



For persons with disabilities, the sky is not the limit

At the age of two Edward (Eddie) Ndopu's life seemed over before it had even begun. That year, he had been diagnosed with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA), a genetic disease that affects the nerve cells that help us walk, eat or breathe. According to doctors, Eddie would not live beyond his fifth birthday. Driven by a relentless pursuit of a full life, Eddie not only survived, he was able to get an education and go on to become the first African with a disability to graduate from Oxford University and become the [UN Secretary-General's SDG Advocate](#). Today, he is making plans to become the first wheelchair user to go into space.

"My voyage to space is really a full circle moment for me," Eddie says. "I defied my prognosis. I was told I would never live beyond the age of five, and I'm here and it seems to me that the logical next step is to defy gravity; to show the world that people with disabilities have enormous capacity for brilliance and to achieve the extraordinary."

As he reaches for the stars, Eddie continues to amplify the voices of persons with disabilities around the world, many of whom continue to be marginalized, isolated and neglected, facing barriers to access education, jobs and to be fully included in society.

Today, 44 per cent of countries prevent students with disabilities from being taught in the same classroom as others. In some countries, over 1 in 10 persons with disabilities have been refused school enrolment. And despite having greater health-care needs, one in three people with disabilities today cannot afford health-care facilities.

The United Nations is working to change that through the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#). Adopted in 2006 and ratified by 177 countries so far, this

landmark document is the largest human rights treaty in the world and it is paving the way towards full inclusion and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.

From 11 to 13 June, UN Member States, UN entities, NGOs and civil society organizations will meet in New York for the 12th session of the Conference of States Parties (COSP) to the Convention, held under the theme “Ensuring inclusion of persons with disabilities in a changing world through the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.”

UN Secretary-General António Guterres will open the Conference and announce the launch of the new UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, opening a new chapter in the history of the UN’s work to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. The strategy will establish the UN’s vision on disability inclusion and provide an accountability framework with objectives for the UN at the individual and country team levels.

The Conference will also discuss such issues as technology, digitalization and ICTs for the empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities, social inclusion and the right to the highest attainable standard of health, and inclusion of persons with disabilities in society through participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sports.

In addition, over 80 side events will cover a wide variety of issues related to the inclusion of persons with disabilities, such as education, the use of assistive technology, inclusion through sports and women and girls with disabilities. These events will also showcase global, regional and national initiatives for the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

In the lead up to the conference, the NGO Committee on Social Development will host a Civil Society Forum on 10 June to strengthen partnerships among stakeholders.

For more information: [12th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD](#)

See also the recently published [UN Disability and Development Report 2018](#)

Follow the event live: [UN Web TV](#)

HIGHLIGHTS



Celebrating the world’s public servants

As countries ramp up their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UN DESA highlights the central role of public institutions in delivering the promise of the 2030 Agenda. The annual United Nations Public Service Forum and Awards, held on the UN Public Service Day, 23 June, celebrate the men and women who act as the backbone of institutions and the brainpower that enables the day-to-day

delivery of public services.

The Forum offers an opportunity for public servants from different countries to come together to share challenges and strategies on how to better deliver public services. It

provides a platform for the exchange of experiences on how to innovate in the public sector to advance the 2030 Agenda.

“Promoting responsive, effective and accountable institutions lies at the heart of the work of the United Nations and sits at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” said Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General and Head of UN DESA. “Transparent and accountable institutions, free from corruption, ensure that public service delivery is both accessible and equitable so that no one is left behind.”

The 2019 UN Public Service Forum will be held from 24 to 26 June in Baku, Azerbaijan, under the theme “Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through Effective Delivery of Services, Innovative Transformation and Accountable Institutions.”

The Forum will focus on developing effective and accountable public institutions that empower public servants to better serve their constituents and leave no one behind. The Forum aims to equip public servants from all levels of government with the skills and mindsets needed to provide effective and responsive services, as well as to meet the SDGs.

