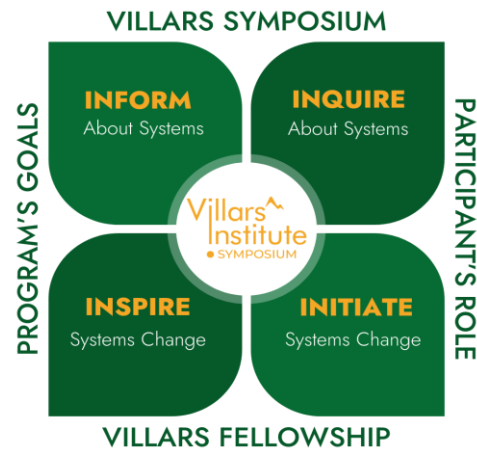
## Co-Designing the Symposium Program

The Symposium program is co-designed with strategic partners and in close collaboration with the [Villars Youth Council](#). This process integrates scientific insight, educational innovation, and practical leadership experience. [Villars Mentors](#) are also an integral part of the event, meaningfully contributing to the program and continuing their engagement with Fellows beyond the Symposium, reflecting the Institute's **commitment to systems leadership in both knowledge and practice**.

This year's Symposium will be opened by [Dr Saleem Ali](#), who will deliver the 8th Villars Distinguished Lecture on how natural laws define human life.



# Program Overview



	Sunday 14 June	Monday 15 June	Tuesday 16 June	Wednesday 17 June	Thursday 18 June
AM		08.30-10.00 <b>Plenary Session</b>	08.30-10.00 <b>Plenary Session</b>	08.30-10.30 <b>Plenary Session</b>	09.00-11.00 <b>Departure &amp; Check-Out for Villars Symposium</b>
		10.00-10.45 <b>Symposium Community Break</b>	10.00-10.45 <b>Symposium Community Break</b>	10.00-10.45 <b>Symposium Community Break</b>	
		10.45-12.00 <b>Sessions in Parallel</b>	10.45-12.00 <b>Sessions in Parallel</b>	10.45-12.00 <b>Sessions in Parallel</b>	
Lunch		12.00-13.30 <b>Symposium Community Lunch</b>	12.00-13.30 <b>Symposium Community Lunch</b>	12.00-13.30 <b>Symposium Community Lunch</b>	
PM		13.30-15.00 <b>Sessions in Parallel</b>	13.30-15.00 <b>Sessions in Parallel</b>	13.30-15.00 <b>Closing Plenary Session</b>	
	15.30-17.00 <b>Arrival &amp; Check-In for Villars Symposium</b>	15.00-15.30 <b>Symposium Community Break</b>	15.00-15.30 <b>Symposium Community Break</b>	15.00-18.00 <b>Exploring and Learning in Villars-sur-Ollon Guided Nature Walk</b>	
		16.00-17.45 <b>Sessions in Parallel</b>	16.00-17.45 <b>Sessions in Parallel</b>		
	17.00- 18.00 <b>Opening Plenary Session of the Villars Symposium</b>	17.45-19.00 <b>Plenary Session</b>	17.45-19.00 <b>Plenary Session</b>		
Dinner	18.00-19.00 <b>9th Villars Institute Distinguished Lecture</b>	19.00-21.00 <b>Symposium Community Dinner</b>	19.00-21.00 <b>Symposium Community Dinner</b>	19.00-21.00 <b>Swiss Community Dinner</b>	