



UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Sustainability Week

United Nations
General
Assembly

Sustainability
Week

15-19 April 2024

General
Assembly Hall,
UNHQ New York



PAVING THE WAY FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

As we passed the critical milestone of the mid-point in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, impactful transformation remains central to the ongoing efforts to advance all three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic, and environmental – to achieve peace, prosperity, progress, and sustainability for all. Among others, COVID-19, conflicts, geopolitical tensions, and humanitarian crises in various parts of the world have posed severe challenges to these efforts and derailed implementation of the SDGs by 2030. Building on the momentum gained from the September 2023 SDG Summit is important in effectively tackling the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

Now, as we set our attention on the Summit of the Future in September 2024, sustainability is more than ever key for critical sectors of the economy to meaningfully contribute to a prosperous future for present and future generations. The foundation of the future of commerce must be marked by environmental responsibility. We must promote sustainable production and consumption in every facet of human existence. Economic prosperity is intertwined with sustainability. Sustainable business models must, therefore, be promoted in all economic activities.

Sustainability also means ensuring that the benefits of progress are shared equitably, *leaving no one behind*. The debt crisis – a development crisis – has further exacerbated the socio-economic disparities in the world. Therefore, addressing debt sustainability as an avenue to improve socio-economic equality should be central to the focus on building a sustainable future. Sustainable transportation, infrastructure, tourism, and energy as well as debt sustainability are all critical avenues to attaining such a future.

In this regard, the President of the General Assembly for its seventy-eighth session, H.E. Mr. Dennis Francis, will convene the following meetings as part of the first-ever Sustainability Week, at United Nations Headquarters in New York:

- Monday, 15 April at 3 p.m.
- Tuesday, 16 April at 10 a.m.
- Wednesday, 17 April at 10 a.m.
- Thursday, 18 April 18 at 10 a.m.

- Friday, 19 April at 10 a.m.

High-level thematic debate on debt sustainability and socio-economic equality for all

High-level thematic event on tourism

High-level meeting on sustainable transport

Informal dialogue on building global resilience and promoting sustainable development through infrastructure connectivity

Global stocktaking marking the completion of the UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All to further accelerate the implementation of SDG 7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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United Nations General Assembly High-level thematic debate on debt sustainability and socio-economic equality for all

Monday, 15 April 2024, 3 p.m. - 6 p.m.
General Assembly Hall, UN Headquarters

Concept Note

In 2023, the global public debt amounted to US\$235 trillion or 313% of global gross domestic product (GDP) - 9 percentage points higher than 2019. Rising debt levels have hindered economic growth and exacerbated poverty and inequality. As his signature event during the first-ever Sustainability Week, the President of the General Assembly for the seventy-eighth session will convene a high-level thematic debate on debt sustainability and socio-economic equality for all.

In recent years, several global shocks have destabilised economies, disrupted international trade, and ignited global inflation. Likewise, other global challenges including the increasing adverse impacts of climate change, sea-level rise, extreme weather events and natural disasters have adversely affected countries, particularly developing countries. These cascading crises in recent years have also contributed to unprecedented levels of global public debt.

Public debt has increased faster in developing countries than in developed countries over the last decade, with external debt stocks of developing countries reaching an alarming US\$11.4 trillion. For developing countries in special situations: the total public debt for least developed countries (LDCs) stood at US\$344 billion; the total public debt for landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) stood at US\$ 704 billion and; the total public debt for small island developing states (SIDS) stood at US\$ 82 billion.

The unsustainable debt burden in these countries has translated into limited access to development financing, increased poverty and inequality, currency devaluations and sluggish economic growth. In developing countries, the soaring debt service continues to constrain the fiscal space needed to finance sustainable development. This debt crisis is a development crisis.

Increasingly stringent financial conditions and an inequitable international financial architecture have contributed to higher external borrowing costs, which make it more difficult for developing countries to pay for external debt servicing; pushing more countries towards debt distress and undermining their debt sustainability and their progress towards sustainable development. For instance, African countries borrow, on average, at rates four times higher than the United States and even eight times higher than those of Germany.

Furthermore, high debt servicing costs divert already limited financial resources away from poverty alleviation, and social protection programmes, perpetuating cycles of poverty and socio-economic inequality. This debt crisis is costly. Inevitably, people are paying the price.

