



## **United Nations General Assembly Informal dialogue on building resilience and promoting sustainable development through infrastructure connectivity**

Thursday, 18 April 2024, 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
General Assembly Hall, UN Headquarters

During the Sustainability Week, the President of the General Assembly will convene a one-day informal dialogue to focus on building global resilience and promoting sustainable development through infrastructure connectivity, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 77/282.

Resilient, reliable, and sustainable infrastructure can boost global resilience to future crises, reduce inequalities and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The scale of the COVID-19 pandemic, magnifying geopolitical tensions and climate change have worsened inequalities and hindered implementation of the SDGs. In the current context, it is evident that resilient infrastructure is key to ensuring the continuity of daily lives and essential services in times of major disruptions.

Persistent infrastructure gaps exacerbate global inequalities, disproportionately impacting vulnerable regions and communities, and hindering collective progress towards equally achieving the SDGs and fostering sustainable development. Meanwhile, more frequent and intense hazards are creating significant infrastructure system damage and service disruption, estimated to cost over US\$ 700 billion annually.

The world is at a crossroads in harnessing the potential of infrastructure connectivity. It has been estimated that US\$ 4.2 trillion can be saved by investing in more resilient infrastructure due to reduced losses and damages, and lower recovery costs post-disaster. For the SDGs to be achieved, and for a low-carbon, climate-resilient future to be unlocked, US\$ 6.9 trillion per year must be invested by 2030. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement call for sustainable and resilient infrastructure to mitigate the effects of climate change and to future-proof existing assets.

Reliable and sustainable infrastructure can set countries towards a development path marked by reduced infrastructure damage, minimized systemic risk, and fast-paced progress towards the SDGs. This will require an unprecedented scale up of investments from both the public and private sectors. Delaying this process will only increase the costs and lead to stagnant development, abandoned infrastructure assets, and escalating existential risk. Promoting and facilitating sustainable development through regional and interregional infrastructure connectivity will allow for a fast-streamed attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development across both developed and developing countries.

Least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS) grapple with specific geographical constraints and resource limitations that require tailored solutions. The annual cost of infrastructure damages in SIDS can reach almost 10% of their entire GDP. LDCs are also facing greater challenges related to infrastructure connectivity as 75% of the population in LDCs lacks reliable access to electricity. While investment is needed across the board, LDCs and LLDCs require a specific focus on transit transport connectivity and energy infrastructure whereas SIDS have an urgent need for climate-resilient infrastructure projects. Overall, the infrastructure financing gap in vulnerable developing countries including the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS is estimated to be over \$1 trillion annually.

Transport infrastructure provides concrete examples of how connectivity can enable resilience and sustainability. Transport infrastructure — maritime transport in particular which carries more than 80% of the world merchandise trade by volume — is the backbone linking supply chains, delivering international trade, connecting world economies, supporting food security and enabling the flow of energy commodities. Transport connectivity can determine countries' trade competitiveness and ability to participate in global supply chains. More frequent and intensified disruptions of recent years have exposed the vulnerability of transport infrastructure and logistics operations to shocks and underscored the need for building the sustainability and resilience of transport infrastructure and logistics. In addition to disruptions caused by the pandemic, policy tensions and geopolitical risks, disruptive climatic factors such as extreme weather events are of particular concern for transport infrastructure and services. Helping transport infrastructure managers and other relevant entities, especially SIDS in assessing climate-related impacts and adaptation options in relation to coastal transport infrastructure is imperative. In some SIDS, transport asset losses represent up to 46% of total non-agricultural annual asset losses from hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, and floods. In this context, establishing a structured framework for the assessment of climate-related impacts with a view to identifying priorities for adaptation and effective adaptation planning for critical coastal transport infrastructure is crucial for transport infrastructure connectivity and resilience.

Financing strategies that mainstream resilience, targeted investments, and robust means of implementation are all needed to see a meaningful increase in global infrastructure resilience. Infrastructure investment plans are inextricably linked to addressing several interconnected crises such as biodiversity loss, climate change, pollution and desertification, energy and food security, and in strengthening resilience to future crises. The international community must recognize the central role of quality, resilient, reliable and sustainable infrastructure for governments in delivering the SDGs and the objectives of the 2030 Agenda, promoting economic recovery, creating employment, and reducing the systemic risk of cascading failure during and after disasters.

