



Marking three years since historic moment: Efforts continue to keep the promise of the global goals

Three years into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the world has seen both important progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and setbacks that require urgent action. “We have only 12 more years until 2030 to fully realize this transformative agenda, but these Goals are absolutely within our reach. It will require policy makers’ unwavering attention, a laser-sharp focus on implementation of these Goals, and a true sense of urgency,” said UN DESA’s Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin at the recent 2018 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

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The SDGs have galvanized actors across the board and helped forge promising partnerships. Many governments have adapted their national institutions and policies in line with the SDGs, often in coordination with parliaments and local and regional governments. NGOs, the private sector, academia and many other stakeholders are continuously stepping up their engagement for the 2030 Agenda and its vision of leaving no one behind.

This broad commitment has led to significant achievements, as the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018 shows. Since the turn of the century, the maternal

mortality ratio in sub-Saharan Africa has declined by 35 per cent and the under-five mortality rate has dropped by 50 per cent. Basic education has been expanded. In the least developed countries, the proportion of the people with access to electricity has more than doubled. And, globally, labor productivity has increased, and unemployment rate decreased.

However, despite these successes, the world is lagging, and even backtracking, in some areas. For the first time in a decade, the number of people who are undernourished has increased, mainly due to conflict, drought and disasters linked to climate change. Gender inequality continues to hold women back and deprive them of basic rights and opportunities. 9 in 10 people living in cities breathe polluted air. And investment in critical sustainable infrastructure remains entirely inadequate.

It will take strong resolve to address the major global challenges that are making the SDGs harder to achieve, such as runaway climate change, a growing number of conflicts, inequality and persistent pockets of poverty. Solutions are available. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the blueprint for a more sustainable and peaceful planet. By engaging young people, tackling climate change, increasing financing for sustainable development, and harnessing the power of technology, the challenges can be overcome.

Effective multilateralism is a further crucial element for SDGs success. For its part, the United Nations is engaged in a comprehensive reform of its development system which aims to make it more effective, cohesive and accountable in delivering on the 2030 Agenda.

The central global UN review forum for the SDGs, the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), is another key tool and has seen a year-on-year increase in participants. 108 countries have conducted Voluntary National Reviews at the HLPF, in which they presented how they are implementing the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

“The HLPF allowed us to pause, take a step back, and gauge how we stand on the road towards the SDGs. We are proud of the many advances we have been making. But we also emerge with a better awareness of where the gaps are. This knowledge will help us to focus efforts in the year to come,” said Mr. Liu, as the HLPF closed its 2018 session.

As the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly kicks off its high-level week on 24 September, three years will have passed since the historic adoption of the SDGs on 25 September 2015. Events to mark this occasion are currently being planned and as in previous years, the SDG Media Zone will feature many interesting panel events and interviews, showcasing actions to deliver the goals on the ground.

For more information:

[Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#)

[Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018](#)

[High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#)

[SDG Media Zone at the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly](#)



Seeking innovative solutions to fund ambitious agenda

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is ambitious and will require trillions of dollars of investment, with cost assessments ranging between \$5 to \$7 trillion per year. Three years into realizing the Sustainable Development Goals, there have been numerous successes – countries have taken concrete steps to mobilize domestic resources and implement national sustainable development strategies, and interest in sustainable investment is

growing. But we face growing challenges as well. Although global growth is positive, there are growing risks and wavering commitments on a range of issues – climate change, trade and economic and financial cooperation.

In many countries, public investment is constrained, while private investment is often short-term and does not flow to where it is most needed. If we want to eradicate poverty and achieve a more sustainable world by 2030, we need to unlock adequate levels of financing and investments for sustainable development.

Focusing on several priority areas could help fast-track progress.

First, making progress requires political support at all levels. Governments can show leadership by taking policy actions that facilitate and attract sustainable finance. This requires steadfast commitment that extends beyond standard political cycles and aims to mobilize the full range of resources – public and private, domestic and international.