To service debt obligations, developing countries are cutting public spending, including on health and education, affecting the poor and vulnerable. In Africa, the amount spent on interest payments is higher than the amount spent on health and education combined. Over the past decade, interest payments in Africa have increased by 132%, and nearly 57% of the African population, or about 751 million people, live in countries that spend more on interest payments than in the sectors mentioned. In Latin America and the Caribbean, governments are spending more on interest payments rather than on critical investments. In some countries, these payments surpassed the spending on education by almost 60%. Likewise, with limited fiscal space, investments in sustainable transport, infrastructure, and energy in developing countries are equally affected.

High debt burdens of developing countries contribute to the inequality between and within countries. As of 2023, progress on SDG 10 to reduce inequality within and among countries is lagging behind. 10% of the world population owns 76% of the global wealth. Rising levels of socio-economic inequality, manifested in income inequality, inequality of opportunity and access to quality education and health care as well as universal social protection, amongst others, continue to have a devastating impact on countries and societies. These rising inequalities are holding back progress towards most SDGs, especially poverty eradication, good health, and social and climate action. Urgent and decisive action is required to reduce economic inequality and ensure more inclusive growth. High levels of inequality can contribute significantly to the generation of and increase in private debt, which can lead to financial crises and have consequences on sovereign debt.

SDG 10.6 calls for enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions. The Political Declaration adopted at the SDG Summit in 2023 further called for reform of the international financial architecture including its international financial institutions and multilateral development banks to be better fit for purpose and to strengthen the voice of developing countries in global economic governance. The reform of the international financial architecture is imperative to address systemic and structural issues that contribute to debt vulnerabilities.

As we look ahead to the Summit of the Future, multilateral action and coordination by all creditors to address the debt crisis are paramount. This includes supporting debt relief initiatives for developing countries facing acute debt distress.

Objectives

This high-level thematic debate aims to take stock of the gaps and bottlenecks in achieving debt sustainability and the implications for the most vulnerable, particularly in developing countries. It also aims to identify key local, national, and international solutions through enhanced partnerships and ambitious initiatives that strive to achieve socio-economic equality for all.

Format

The high-level thematic debate will comprise an opening segment, a fireside chat, a high-level plenary, and a closing segment. The meeting will be open to Member States and Observers, the United Nations system, ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations, and other relevant stakeholders.

Outcome

The President of the General Assembly will circulate an informal summary of the high-level thematic debate.



United Nations General Assembly High-Level Thematic Event on Tourism

Tuesday, 16 April 2024, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
General Assembly Hall, UN Headquarters, New York

Concept Note

As part of the Sustainability Week, the High-level Thematic Event on Tourism will be convened by the President of the General Assembly for the seventy-eighth session, in cooperation with UN Tourism, and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 77/178 entitled “Promotion of sustainable and resilient tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environmental protection”, as well as resolution 77/269 entitled “Global Tourism Resilience Day”.

As one of the largest sectors in the world, tourism is a major driver of economic growth, and social and cultural development, as well as an important contributor of decent job creation and entrepreneurship for all. For many developing countries, the tourism sector is a major source of employment, foreign currency earnings and tax revenues. In small island developing states (SIDS), tourism accounts for nearly 35% of all exports, reaching in some cases as much as 80% of national exports¹. It can be a great source of income to national economies and help eradicate poverty by creating employment opportunities, improve economic livelihoods in local communities, and facilitating socio-economic progress. It can also advance the empowerment of women, and other disadvantaged groups including indigenous communities, as well as generate economic opportunities for youth and people living in remote areas, while preserving tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

The year 2023 marked the midway point on the journey for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. However, the current poly-crisis have hampered the world’s capacity to deliver on its commitments. While tourism is explicitly included in targets under SDGs 8, 12, and 14, as one of the world’s largest economic sectors, it can significantly contribute to fulfilling all 17 Goals.

According to the UN Tourism, measuring the sustainability of tourism will improve policy action for sustainable development, and promote one common statistical language, which can be compared across countries and economic sectors, as well as ensure tourism is factored into national and international development frameworks. The Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainability of Tourism (SF-MST), the sustainability indicators, form the foundation of a global approach towards evidence-based policies of sustainability of the global tourism sector.