The Forum will include capacity building workshops with sub-themes, such as linking government performance with the power of disruptive technologies, digital transformation for the SDGs, promoting more gender responsive public service and enhancing social inclusion of vulnerable groups (see full programme [here](#)).

The Forum will also host a plenary panel on SDG 16 with a focus on accountable and effective institutions, providing a strong link to the 2019 High Level Political Forum (HLPF) which is set to review SDG 16 in July.

The Forum will also feature the UN Public Service Awards ceremony. The Awards, accorded by UN DESA, recognize the exceptional public servants from across the globe who deliver strong, inclusive and effective institutions and services.

For more information: [UN Public Service Forum](#)

[UN Public Service Awards](#)

HIGHLIGHTS



More than 400 submissions listed in new SDG good practices database to inspire action for the goals

What are the inspiring breakthroughs and success stories that illustrate SDG implementation? What are the good practices that can be replicated and scaled up? What are the gaps and constraints and how should we address them? Looking ahead, what steps should

we take to accelerate progress? To help answer these and other questions, UN DESA

circulated a call for submissions of SDG-related good practices or success stories from Member States, the UN system and stakeholders – and received more than 600 suggestions!

After a vetting from an interagency panel of experts, the first batch of good practices have been released on a [searchable online database](#), featuring more than 400 submissions. More SDG good practices will be made available as the review is finalized. The intention is to periodically issue a Call for Submissions of good practices, so if your organization missed this round, there will be another opportunity in the future.

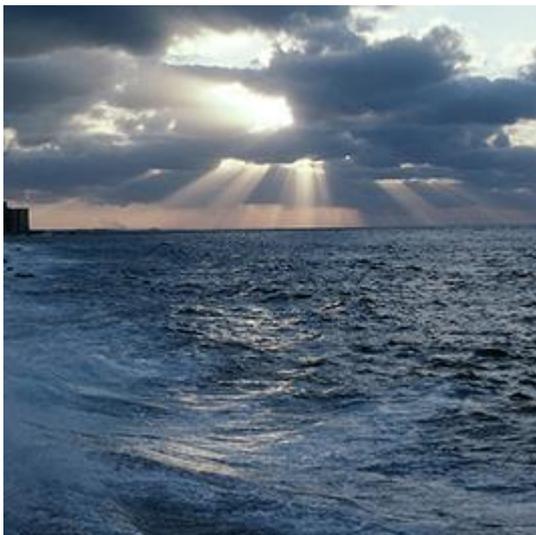
To search the submissions including by sorting them by individual SDGs, click [here](#) and select the “SDG Good Practices” checkbox under the “Action Network & Databases” section in the left column. There is also a search bar for searching by country name or organization name.

Some of the vetted good practices from this initial, global Call for Submissions that could be replicated or scaled up include:

- Brazil: The Sustainable Cities Program in Brazil is an open data portal that aims to create awareness, mobilize and commit public and local governments to the construction of fair and sustainable cities through a systemic approach that integrates all areas of public administration—health, education, social assistance, housing and mobility.
- South Sudan: Vétérinaires Sans Frontières (VSF) promotes the Community-based Animal Health Workers model as a cost-efficient and locally available option to offer access to quality animal health services to pastoralists in South Sudan, where more than half of the population is dependent on livestock for survival. VSF trains members of hard-to-reach and at-risk communities in good husbandry practices and basic animal health care.
- Vietnam: HelpAge International and local partners have developed and tested a development model of Inter-generational Self Help Clubs to establish and strengthen the capacity of inclusive, sustainable and affordable civil society organisations throughout Vietnam to engage effectively with local community groups and authorities to promote greater inclusion of vulnerable groups—older persons, women, persons with disabilities—in service delivery and social development.

More examples of good practice projects and initiatives being done to implement the SDGs around the world will be highlighted by UN DESA each week through the SDG Summit in September to inspire others to take action.

Photo credit: UNDP Brazil



It's time to
#SaveOurOcean –
take #OceanAction
now!