Second, engagement with the private sector needs to be stepped up. With funds in global capital markets amounting to around \$300 trillion, there is much greater scope for tapping the full potential of private investment. More needs to be done to incentivize greater sustainable investment. This calls for greater partnership between investors, business, governments, development banks, financial institutions and others.

Finally, we need to make the most of innovative solutions to finance the SDGs. The resources needed to finance the 2030 Agenda exist, but innovation is essential to getting them where they are most needed. Technological and financial innovations are creating new tools and opening opportunities to address long-standing deficiencies in access to finance for large parts of the world's population.

The Secretary-General's High-level Meeting on Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, taking place on 24 September at UN Headquarters, aims to put the spotlight on these priorities. It will identify key actions and initiatives by Governments, business and the international community to accelerate implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda. And, it will call on stakeholders to act and report on progress to the General Assembly's High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development in 2019.

While substantial gaps remain, the evidence indicates strong potential to scale up progress on financing the SDGs — acting urgently and collaboratively on the basis of

strong, national commitments and new coalitions of actors who can catalyze investments and innovation in support of sustainable development.

For more information:

High-level Meeting on Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Financing for sustainable development

HIGHLIGHTS



“We are all in this together” – meet the new ECOSOC President

Earlier this summer, Rhonda King of the Caribbean island nation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was voted in as the 74th President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Upon her election on 26 July 2018, Ms. King said that she intended to make the year ahead “a defining” one for the body that leads the UN’s ambitious

drive for sustainable, economic, social and environmental development.

“It promises to be a defining year, which could help set a new course for the work of the Council and the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) held under its auspices,” said Ms. King.

Calling it an honour to serve, she thanked the Council members and asked for their help moving forward so that ECOSOC and the HLPF could live up to its expectations.

She paid special tribute to the Council’s outgoing President, Marie Chatardova, “whose leadership and vision” Ms. King said she would continue to rely and build on, with its emphasis on inclusion and participation.

She cited the HLPF as “the centerpiece” of her priorities, saying that when it meets in the General Assembly, Heads of State and Government will review the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

She also listed a revived ECOSOC as one of her main priorities. “You heard me correctly,” she said, “with your committed participation, we will revive the ECOSOC using in full, the hard-won innovations introduced by the General Assembly.”

“There has been some dissatisfaction with the functioning of ECOSOC over the recent few years. But in the coming 12 months, let us work together to restore the ‘deliberative function’ of ECOSOC,” she underscored.

“We will have to think of ways to strengthen the conduct of the next cycle of reviews” while looking towards the early targets of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, that are set for 2020, she said.

For her part, former President Chatardová recapped the “unprecedented engagement” of many groups during her year in office, calling it “very encouraging” towards achieving the 2030 Agenda.

She recalled 240 side events and special events, focused on partnerships, education, business, SDG Learning and Training, and local and regional government. Additionally, a film festival and a number of exhibitions enriched the official meetings, added Ms. Chatardova.

“I am sure when next year HLPF also meets under the auspices of the General Assembly, it will reaffirm the political will at the highest level to continue implementing the 2030 Agenda and lifting the obstacles,” she said.

For more information: [President of the UN ECOSOC](#)

GET INVOLVED



Join the conversation in the SDG Media Zone!

World leaders will soon be coming together at UN Headquarters in New York as the UN General Assembly’s 73rd session and its high-level week kick off in September. The global goals and our joint efforts to finance and achieve them, building a healthier, more equitable and prosperous planet, will be among the many items on a busy agenda.

On 24-28 September, the UN will host the SDG Media Zone to act as a dynamic space for well-known personalities and UN Member States as well as content creators, influencers and media partners to discuss change-making initiatives and innovative approaches to achieving the goals.

This platform will also enable speakers to call on humanity to engage in the SDGs. The Zone will have daily themes including the Legacy of Mandela, the UN Youth Strategy, Climate Action and the Right to Education.

The interviews and panel discussions will take place in a special tent on the UN Visitors’ Plaza. Although access to UN Headquarters is limited to the public at this time, audiences outside of the UN are encouraged to join in the conversation online. In 2017, the #SDGLive hashtag had a total reach of more than 53 million people on Twitter.