Given the cross-cutting nature of tourism, the sector has strong linkages and a multiplier effect on other sectors, making it a powerful engine of economic growth, poverty eradication, and reducing inequalities among and within countries through jobs, opportunities for disadvantaged groups like youth and women, and community and rural development. Tourism is also a vehicle for cultural exchange and understanding, tolerance, and peace building. It requires a whole-of-government approach, strong public-private sector partnerships, and community engagement. As an economic activity, tourism has a significant advantage as it can be perfectly compatible with cultural and environmental protection -providing valuable income to sustain biodiversity and livelihoods even in remote areas.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which caused a significant reduction in international travel, has exposed the vulnerability of the tourist ecosystem. It revealed the importance of ensuring innovations in tourism for resilience and adaptability as well as the need to ensure sustainable investment opportunities for the sector. Conflicts, geopolitical tensions and ongoing humanitarian crises in various parts of the world further aggravates the economic and political landscape and poses the challenges to the tourism industry.

Objectives

The high-level thematic event on tourism aims to advance a concerted approach on strengthening tourism resilience at the highest level and maximising its contribution to the sustainability agenda. The event offers Member States, Observers, civil society, UN System and other stakeholders a platform to discuss strategies, share best practices and experiences to promote sustainable and resilient tourism and its contribution to achieving SDGs.

Format

The event will comprise an opening, a fireside chat, two high-level plenary segments, two thematic debates and a closing segment. The meeting will be open to the United Nations system, ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

Fireside Chat: The Future of Tourism

The successive natural and man-made crises have improved the awareness and development impact of the tourism sector. At the same time, they have revealed its vulnerability to external shocks and the consequences thereof on economies, societies and our planet while underscoring structural challenges that need to be addressed if we want to boost the resilience of the sector and maximize its contribution to a more inclusive and sustainable future.

New business models and effective partnerships are emerging, calling for appropriate mechanisms to encourage more holistic policies as well as multistakeholder engagement and partnerships. The Fireside Chat will provide opportunities to involve non-state actors, private sector, academia and civil society to discuss how we can harmonize leadership in and of the tourism sector in order to ensure a prosperous and sustainable future.

Thematic debate 1 –Launch of the Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism

The Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainability of Tourism was adopted at the 55th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission held in February 2024. A living example of moving beyond GDP to value what counts, the SF-MST, the sustainability indicators, respond to the information needs of more integrated tourism policy.

The key statistical data and indicators will be measured for three dimensions: economy, society, and environment. In addition, the data and indicators will be measured on a global, national, and sub-national levels. The SF-MST is to provide for a multipurpose conceptual statistical framework, which measures the impacts and dependencies of sustainable tourism.

Pilot studies of the SF-MST have been carried out in over 20 countries and has helped to further strengthen the Framework as well as helped destination managers and policymakers in the countries to develop strategies to enhance sustainable tourism in their respective countries. In the implementation of the SF-MST, there will be more robust data to ensure that sustainable tourism action on the ground really contributes to raising living standards and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Thematic debate 1 aims to launch the framework and provide a platform and give member states the opportunity to discuss the importance of such tools for sustainability in tourism. A commonly agreed evidence-based tool helps to engage with stakeholders across the board to jointly agree on where we stand, where we need to go, and how to get there. Harmonized and trusted data is critical to communicate progress more effectively, benchmark performance, align policy agendas and governance models, and promote innovative business practices and partnerships.

Thematic debate 2 – Fostering Resilient Tourism to facilitate and ensure global sustainability

As the largest industry globally, tourism, makes a substantial contribution to sustainable development. Nevertheless, tourism is intrinsically susceptible to several disruptive occurrences such as climate change, pandemics, cyber-security incidents, terrorism, and political instability and conflict. Therefore, it is crucial to safeguard the worldwide tourism industry by ensuring the resilience of the global tourism ecosystem, including the capacity of tourist destinations to endure shocks, promptly recover from crises, or even

prosper in the face of such difficulties. Developing resilience entails the process of planning, managing, and recovering from adversities. The corona disease (COVID-19) pandemic represents yet another episode in a series of global disruptions that has heightened the attention of global stakeholders to the inherent vulnerability of the tourism sector.