Never before has it been so easy to follow the world's progress toward protecting our ocean and sustainably managing its vital resources. Ahead of World Oceans Day on 8 June, UN DESA has re-launched its oceanconference.un.org website for all news and information related to Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water. On this site, you can also

register your commitment or join the communities of ocean action. The time is now to #SaveOurOcean!

The dynamic new website, launched at the UN DESA-led meeting of the Communities of Ocean Action (COAs) in Incheon, Republic of Korea, in May, will highlight the work of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean and the global partnerships and initiatives actively working to restore the health of our seas. Special attention will be paid to the COAs, which are the multi-stakeholder working groups aligned with the targets of SDG 14 launched to follow up on the 1,400 voluntary commitments to save our ocean registered during the 2017 UN Ocean Conference.

Furthermore, the site will host all of the information for the next UN Ocean Conference, which the UN General Assembly will hold in Lisbon, Portugal, from 2 to 6 June 2020, co-hosted by the governments of Kenya and Portugal, under the theme "Scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation for the implementation of Goal 14: stock-taking, partnerships and solutions."

Ensuring that our marine and coastal ecosystems are healthy and continue to provide the food, jobs, natural disaster protection and climate mitigation on which we depend requires efforts from governments, international organizations, businesses, civil society—and individuals. Join the UN and other groups in protecting our ocean in these ways:

- Reduce the amount of single-serve plastics you use. Find 10 easy tips from [Global Citizen](#) on how to do this.
- Beautify your local waterways by collecting trash along your coastline or river, or at a park.
- Join an ocean-related event or register your own on the UN's World Oceans Day portal – unworldoceansday.org.
- Take the pledge and join the #CleanSeas movement [here](#).
- Bookmark UN DESA's new [ocean action website](#) and stay tuned for details on the 2020 UN Ocean Conference.



The people behind the numbers – latest population trends to be revealed

For nearly seven decades, the UN has been collecting and analysing population data from countries or areas around the world to estimate the number of humans inhabiting planet Earth today and in the future. What do these numbers tell us? And why is it so important to be counted? As UN DESA prepares to launch the 2019 revision of World Population Prospects on 17 June

2019, we ask Thomas Spoorenberg, Population Affairs Officer at UN DESA's Population Division.

World Population Prospects is considered the most accurate and trusted estimate of the human population. How is it produced?

“The UN Population Division, which is part of UN DESA, has been estimating and projecting the world's population since 1951. A team of more than a dozen people has worked for more than a year on this latest update. We have spent most of our time analysing recent trends in fertility, mortality and international migration to determine the size and age structure of the population for 235 countries or areas.”

Where do all these data come from?

“We evaluate population censuses, vital registration of births and deaths and household surveys. For example, this latest assessment considers the results of 1,690 population censuses conducted between 1950 and 2018, information on births and deaths from numerous vital registration systems and demographic indicators from 2,700 surveys. We then feed those estimates into statistical models to project the future trajectories of fertility and mortality that will determine, in conjunction with future international migration, the future population of each country or area through 2100 and to assess the certainty of those projections.”

Going beyond the numbers, this publication talks about billions of real people – where they live, how old they are, whether they migrate. Why is it important to know all these things?

“Understanding global population trends and anticipating the demographic changes to come are crucial to sustainable development. The population trends we are observing over the past few decades tell us that we have made substantial progress towards several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as reducing mortality among children, increasing access to sexual and reproductive health care and enhancing gender equality to empower women to decide freely and responsibly on the number of their children.

Looking ahead, by the year 2030, our population will be different from what we see today, and it will change even further by 2050. Societies need to adapt by anticipating future demographic trends and incorporating that information into policy and planning. For example, countries with rapid population growth, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, must plan to provide schooling and health care to growing numbers of children and ensure education and employment opportunities to increasing numbers of youth. Countries where the population has already ceased, or will soon cease, to grow must prepare for an increasing proportion of older persons and, in some cases, decreasing population numbers. With long-term objectives, such as the SDGs, analyzing population trends help us to plan not only for today's, but also for tomorrow's population."