Get involved online, and become a part of a global community of change-makers. Help us bolster the commitment to achieve the SDGs!

To join the discussion, search for the #SDGLive hashtag on Twitter or tune in to webtv.un.org.

For more information: [SDG Media Zone](#)



“Young people are active partners; they need to have a seat at the table”

Our planet is home to 1.8 billion young people today; the largest generation of youth in history. Growing up in an interconnected world, it is a generation facing many opportunities, but grave challenges at the very same time. This September, the UN will present a new strategy for youth to step up its efforts, working with and for young people

around the globe. Ahead of the launch, UN DESA Voice talked to the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, who shared her hopes for what this new strategy will achieve.

Today, our world is home to 1.8 billion young people; the largest youth generation in history. What are some of the major challenges that this generation is facing?

“I believe we are living in the best, but also the worst moment as young people today. It's the best of times because we are the most interconnected generation, and the most educated one as well. Still, we can't ignore that young people all around the world face more challenges than ever before. For example, about 71 million young people are currently unemployed; AIDS-related deaths of adolescents have increased the last decade while it has decreased in other age groups; and 408 million youth live in settings affected by armed conflict and organized violence.”

This large youth generation also brings tremendous opportunities for the world. Can you tell us what this means for our global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals?

“Definitely, the 2030 Agenda recognizes the key role that today's youth play in its achievement, as it mentions “the future lies in the hands of today's younger generation who will pass the torch to future generations”. But young people – especially the ones that are the most vulnerable and most marginalized- have been seen solely as beneficiaries of development and this needs to change. Young people are innovative, resourceful, creative and are already taking action in their communities to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. For the global efforts being taken, this means that young people are active partners, and they need to have a seat at the table for policymaking, implementation and evaluation in all stages.”

In September, the UN will launch a new strategy for youth. How will this new strategy help young people around the world? What is it hoping to achieve?

“The UN Youth Strategy offers an umbrella framework that will guide the entire UN system to work with and for young people, as we seek to step up our work to empower young people to realize their full potential and stand up for their rights at the global,

regional and country level. The strategy further aims to significantly strengthen the UN-System's capacity to meaningfully engage with young people, providing avenues for their participation and ensuring the system can benefit from their insights and ideas. Through this strategy we hope to facilitate increased impact and expanded global, regional and country-level action to address the needs, build the agency and advance the rights of young people around the world, and to ensure their engagement and participation in the implementation, review and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as other relevant global agendas and frameworks.

On the one hand, the Strategy has five priority areas that the UN aims to programmatically focus further on: engagement, participation and advocacy; access to quality education and health services; economic empowerment through decent work; youth and human rights and civic participation; and peace and resilience building. Here it is important to mention that the great thing is also, that existing key interagency initiatives on youth, such as Decent Jobs for Youth, the Compact on Young People in Humanitarian Action, and Youth, Peace and Security efforts, as well as forthcoming initiatives, such as the Generation Unlimited Partnership initiated by UNICEF, will be situated under the overarching umbrella of the Strategy.

On the other hand, four core functions have been identified for the UN itself to improve its delivery for and with young people, which include being a leadership example; a knowledge and innovation pioneer; an investment and solution catalyst; and an accountability leader. This will help to bring young people closer to the UN, and the UN closer to young people, and to ensure the UN system's work related to youth that is currently being done is amplified, coordinated and coherent."

How has the strategy been developed? Have the voices of young people been included?

"The Strategy was finalized under the leadership of my office in close coordination with the co-chairs of the Interagency Network on Youth Development and benefitting from the inputs of many of its members. We had twenty-seven UN agencies, funds, programmes and departments actively contributing their inputs to the strategy. Also, youth have been consulted throughout the process, in particular through the Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY) and the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations(ICMYO), who together represent through their networks thousands of youth organizations and millions of young people from all over the world. Now beyond the development of the Strategy itself, we will also count on our internal and external partners in the roll-out, implementation, monitoring and review of the Strategy going forward.