Concurrently, it has underscored the sector's remarkable capacity for rapid recovery and its potential to catalyse economic resurgence with even greater alacrity. It is imperative to investigate methodologies for fostering resilience within the global tourism sector, thereby facilitating and ensuring global sustainability.

During thematic debate 2 Member States will discuss potential strategies for building resilience in the tourism sector including the sector's ability to withstand and recover from various crises. The discussion will also focus on addressing vulnerabilities and risks, funding and investing in resilience and resilience-building frameworks and partnerships.

Outcome

The President of the General Assembly will circulate an informal summary of the high-level thematic event.



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United Nations General Assembly High-level Meeting on Sustainable Transport

Wednesday, 17 April 2024, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
General Assembly Hall, UN Headquarters

Concept Note

As part of the Sustainability Week, and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 77/286, the President of the General Assembly will convene a high-level meeting (HLM) on sustainable transport, in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to promote sustainable transport cooperation in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, the New Urban Agenda and the political declaration of the High-level Meeting on Improving Global Road Safety.

Sustainable transport systems remain crucial for sustainable development. They support economic growth, facilitate global supply chains, including the delivery of goods and services to rural and urban communities, enhance international cooperation and trade, connect people and communities to jobs, schools and health care, and thus provide all with equal opportunities.

Against this backdrop, the General Assembly, in its resolution 78/148, entitled “Strengthening the links between all modes of transport to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals” proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Transport (2026-2035).

Sustainable transport is crucial to address the special needs of countries in special situations by establishing and promoting efficient transport systems that particularly link least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS) more efficiently to international markets and global supply chains. Sustainable transport systems are also critical to empower vulnerable people, including by providing rural communities with access to major roads, rail lines and public and non-motorized transport options that enable access to economic and social activities.

At the same time, accessible, affordable and sustainable transport services are still lacking in many parts of the world, especially in developing countries, constraining mobility and connectivity to regional and global transport networks. Over 1 billion people still lack

access to an all-weather road and adequate transport services. Even where transport infrastructure and systems are present, they may not provide safe, affordable, and convenient access for all, particularly for groups in vulnerable situations such as the women, children and youth, older persons, and persons with disabilities, with the poor often spending one fifth of their income on public transport. Deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents continue to rise, road traffic crashes kill approximately 1.3 million people worldwide annually, with disproportionate burden falling on the healthcare systems and economies in developing countries.

Existing transport networks can also face challenges, such as congestion, poor maintenance, and lack of resilience to disasters, extreme weather events and climate change. It was estimated that additional spending for roads is likely to amount to 2% of GDP in low-income developing countries to meet the SDG objectives, which do not include other components of sustainable transport, such as railways, ports, and mass transit.

There is a need to develop and enhance multimodal transport systems that fully utilize and integrate public transport systems, rail, maritime, inland shipping, ferry, and air transport, as well as non-motorized transport such as cycling and walking. Passenger and freight transport, with different stakeholders, require differentiated policy solutions and investment models.

As maritime transport accounts for over 80%, by volume, of all global freight, it is essential to support countries with the lowest shipping connectivity. These countries often face a vicious cycle, of low trade volumes that discourage investments in transport connectivity, and low connectivity that makes trade even more costly and uncompetitive.

Meanwhile, the international community must remain resolute in addressing some of the challenges caused by transport systems. Transport accounts for about one-quarter of global energy-related carbon dioxide emissions, a share that is rapidly increasing, as more than 90% of its energy is derived from fossil fuels, with shipping contributing 3% of the global emissions. Likewise, air and noise pollution as well as the 'end-of-life' disposal of automobiles and ships continue to pose complex challenges to healthcare systems and to the environment.

The total transport activity will more than double by 2050 compared to 2015 under the trajectory reflecting current efforts. It is an apt time to garner political momentum and engagement, at the highest level, on access to safe, affordable, and sustainable transport systems for all. International cooperation and multistakeholder initiatives remain essential to urgently accelerate the transformation towards sustainable transport in all countries, and the upcoming United Nations Decade of Sustainable Transport provides an opportunity for the global community to consider the required actions to harness the full potential of sustainable transport.