One thing we know already, even before the launch of the latest revision, is that our population is growing. Can we achieve the SDGs and curb climate change with even more of us on this planet?

"It's true that the global population continues to grow, but the rate of increase is slower today than at any time since 1950 and we expect it to continue to slow over the coming decades. Overall, the world has been rather successful in reducing poverty and increasing the quality of life for many of the more than 5 billion people added to our population since 1950. But the world's economy will need to grow sustainably to support the growing global population and to avoid negative impacts on the environment. Many of the fastest growing populations are in the world's poorest countries. In these countries, population growth is a real challenge for efforts to eradicate poverty and inequality, combat hunger and malnutrition, strengthen the coverage and quality of education and health systems, and improve access to basic services.

Having said that, we should remember that population size and growth is just one part of a complex sustainable development equation, which also includes issues such as consumption, technology and the state of the environment. Slower population growth can help achieve the SDGs and the Paris Agreement climate targets, but it is even more important to encourage more responsible patterns of consumption and production that can ease pressure on ecosystems to generate food, preserve natural resources and allow the world more time to identify and adopt new technologies."

Our population is not only getting larger, it is increasingly getting older. What will an older world look like? What adjustments will we have to make?

"Persons aged 65 or over already make up the world's fastest growing age group and virtually all countries can expect the percentage of older persons in their populations to increase. Countries need to plan now for population ageing to ensure the well-being of older persons, the protection of their human rights, their economic security, access to appropriate health services and lifelong learning opportunities, and formal and informal support networks."

For more information: [World Population Prospects](#)

Watch the launch of the 2019 Revision of the World Population Prospects live on 17 June, at 12 noon EDT on webtv.un.org



Global economic growth projections revised downward to 2.7% in 2019 and 2.9% in 2020

The global economy is experiencing a broad-based growth slowdown amid unresolved trade tensions, high international policy uncertainty, and softening business confidence, according to UN DESA's World Economic Situation and Prospects

(WESP) as of mid-2019 report, released in New York on 21 May 2019.

The forecast for weaker global growth casts a shadow over efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which has set universal goals for eliminating poverty, promoting prosperity and social well-being while protecting the environment. Weaker economic growth puts at risk essential investments in areas such as education, health, climate change adaptation and sustainable infrastructure.

According to the report, the growth outlook in all major developed economies and most developing regions has weakened due to a confluence of both domestic and external factors. Following an expansion of 3.0 per cent in 2018, world gross product growth is now projected to moderate to 2.7 per cent in 2019 and 2.9 per cent in 2020, reflecting a downward revision from the forecasts released in January.

"If we look back six months ago, we saw that growth had already started to slow, but some of the risks that were highlighted at that time have now materialized," said Dawn Holland, Chief of the Global Economic Monitoring Branch in UN DESA.

The report identifies several downside risks that could trigger a sharper or more prolonged growth slowdown in the world economy, potentially inflicting significant damage on development progress. These risks include a further escalation in trade tensions, a sudden deterioration in financial conditions, and the accelerating effects of climate change.

"More comprehensive and well-targeted policy responses are needed to tackle the current growth slowdown," said Elliot Harris, UN Chief Economist and Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development. "It is increasingly clear that policies to promote sustainable development will need to look beyond GDP growth and identify new and more robust measures of economic performance that appropriately reflect the costs of inequality, insecurity and climate change."

Dimmed economic outlook for different regions

Across most regions, the economic outlook has dimmed, as also highlighted in the *June Monthly Briefing*. In the United States, GDP growth for this year is projected at 2.3 per cent—down from 2.9 per cent in 2018—as the effects of fiscal stimulus measures wane. As external trade weakened more sharply than expected, the European Union and Japan are projected to grow at a slower pace of 1.5 per cent and 0.8 per cent in 2019, respectively.