When will the strategy be launched? How will young people be able to access the new strategy, and can they follow the launch event live?

"On 22 June, the Secretary-General endorsed the strategy in his Executive Committee, and tasked my Office, along with the Department of Public Information to prepare for a launch initiative during the High-Level segment of the General Assembly. The event will take place on 24 September with the participation of the Secretary-General, Heads of Governments, Ministers, Heads of UN Agencies, CEOs of Private Sector organizations, foundations and civil society, and most importantly many young people. The strategy will be made available online. We are working to have it available in all 6 official languages of the UN. We hope to mobilize as many youth activists and advocates, youth organizations and networks, UN-System partners, Member States and others to galvanize attention, commitments and create momentum that will propel us forward as we start implementing the new strategy.

For those who cannot make it to New York, they can watch the event live on UN Web TV on 24 September from 12.00 pm – 2.00 pm ET. I can promise it is going to be a fun and dynamic event!"

For more information:

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



Call for protection of rights of indigenous peoples on the move

Indigenous peoples have a profound spiritual connection to their lands and resources. Yet, increasingly, indigenous persons are migrating within their countries and across international borders. This year's commemoration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples focused on Indigenous Peoples: Migration and Movement. The event explored how

migration is an opportunity, but also carries inherent risks.

Many indigenous migrants find themselves living in unsafe and insanitary conditions in urban areas. Indigenous women and girls experience disproportionately high rates of trafficking and other forms of violence and indigenous youth are faced with complex questions regarding their identity and values.

Rosa Montezuma, the first young indigenous woman to hold the title of "Miss Panama 2018" spoke at the event, emphasizing that indigenous women are capable, talented, professional and determined to fight for their culture, identity and rights.

Panelists also highlighted the need to address the root causes of migration, which includes loss of lands and livelihoods, displacement, dispossession, conservation and climate change, so that indigenous peoples can continue to live in their traditional lands and territories.

In the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#) to be adopted in December, there is a call for continued protection of the rights and identities of indigenous peoples.

"The Global Compact presents an excellent opportunity to highlight the specific needs and rights of migrants from indigenous groups, to address the risks and challenges they face in their countries of origin, transit and/or destination," said UN DESA's Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin.

"It is also important to prevent the conditions for involuntary migration of indigenous peoples, by ensuring their rights as enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples."

For more information:

[International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples](#)

[Global Compact for Migration](#)

Old obstacles to growth persist despite the new economic upturn



Old obstacles to growth persist despite the new economic upturn

Over the past two years, the world economy has experienced a substantial upswing, and baseline growth is expected to be robust in 2018–2019. The short-term outlook remains promising, as major economies continue to expand despite growing international trade tensions.

The positive overall picture, however, masks some worrisome long-term trends in the pattern of economic growth. While average growth in developing and transition economies has strengthened since 2016, a significant number of countries are not sharing in the global improvement and are falling further behind.

In 2016, GDP per capita declined in a staggering 49 countries, the highest number since 2009. In 2017–2018, a total of 48 developing and transition economies—home to 15% of the global population—are projected to see less than 1 per cent growth in GDP per capita.

What characterizes the 48 developing and transition countries that are facing weak growth in 2017-2018?

Many of them are highly dependent on commodities – in particular – oil. In 27 of these countries, commodities constitute over 80 per cent of total merchandise exports. In several cases, the commodity price collapse of 2014–2016 revealed massive macroeconomic imbalances and triggered deep and prolonged crises.

Of the 48 countries, 17 are classified as least developed countries (LDCs). A very low development base and limited resources impede crucial investment in areas such as infrastructure, healthcare and social programmes. As a result, low incomes often tend to be sticky, making it even harder for LDCs to expand the economy and make productive headway.