Objective

The high-level meeting will highlight sustainable and effective solutions to improve the balance between economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable transport, to take full advantage of sustainable transport in accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Format

The high-level meeting will consist of an opening, a ministerial segment, an interactive multi-stakeholder panel, and a closing segment. The meeting will be open to Member States and Observers, the United Nations system, ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

Multi-stakeholder Panel: Enhancing intermodal transport connectivity and developing socially inclusive and environmentally friendly transportation.

The panel will discuss intermodal transport policy-design and best-practice to improve passenger journeys and freight movements. The speakers will address how transport infrastructure and services can be made more broadly available, accessible, inclusive and safe, in an environmental manner. It will also discuss the role of international cooperation in promoting sustainable transport systems among countries. Guiding questions:

1. How can efficient multimodal and intermodal transport solutions be used to improve passenger journeys and freight movements? Where do opportunities lie in boosting modal shift to more efficient, sustainable, and green solutions?
2. What can be done to ensure that transport infrastructure and services are beneficial to all, including older persons, persons with disabilities, women, and rural communities?
3. How can sustainable transport policies be integrated into climate change mitigation and adaptation actions? What new innovations and emerging technological solutions can help achieve socially inclusive and environmentally friendly sustainable transport?
4. What is the role of local, regional, and national governments in enhancing sustainable transport, and how can they be empowered to act as agents of change?
5. How can international cooperation be harnessed to develop transport and transit corridors? What role can the United Nations and stakeholders, including the private sector, play to support the development of sustainable transport opportunities?

Outcome

An informal summary of the President of the General Assembly will be submitted as a contribution to the implementation plan for the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Transport and will be circulated to all Member States and Observers to the UN.



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.



United Nations General Assembly Global stocktaking marking the completion of the UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All to further accelerate the implementation of SDG 7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Friday, 19 April 2024, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
General Assembly Hall, UN Headquarters

On the last day of the Sustainability Week, the President of the General Assembly will convene, with support from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and in collaboration with UN-Energy, *“a global stocktaking, marking the completion of the ongoing efforts to implement the plan of action of the Decade, and building on the follow-up to the high-level dialogue on energy, to further accelerate the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 7 of the 2030 Agenda”*, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 77/170 and 78/157.

Facing a worsening climate crisis, spreading conflicts, and a gloomy global economic outlook, it is paramount for the international community to pursue a sustainable and thriving future for all. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remains the clearest blueprint of these aspirations. However, current progress is severely off-track. Energy is an essential ingredient for getting the world on track towards meeting the SDGs and the objectives of the Paris Agreement on climate change. SDG 7, which calls for access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, is inextricably linked to many other SDGs and its targets, including poverty eradication, food security, health, education, prosperity, gender equality, employment, transport, ocean, clean water and sanitation, as well as gender equality and the empowerment of women, youth and children.

Energy transitions are key to achieving the 1.5° Celsius objective of the Paris Agreement on climate change. The UAE Consensus, adopted at the UNFCCC COP 28, has underlined energy’s centrality to climate action, recognizing the need to transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, including by tripling renewable energy capacity globally and doubling the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030. It also calls for ensuring national and international frameworks that address energy poverty or just transitions.

As of 2023, 473 million people in LDCs are without any connection to electricity, accounting for almost two-thirds of the global population lacking access. On average, 60%

of the population in LLDCs have access to electricity as of 2021. Almost half of the 32 LLDCs have achieved 97% of the population living with access; with the low average coverage reflecting the low access rates of LLDCs that are also LDCs. Similarly, SIDS have access rates above 95% as of 2021, with the lowest access rates also reflecting the low rates of SIDS that are also LDCs.

Therefore, realizing just, inclusive and equitable energy transitions is the prerequisite for ensuring that no one will be left behind, including the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS). All stakeholders need to step up to achieve universal energy access and accelerate clean energy transitions in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. Achieving SDG7 will require increased ambition, accelerated implementation, and scaled-up multi-stakeholder partnerships.

The High-level Dialogue on Energy convened by the Secretary-General in 2021 resulted in considerable momentum towards SDG7, including the Global Roadmap for Accelerated SDG7 Action and the Energy Compacts.

At the SDG Summit in September 2023, it was announced that over USD 1.3 trillion had already been mobilized through the Energy Compacts which featured prominently as one of 12 High-Impact Initiatives. However, efforts must be further scaled up and accelerated to ensure effective implementation of the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All (2014–2024), to achieve SDG 7 by 2030, and accelerate action towards net-zero emissions by 2050.

