



Fulfilling the promise of globalization

Advancing sustainable development in an interconnected world*

Globalization has significantly influenced global growth and sustainable development over the past decades. Driven by the mobility of goods, services, capital, labour and technology, it has unleashed a wide array of opportunities – as well as new challenges – for realizing sustainable development. To ensure that no one is left behind, emerging challenges need to be addressed, and globalization needs to be managed to support inclusive economic growth and sustainable development.

“Globalization has enabled economic growth and poverty reduction for some. Yet to fully achieve sustainable development, globalization has to work for all.”

THREE EMERGING MEGA-TRENDS

Today, three large and sustained global shifts with the power to shape the future are significantly influencing globalization. These so-called mega-trends include: a shift in production and labour markets which requires new jobs and skillsets; rapid advances in technology; and climate change.

Global shifts in production and labour markets have spurred deep changes in both developing and developed countries. Driven by both the outsourcing of manufacturing to lower-wage countries and advances in labour-replacing robotics and mechanization, these shifts are expected to mostly benefit high-tech sectors, while leading to job-losses in other, predominantly manufacturing, sectors. These trends in labour markets are also associated with higher rates of income inequality, which has increased in a majority of countries across the globe. Rising inequality has fueled discontent and is threatening to undermine institutional frameworks at national, regional and global levels.

Closely related to the shifts in production and labour markets is the **rapid advance of technological change**, including Artificial Intelligence, which has been particularly relevant in the context of the changing nature of work. In this new age of rapidly advancing technology, knowledge and information exchange using ICTs and networks have become increasingly important. Nonetheless, the digital divide continues to persist in terms of access to information and communication technology between and within countries. Further innovations may risk leaving behind countries and populations that have limited access to new technologies. Innovations in communication technologies, including social networks are playing an important role in shaping citizen’s opinions and challenging traditional governance structures.

The third megatrend is **climate change**. An increasing body of evidence points to globalization as contributing factor to climate change. Trends associated with globalization, including certain forms of economic activity, lifestyle changes and urbanization, are key factors that drive an increased demand for natural resources, spurring environmental degradation.

“The greatest threats to the wellbeing of people and planet, including from recent emerging trends, are global in nature. Addressing them requires concerted global action.”

*This policy brief is largely based on the Report of the Secretary-General ([A/72/301](#)) on the role of the United Nations in promoting development in the context of globalization and interdependence. It will be considered by the Second Committee of the General Assembly on 17 October 2017.

THE ROLE OF THE UN IN MAKING GLOBALIZATION WORK FOR ALL

To achieve sustainable development, globalization must work for all. As the opportunities, challenges and risks of globalization are highly inter-related, a broad framework is needed to address them. Globalization trends have led to calls for more effective multilateral cooperation to ensure that its effects do not threaten peoples' livelihoods, or the sustainability of the planet.

Global agreements can play a key role. The 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) and the Paris Agreement together represent a normative action plan to address many of the challenges associated with globalization. A wide range of the challenges of globalization are addressed normatively through the Sustainable Development Goals and targets embodied in the 2030 Agenda and the AAAA. The Agenda addresses a wide range of issues that are key to a fairer and more sustainable future, particularly in SDG1 on poverty eradication, SDG8 on decent work, SDG9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure, SDG10 on reducing inequality, SDG12 on sustainable consumption and production and SDG 13 on climate change, among others.

“The United Nations and other international institutions have a strong role in setting norms: the 2030 Agenda, AAAA and Paris Agreement represent a roadmap to address globalization challenges.”

Beyond global and regional policy frameworks, country level policies play an integral role, based on strong national institutions and governance systems. The United Nations can support Member States to devise country-specific policy approaches to globalization. To complement efforts at the national level, there is a need to enhance the coherence, governance and consistency of the international trading, financial and monetary systems, including continuing to improve global economic management and strengthen the UN support to sustainable development.

Future policy frameworks need to address all major areas relating to globalization, including trade, investment, technology, employment, international tax cooperation, migration, regional and development cooperation and climate change. Existing policy frameworks, including those in the realm of the UN development system, need to be recognized as contributing to addressing challenges associated with globalization and strengthened to match the speed of technological change and growing interdependence of markets and societies.

KEY MESSAGES AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The greatest challenges to the well-being of people and the planet are global in nature and thus require global solutions, supported by effective and relevant global institutions.
- Globalization can enable inclusive growth and poverty reduction and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. However, important challenges remain in relation to emerging mega-trends.
- Sustainable development and peace and security are inextricably linked. To foster peace, globalization needs to be equitable and sustainable. Peaceful societies represent a precondition for human well-being.
- Inclusive, transparent and effective multilateral approaches are needed to manage globalization. Global institutional and normative frameworks are necessary to ensure that globalization leaves no one behind.
- The United Nations and other international institutions have a strong normative role to play to ensure that globalization works for all. The 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change represent a normative road map to address the challenges of globalization.
- The challenges of globalization are unique to each country. The United Nations can support Member States in devising country-specific approaches based on strong national institutions and governance to manage, among others, the challenges of rapid technological change, including Artificial Intelligence.

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