

Key messages from the 2024 Regional Forums on Sustainable Development

Between February and April 2024, the regional commissions convened the regional forums on sustainable development, which serve as intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder platforms to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to generate inputs for the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The 2024 regional forums reviewed progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, provided spaces for peer learning and policy dialogue to accelerate that progress, and convened entities of the United Nations system. In addition, they held sessions dedicated to the Summit of the Future, which enabled stakeholders to highlight regional perspectives and priorities for stronger multilateral cooperation and to underscore the vital role of the regions in implementing the outcomes of the Summit, to be held in New York on 22 and 23 September 2024.



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Common messages of the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development



- Across the five regions, progress on the Sustainable Development Goals is off track. Efforts are needed to accelerate progress, based on innovative policy strategies and the synergistic implementation of multiple Goals, including by leveraging sustainable transitions in key areas, such as green growth sectors, energy sustainability, access and affordability, digital connectivity and transformation, and sustainable food systems.



- In the context of rising debt and fiscal constraints that hinder the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, improving access to financing for development is essential. Efforts are needed to mobilize funding in order to scale up development financing, including for climate resilience, through innovative financing mechanisms and the reform of the international financial architecture, and to address debt pressures, curb illicit financial flows and provide better safety nets during global shocks to countries at all income levels.



- In addition to addressing digital divides, closing skills gaps and incorporating new technologies in productive processes, international cooperation for enhanced digital and data governance, including in the area of artificial intelligence, is crucial to ensuring the inclusive digital transformation of all regions.



- Tackling persistent inequalities, including between women and men, through inclusive social protection, job creation and strategies to address climate vulnerabilities are priority concerns. Moreover, intergenerational solidarity that is both built on youth inclusion and geared towards addressing population ageing is crucial to leaving no one behind.



- Fostering multi-stakeholder engagement in voluntary national review and voluntary local review processes and leveraging the data revolution to strengthen data and statistics capacities are key aspects of supporting evidence-based monitoring and implementation for the Sustainable Development Goals.



- It is essential to capitalize on the Summit of the Future to press for the comprehensive reform and strengthening of the multilateral system with a view to addressing global governance challenges across the development, peace and humanitarian pillars and accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals in developing countries.

Messages from the regions

AFRICA

- The Summit of the Future should be inclusive and ensure the effective participation and stronger voice of Africa and the global South in international decision-making.
- The global financial architecture should be reformed to be fit for purpose and serve the interests of Africa and other developing regions. The policy environment for sustainable finance must be enhanced to accelerate implementation and ensure equitable access to innovative financing and capacity-building for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.
- Metrics beyond gross domestic product, together with accounting methodologies to measure the value of countries' natural capital in Africa and other regions, should be designed and adopted. Statistical systems should be transformed and modernized to enhance access to quality disaggregated data by leveraging the digital revolution, artificial intelligence and the high-impact initiative on the power of data.
- It is vital to redouble efforts to ensure peace as a foundation for security, respect for human dignity and rights, good governance and development, and to strengthen governance and legal frameworks to uphold human rights, enhance transparency and combat illicit financial flows and trafficking in small arms.
- A fair global digital compact should help to bridge digital divides across Africa, construct secure and trusted digital ecosystems and ensure effective global digital governance.
- Efforts should be made to capitalize on the “youth bulge” demographic dividend in Africa by increasing investment in and empowering all children and young people, and by ensuring substantial budget allocations for poverty reduction, gender equality, job creation and the poverty-climate nexus, with special attention to women and young people.
- The vast market of the African Continental Free Trade Area should be leveraged to develop industrial and green-transition value chains and to sustainably harness the continent's natural resources. Fostering innovation in climate financing, just transitions, inclusive carbon markets and regional collaboration, accelerating investments in early warning systems and investing in climate literacy are key to enhanced climate resilience.
- Policies for a business-friendly environment should be refined to uphold the right to food, enhance resilience to climate shocks, leverage technology and foster partnerships for sustainable agriculture.
- Education systems should be reformed to be more entrepreneurial, to better align with societal needs and to enhance the accessibility and security of digital technologies at all education levels.