Enhanced regional and interregional infrastructure connectivity is a key means to respond to crises, prepare for future risks and build resilience. Closer multilateral cooperation and stronger regional connectivity in the fields of science, education, finance, technology, and innovation are essential to enhance infrastructure resilience in transport, energy, and digital infrastructure. There is a need for a risk-informed approach to the development and management of resilient infrastructure to ensure that existing and new infrastructure systems are better prepared to absorb, respond, recover and adapt to current, emerging and future shocks and disruptions.

## **Objectives**

The informal dialogue aims to generate momentum and raise ambition on proposals to contribute to enhancing investments in quality, reliable, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure, including a risk-informed approach to infrastructure development and management. It also aims to create a platform to share best practices and strategies to enhance collaboration and partnerships within and between regions and regional and interregional challenges faced and to engage on means of implementation including innovative financing mechanisms and partnerships to support improved connectivity, resiliency, and quality of infrastructure systems.

## **Format**

The dialogue will consist of an opening, plenary segment and two multistakeholder panels. The dialogue will be open to Member States, Observers, United Nations system, ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations, and other relevant stakeholders.

## **Plenary**

The plenary segment will highlight Member States' perspectives on building global resilience and promoting sustainable development through infrastructure connectivity including the critical factors that have facilitated advancements in infrastructure connectivity, as well as primary challenges being faced. To this end, participants are encouraged to highlight new commitments, pledges or declarations in infrastructure connectivity and progress in existing initiatives.

## **Multistakeholder Panel 1 - Bridging the Gap: Challenges and Best Practices to Forge a Resilient Future through Infrastructure Connectivity.**

This panel will discuss the bottlenecks in achieving infrastructure connectivity and explore best practices in infrastructure connectivity. It will highlight region-specific challenges and the critical enablers that result in impactful, resilient, and sustainable infrastructure initiatives. The discussion will explore measures and policies essential for ensuring inclusive and sustainable access to infrastructure for all, aligning with principles

of social and environmental responsibility and the reduction of inequalities, and the role of international cooperation in ensuring that the development of resilient infrastructure aligns with broader sustainability and resilience goals while improving regional and interregional connectivity.

Guiding Questions:

1. What lessons can be learned from integrated approaches to environmental sustainability, resilience, and connectivity? What good practices can be shared on involving regional and local governments in the planning and implementation of infrastructure projects?
2. How can the international community better collaborate to promote the exchange of best practices and overcome the challenges in infrastructure connectivity, across regions and in countries most vulnerable to climate change and economic challenges?
3. How does infrastructure connectivity influence economic recovery, job creation, and addressing inequalities, especially in the context of the interconnected crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and desertification?
4. What measures and policies are needed to ensure affordable and equitable access to infrastructure for all, considering the principles of inclusivity as well as economic, social and environmental sustainability?

### **Multistakeholder Panel 2 – Achieving Infrastructure Resilience through partnership, solidarity, and innovation.**

The panel 2 will explore the means of implementation to support investment in resilient infrastructure including innovative finance mechanisms options, public-private partnerships, and blended finance models. It will delve into the collaboration between international financial institutions and the private sector to scale up investments in resilient infrastructure projects, with a focus on groups of countries facing unique challenges. The panel aims to identify the systems and mechanisms to support various phases of infrastructure connectivity and examine the role of international cooperation in addressing challenges and vulnerabilities in global supply chains within the context of infrastructure connectivity.

Guiding Questions:

1. What strategies can be implemented to bridge the infrastructure investment gap and ensure sustainable and resilient development?

2. What innovative financing mechanisms, such as blended finance models, have shown promising results in mobilizing resources for sustainable infrastructure development?
3. In what ways can international financial institutions, development partners and private sector actors collaborate to scale up investments in resilient infrastructure projects, particularly in regions facing unique challenges, such as LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS?
4. What role can international cooperation play in facilitating investment while addressing the challenges and vulnerabilities in global supply chains, particularly in the context of infrastructure connectivity?

### **Outcome**

An informal summary of the President of the General Assembly will be circulated to all Member States and Observers.

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