While growth in the East and South Asia regions is expected to moderate, the economic outlook remains robust, amid resilient domestic demand. In East Asia, regional GDP growth is projected to moderate slightly from 5.8 per cent in 2018 to 5.5 per cent in both 2019 and 2020. Following growth of 5.7 per cent in 2018, South Asia is forecast to expand by 5.0 per cent in 2019 and 5.8 per cent in 2020.

In contrast, the growth outlook in many of the other regions remains challenging. In Africa, GDP growth is projected at 3.2 per cent in 2019 and 3.7 per cent in 2020, after an expansion of only 2.7 per cent in 2018. These growth rates are insufficient to absorb a fast-growing labour force. The creation of decent jobs represents a crucial challenge to make further progress in poverty reduction. Several sub-Saharan African economies have poverty rates that are among the highest in the world.

Meanwhile, Western Asia's growth forecast for 2019 has been revised down from 2.4 per cent to 1.7 per cent, reflecting lower oil sector output in Saudi Arabia and a sharp decline in industrial production in Turkey. For the economies of the Commonwealth of Independent States, external conditions, including non-oil commodity prices, may be less supportive in 2019. Growth is expected to moderate slightly, especially as fiscal policies are largely growth-neutral, and several countries have tightened monetary conditions.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the economic recovery has lost momentum, with regional GDP projected to expand by only 1.1 per cent in 2019, following estimated growth of 0.9 per cent in 2018. Economic activity in late 2018 and early 2019 was weaker than expected, particularly in some of the region's largest countries, including Argentina, Brazil and Mexico.

Persistently high trade tensions a threat to global growth

Amid unresolved trade disputes and higher tariffs, the projected growth of world trade has been revised downwards to 2.7 per cent in 2019, slowing markedly from 3.6 per cent in 2018. The report warns that a spiral of additional tariffs and retaliations could have significant spillovers on the developing countries, particularly those with a high export exposure to the impacted economies. A more protracted period of weak international trade activity could also harm investment prospects and adversely affect productivity growth in the medium term.

Carbon pricing a key element in combating climate change

The increase in frequency and intensity of natural disasters highlight the rising threats from climate change, particularly for the most vulnerable economies. The report calls for a stronger and more coordinated multilateral approach to global climate policy, which includes the use of carbon pricing mechanisms. A price on carbon compels economic decisionmakers to internalize some of the environmental costs of their consumption and production. The report documents an increasing use of internal CO₂ prices by the private sector. This not only results in higher energy efficiency and cost savings, but also leaves firms better prepared for expected policy changes.

For more regional economic highlights, please check out the June Monthly Briefing on the World Economic Situation and Prospects, available [here](#) [available on 3 June].

For more information: [World Economic Situation and Prospects as of mid-2019](#)

Step by step – working towards sustainable development for all



Our world is facing mounting challenges that no one country can face alone. By connecting global policies and national action in the economic, social and environmental areas, UN DESA works with nations across the globe to find solutions to many of the world's most pressing problems. Guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the department helps countries in their efforts to achieve sustainable development for all.

This year alone, the department is bringing the global community together for several high-level events aimed at accelerating action for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and boosting positive change. It kicks off with the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development on 9-18 July and continues in September during UN high-level week with the SDG Summit (24-25 September), the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development (26 September) and the Samoa Pathway High-level Mid-term Review (27 September).

Counting everyone, because everyone counts

UN DESA does much more than bringing countries together. The department is a key provider of essential data, information and analysis for the international community to make informed decisions on development issues.

UN DESA keeps track of the world population to help countries plan and to make sure everyone is counted. Where is the population growing the fastest? How are population trends affecting the achievement of the SDGs? The global community will find out on 17 June 2019, when the department will launch its biennial report on the latest demographic trends, the World Population Prospects 2019.

Similarly, UN DESA collects and analyzes data, working closely with national statistical offices around the globe to strengthen statistical capacities, ensuring that no one is left uncounted. Based on this thorough work, the department leads the preparation of the annual Sustainable Development Goals Progress Report, tracking advancements and

identifying gaps in our global efforts to achieve the SDGs. Stay tuned for the next SDG Progress Report to be launched on 9 July 2019.