ARAB STATES

- The Arab States call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, unrestricted access to humanitarian aid and an end to the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in accordance with international law.
- Access to information and communications technology must be maintained in conflict-affected countries. Legislation should be passed to curb the use of these technologies as tools of war. Digital governance should be enhanced, including through the establishment of a global mechanism to certify artificial intelligence data sets and algorithms, in order to avoid perpetuating existing injustices and inequalities and to address any disinformation generated by artificial intelligence.
- Ministries of education and universities are encouraged to establish an institutional framework for programmes and platforms that link formal and non-formal information technology education and training to develop local digital skills that meet national needs.
- The Arab States call for the reform of the international financial architecture, in particular the distribution of special drawing rights, and for enhancing the representation of countries of the global South, including Arab countries, in global financial institutions. They call upon financial institutions to intensify efforts to prioritize climate finance for the least developed countries in the region and to design financing mechanisms that are commensurate with those countries' circumstances.
- Strategic foresight should be integrated into planning processes, and preparedness should be boosted to deal with social and environmental megatrends, such as ageing, geographical mobility and climate change.
- An enabling environment is needed to encourage companies to integrate sustainability into their strategies and operations by streamlining business creation processes, improving access to funds and investments, ensuring basic and accessible infrastructure and reforming tax policies.
- Reliable poverty databases should be developed and well managed, and early warning systems should be established to detect potential poverty crises and enable appropriate proactive measures to be taken.
- Investment in food sovereignty is needed at the regional level and in the global South, rather than at the level of individual countries, and the triple nexus approach to humanitarian, development and peace actions should be activated to achieve food security in countries affected by conflict.
- Anti-corruption legislation should be strictly implemented to foster inclusive and peaceful societies and a culture of ethical conduct and integrity in public administrations to restore confidence in national institutions.



ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

- Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals has been slow and uneven across Asia and the Pacific. At the current pace, the region as a whole will not achieve any of the 17 Goals by 2030.
- Climate change exacerbates poverty and hunger, threatening to reverse sustainable development gains, with vulnerable groups facing disproportionate impacts owing to their limited capacity to adapt and scarce resources. Ambitious climate action, coupled with robust investments in social protection, energy efficiency and renewable energy production and focused on gender equality and access for marginalized groups, is necessary to mitigate the adverse effects of climate-induced disasters and support livelihoods.
- Efforts by member States to ensure policy coherence can accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; voluntary national reviews are instrumental for aligning efforts at all levels of government and can foster collaboration and engagement, leading to forward-thinking, inclusive governance.
- Actions that also leverage science, technology and innovation can facilitate sustainable development and ensure that no one and no country is left behind. These actions can be supported by effective and ongoing international cooperation, including through South-South and triangular cooperation, for peace and prosperity in the region.
- Regional and subregional cooperation plays an important role in addressing transboundary challenges, enhancing connectivity and trade, strengthening food security, reducing the risk of disaster and managing water resources sustainably.
- The United Nations development system's technical and integrated support can effectively bolster collective efforts on climate action, resilience-building, the energy transition and gender equality while also ensuring the full and effective participation of all stakeholders in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.