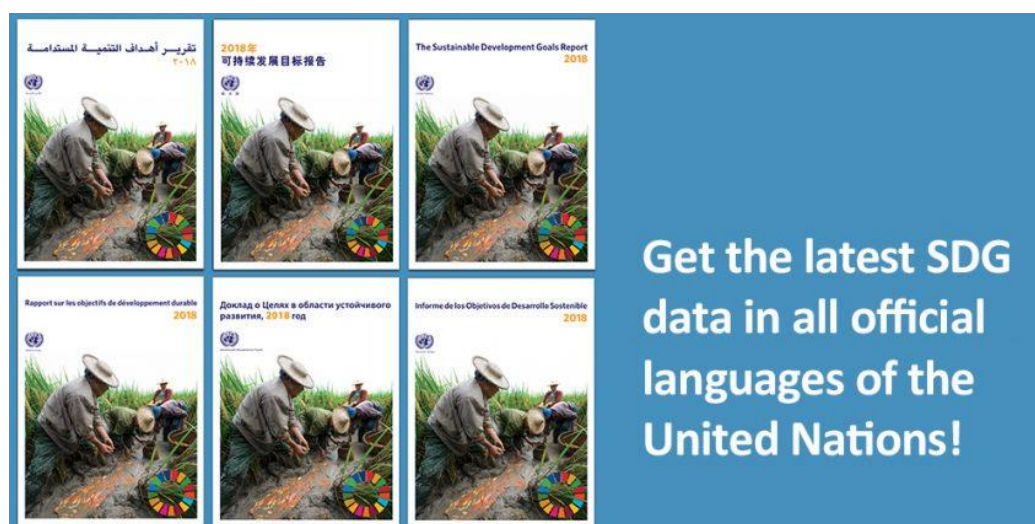
A significant number of these countries also suffer from deeply rooted armed conflicts or face civil unrest and instability. Conflict poses an immense obstacle to development progress, as the loss of human lives and forced displacement of the population are compounded by extensive damage to physical and human capital and an inhospitable environment for investors.

While geographical barriers and exposure to weather-related shocks act as a restraint on growth prospects in many cases, among the 32 landlocked developing countries (LLDC), only 7 are part of the 48 countries identified as growth laggards. However, all the commodity-dependent LLDCs recorded a severe slowdown in GDP per capita growth following the collapse of commodity prices in 2014–2016.

There is no single factor that explains why some countries continue to fall further behind. The experiences of China and several other East and South Asian economies, which managed to achieve high and relatively stable growth in GDP per capita over the past four decades suggest that there are no ultimate traps to development. Nonetheless, well-known barriers to growth remain the same in 2018 as in the past – conflict and a lack of economic diversification. While we continue to confront these persistent obstacles, a daunting threat for some countries still lurks in the background – more hostile climatic conditions in the face of rising global temperatures.

Learn more in the latest [World Economic Situation and Prospects Monthly Briefing](#)

Latest SDG data available in all official UN languages



The latest Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018, released earlier this year and presenting the latest data on the SDGs progress, is now available in all official languages of the United Nations. Online audiences around the world can now find out where we're advancing and where we need to step up efforts to achieve the goals – in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish and Russian.

The report, launched on 20 June by UN DESA's Statistics Division, found that a fast-changing climate, conflict, inequality, persistent pockets of poverty and hunger and rapid urbanization are challenging countries' efforts to achieve the SDGs.

The report noted that for the first time in more than a decade, there are approximately 38 million more hungry people in the world, with conflict being one of the main drivers of food insecurity in 18 countries. According to the report, the world furthermore experienced the costliest North Atlantic hurricane season on record in 2017, driving the global economic losses attributed to the disasters to over \$300 billion.

At the same time, the report found that more people are leading better lives than they were just a decade ago. The proportion of the world's workers living with their families on less than 1.90 per person a day declined significantly over the past two decades; the

under-five mortality rate dropped by almost 50 per cent; and in the least developed countries, the proportion of population with access to electricity has more than doubled between 2000 and 2016.

Access all the latest SDG data in all official UN languages [here](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 10-14
September,
Tunis | Regional Training Workshop on Trade SDMX, |
| 17 September,
New York | Briefing on the Global Infrastructure Forum 2018 |
| 18 September,
New York | UN General Assembly, Seventy-third session |
| 24 September,
New York | High-level Meeting on Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development |

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