Ahead of the curve

In a similar fashion, and looking through a sustainable development lens, the department monitors and analyzes global economic trends as well as new frontier technologies, often staying ahead of the curve. This was the case in the 1980s when UN DESA warned about the debt crisis and in the late 2000s when the department cautioned about the factors that led to the financial crisis.

The latest global economic trends were revealed in the *World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP)* as of mid-2019 launched on 21 May. The report finds that high trade tensions and policy uncertainty continue to damage the prospects of economic growth. The department also shares regular updates on the global economy in the WESP monthly briefings.

Home of sustainable development

Within the UN system, UN DESA is the place where every SDG finds a home and where all actors can do their part to make sure we leave no one behind. The department leads the preparations for the annual review of the goals at the HLPF every July, supports Member States as they prepare to present their *Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)* at this event, and we also provide the platforms where international actors can forge new partnerships and initiatives to spur further action on the goals. UN DESA also made a call asking the international community to share their SDG good practices and success stories. And the results are in, showcasing more than 400 projects in the department's searchable database.

UN DESA also helps build capacities on the ground. Together with partners, the department supports more than 75 countries in building integrated, evidence-based, inclusive and well-funded national strategies and plans to implement the SDGs. Moreover, the department also works to secure financing for the goals.

Reaching those who are furthest behind first

To realize the promise of the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind, we need to reach the furthest behind first. UN DESA leads the way to make this happen. The department is a leading voice to promote inclusion, reduce inequalities and eradicating poverty.

This June for example, the department is organizing the 12th session of the *Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Tune in on 11-13 June via UN Web TV to follow our work protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

Whether by organizing major events, tracking SDG data, taking the pulse of socioeconomic trends or cutting-edge issues, or helping countries build capacity, UN DESA is there to support the international community. Step by step, the department works towards sustainable development for all.

Learn more about UN DESA's work in our new pamphlet.

It is time to “circle back” and transform the planet

SDG BLOG



Joyce Msuya, Acting Executive Director
UN Environment



By Joyce Msuya, Acting Executive Director, UN Environment Programme

In India, a young entrepreneur is turning hundreds of tons of flower waste from temples into organic incense sticks, made by women. A simple, cost-effective innovation is helping generate employment, protecting our water bodies and encouraging more research into environment-friendly alternatives. In Burkina Faso, an initiative to repurpose plastic waste into clothes and other items has reduced plastic waste in dumpsites in the city of Koudougou by one-third and improved sanitation.

We have just concluded a record-breaking UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi. Close to 5,000 delegates from more than 170 countries demonstrated a global political will to urgently tackle environmental challenges including the need to transform the environmental footprints of the world’s consumers and to promote the kinds of innovations I have outlined in India and Burkina Faso.

These innovations challenge the very basis of how we treat our planet. We can no longer grow now and clean up later. We have reached the planet’s limits and, as the UN Secretary-General recently reminded us, we simply cannot negotiate with nature.

But innovations also represent some good news. When we “circle back” and see value in what we discard, everybody wins: we protect nature, build livelihoods and improve the health of people. In 2017, humanity used an estimated 90 billion tons of resources. More than 50 per cent of that was dispersed or emitted as waste, while less than 10 per cent was cycled back into the economy.

The food we waste every year, due to damp warehouses, delayed shipments, or consumers who forget their leftovers in the back of the fridge – is enough to feed the world’s hungry four times over. That’s no small matter, given that we’ll probably have another two billion mouths to feed by 2050.

Our piles of discarded smartphones, washing machines, televisions and batteries contain valuable caches of copper, silver, gold, palladium, and other precious resources. But in harvesting this valuable resource, we can generate less carbon emissions than compared to mining the earth for fresh minerals.

And thanks to some innovative thinkers, ocean plastic is now a viable raw material that’s being used to make everything from boats, running shoes, sunglasses, skateboards to carpet tiles.