Objectives

The goal of the global stocktaking is to review progress achieved at the end of the UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All, 2014-2024, and to raise ambition and accelerate action towards attaining SDG 7 by catalysing innovative solutions, investments and multi-stakeholder partnerships.

In this context, key questions to be addressed include:

- How can ambitions be further increased and implementation be further accelerated?
- How can multi-stakeholder partnerships be scaled up?
- What will be the appropriate institutional arrangements for continuing to advance international cooperation on energy beyond the UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All?

Further voluntary commitments, including Energy Compacts, will be encouraged in support of closing the energy gap, rapidly transitioning to decarbonized energy systems, addressing energy's interlinkages, and strengthening partnerships and the means of implementation.

Format

The global stocktaking will consist of an opening and closing segments and two thematic debates. The global stocktaking will bring together high-level representatives from Member States and other leaders from all regions. The meeting will be open to the United Nations system, ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations, and other relevant stakeholders.

Thematic Debate 1: Closing the energy access gap and transitioning to decarbonized energy systems

675 million people still lack access to electricity. About 2.3 billion people remain without clean cooking solutions, causing millions of premature deaths annually, disproportionately affecting women. Progress towards ensuring universal access to electricity and clean cooking solutions and technology by 2030 will be reviewed and solutions to closing the remaining energy access gap will be discussed.

While the investment in renewables is outpacing the investment in fossil fuel power plants, much more is required to transition away from fossil fuels as the deployment of renewables is lagging especially in transport, industry, heating and cooling. Discussions will centre on the need for accelerated progress on deep energy decarbonization in support of achieving the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Agreement, including through the tripling of renewable energy capacity globally and the doubling the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030, as well as the phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that do not address energy poverty or just transitions.

Thematic Debate 2: Addressing energy's interlinkages and strengthening means of implementation and partnerships

Progress on SDG7 can produce particularly high co-benefits in other areas of sustainable development, bringing many more development synergies than trade-offs for vulnerable populations. This includes poverty eradication, food security, health, education, prosperity, gender equality, jobs, transport, ocean, water and sanitation, and the empowerment of women and youth. However, co-benefits in these areas do not come about automatically. Discussions will elaborate on cross-sectoral approaches that are required at the level of policy, planning, and implementation. Among other benefits, the implementation of SDG7 could result in millions of new green jobs world-wide.

The need to dramatically scale up international cooperation to catalyse public and private finance and investment to accelerate energy transitions, especially for developing countries as well as vulnerable countries and countries in special situations, including SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs, will be focused on. Discussions will also consider the importance of infrastructure, technology transfer, capacity building and the collection, management and application of data in addressing the digital divide in the energy sector.

Outcome

The President of the General Assembly’s “*Call to Action*” will be launched to further accelerate the implementation of SDG7, focusing on a set of recommended actions and arrangements to follow-up on the Decade with concrete milestones towards 2030, consistent with the net zero goal to be achieved by 2050.

Participation in the Sustainability Week

All Member States and Observers are invited to participate at the highest level possible. Non-governmental organisations in consultative status with ECOSOC are invited to register to participate in each of the meetings by contacting the [NGO Branch of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs](#). Registration details for the UN System representatives will be shared via the forthcoming Information Note.

Member States are encouraged to include in their national delegations to the meetings of the Sustainability Week representatives of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

OPGA Contact Information

For further information on the meetings held during Sustainability Week, the relevant focal points in the Office of the President of the General Assembly can be contacted at the emails below:

Meeting	Focal point	E-mail
High-level thematic debate on debt sustainability and socio-economic equality for all	Vanessa van Dijsseldonk	vanessa.vandijsseldonk@un.org
High-level thematic event on tourism	Vanessa van Dijsseldonk	vanessa.vandijsseldonk@un.org
High-level meeting on sustainable transport	Jun Jiang	jun.jiang1@un.org
Informal dialogue on building global resilience and promoting sustainable development through infrastructure connectivity	Sneha Dubey	sneha.dubey@un.org
Global stocktaking marking the completion of the UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All to further accelerate the implementation of SDG 7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	Bramantya Widodo	bramantya.widodo@un.org