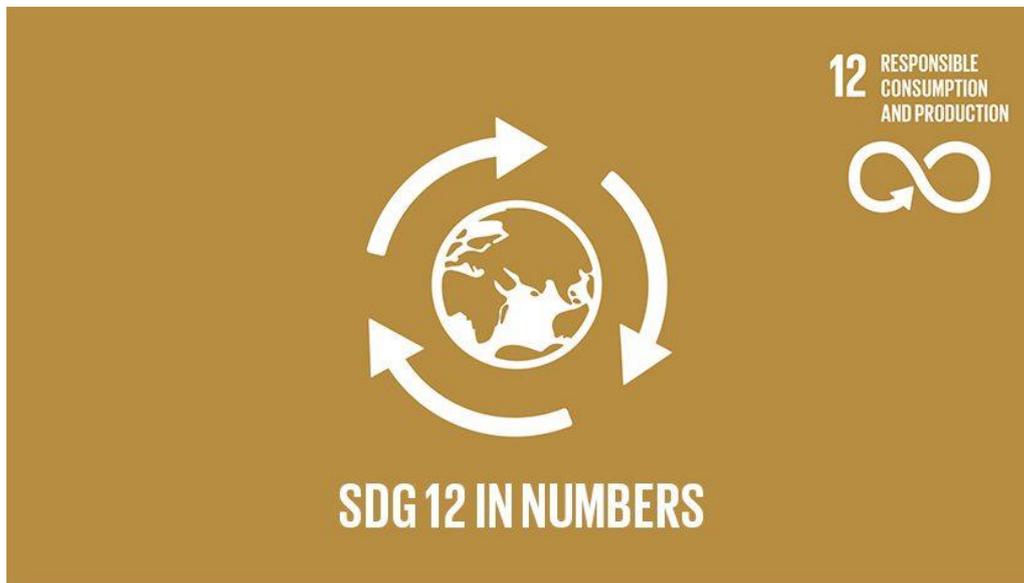
If countries deliver on all that was agreed in Nairobi and implement the resolutions, we could take a big step towards a new world order where we no longer grow at the expense of nature but instead see people and planet thrive together.

Someone very wise once said, “the best way to predict the future is to create it.”

So, what does this mean practically for us? It means altering consumption habits and confronting conundrums like the fact that meat and dairy products use an overwhelming majority of farmland but constitute only a fraction of the calories we consume. It means governments investing heavily in sustainable solutions that restore nature and regenerate the biosphere. It means consumers holding companies accountable to invest in better and sustainable materials, processes and infrastructure. And it means being kinder to the environment in how we extract resources from nature.

Science has sounded a red alert and painted a future that we simply do not want. 2019 is a year of both urgency and opportunity and chance for all of us to transform the planet!

SDG 12 in numbers



How societies use and manage their natural resources fundamentally shapes their quality of life and the health of their environment. The world continues to use more and more natural resources. Decoupling economic growth from resource use is one of the most critical and complex challenges facing humanity today. A shift towards more sustainable consumption and production patterns will require strong national public policies, sustainable consumer behavior, and a transformation of business practices along global value chains.



In 2017, worldwide material consumption reached 92.1 billion metric tons, up from 87 billion in 2015 and a whopping 254 per cent increase from the 27 billion in 1970, with the rate of extraction accelerating every year since 2000.

The material footprint per capita is used to measure the amount of raw material extracted to meet a person's need. The

“material footprint” per capita in developing countries grew from 5 metric tons in 2000 to 9 metric tons in 2017, but it is still less than half of the value for developed countries (close to 23 metric tons in 2017).

For all categories of materials, developed countries have at least twice the per capita footprint of developing countries. In particular, the material footprint for fossil fuels is more than four times higher for developed than developing countries.



Globally by 2018,
108 countries
had national
policies on
sustainable
consumption
and production

About one third of the food produced in the world for human consumption every year gets lost or wasted, the majority in developed countries.



93 per cent of the
world's 250 largest
companies are now
reporting
on sustainability

By 2018, a total of 108 countries had national policies and initiatives relevant to sustainable consumption and production.

According to a recent report from KPMG, 93 per cent of the world's 250 largest companies (in terms of revenue) are now reporting on sustainability, as are three

quarters of the top 100 companies in 49 countries.

Playing with genes: The good, the bad and the ugly



Genetic technologies—the ability to manipulate and transform the properties of cells, seeds, plants, animals and even humans—are pushing the frontiers of science and offering us new hope for increasing food production, curing disease and improving the quality of life. While the upsides of genetic technologies are promising, we also need to consider the consequences—the bad, and even the ugly.

The good

We now have the knowledge and tools to address some of the most protracted challenges facing humanity, including health challenges that affect millions of people around the world. In the fight against malaria, genetic technologies are being used to develop new vaccines and enable “gene drives” that specifically target the parasite-carrying mosquitoes. The possibility of developing an effective vaccine to a disease contracted by 200 million people each year or eradicating it completely presents an enormously exciting prospect.

In food production, genetic technologies are helping farmers increase production and overcome the risk of drought, floods, and pests. There are commercially available genetically modified crops that are resistant to pests, herbicides, and to viral disease. Flood-resistant rice varieties are helping millions of farmers in South Asia, allowing higher crop yields and enhancing food security.

The bad

On the flip side, we are observing a growing “genomics divide” between those that can afford cutting-edge genetic technologies and those who cannot and are consequently left behind. Firms in developed countries own the rights to most of the innovations in genetic technologies. Furthermore, genetic therapies—one application of genetic technology—are mostly developed for rare diseases and come at high costs, ranging from \$373,000 to \$1 million per patient per year, making them unaffordable for most people. Clearly very few people have the means or the insurance coverage necessary to take advantage of these therapies.

In agriculture, public concern is mostly focused on the rapid spread of genetically modified organisms (GMO) in the food chain, their safety and sustainability, that the gains and risks are shared equitably, and that cultural and religious beliefs are respected.

The ugly

It is not hard to imagine how genetic editing can turn ugly. Despite significant improvements, gene editing is still imprecise, which could lead to inadvertent changes to the genome. There are also concerns over the unknown, long-term safety of gene editing.

There are growing concerns regarding germline editing—modifications that can be inherited by an unborn child. In the case of germline editing of unborn children, an important question arises, that is, what constitutes informed consent? How can a future person have a voice on genetic changes that will affect them throughout their lives, and perhaps passed on to their offspring?

There is also the possibility of unforeseen ecological changes with genetic targeting of plants and animals, which may destroy an entire species or disrupt ecological balance.

The future

Genetic modification clearly demands careful consideration from policymakers, academics, private companies, and civil society. Technological advances in this area are moving faster than the regulatory capacity of most governments. Recently, scientists have joined together to call on the Member States to move swiftly to strengthen the global regulatory framework and minimize the risks of genetic technologies.

Many stakeholders would also like to see the Member States agree on a moratorium on human germline editing until the world can agree on common norms and standards. The Director-General of the World Health Organization has already responded to these

concerns, establishing in March this year a new advisory committee to develop global standards for governance and oversight of human genome editing.

The Food and Agriculture Organization is another UN entity likely to play a key role in supporting the Member States in developing and adopting common norms and standards for applying genetic technologies in food production. In addition, there will be need for the Member States in the General Assembly and ECOSOC to further discuss the possible implications of genetic technologies on inequality in income, opportunities and outcomes within and across countries.

For more information: [Frontier Technology Quarterly](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

6-7 June, New York	ECOSOC Management Segment
11-13 June, New York	Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 12th Session
11-13 June, New York	2nd Meeting of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics
24-26 June, Baku	UN Public Service Forum and Awards Ceremony 2019
24-26 June, Geneva	ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment

FIND US ALSO ON:



© United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
[Unsubscribe](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Copyright](#)