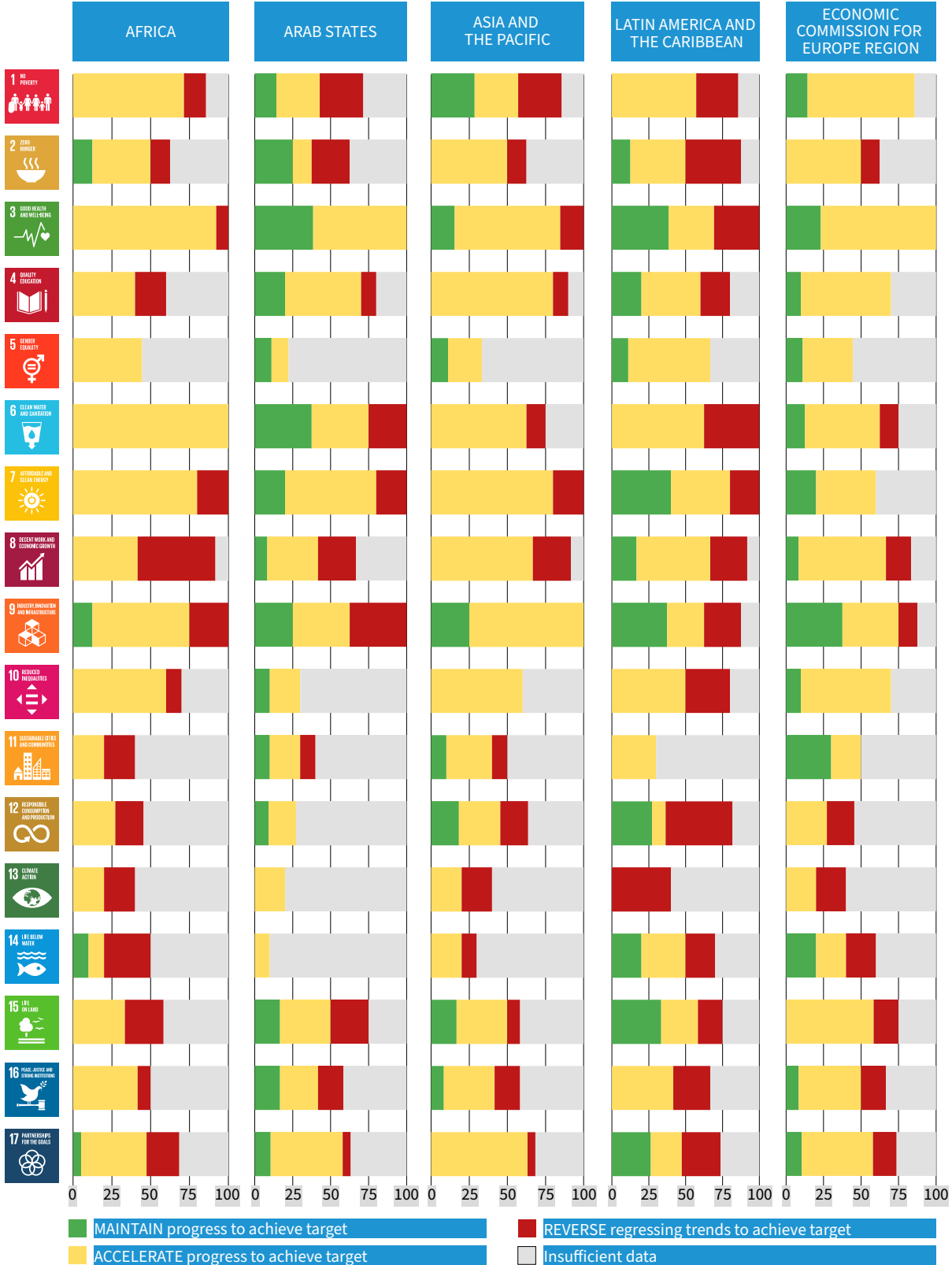
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

- Cascading crises and the region's long-standing development challenges hinder the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) estimates that 22 per cent of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals will be met by 2030, 46 per cent are moving in the right direction but require acceleration, and 32 per cent are backsliding.
- The region needs to overcome three development traps: (1) the trap of low growth, with average economic growth of 0.8 per cent in the decade 2014–2023 and employment growth in that period at its lowest since the 1950s; (2) the trap of high inequality, which is reflected in limited social mobility and cohesion and the 180 million people still living in poverty; and (3) the trap of weak institutional and governance capacities, which contribute to rising polarization and reduced trust in institutions.
- Productive development policies in strategic sectors, if implemented at scale, can produce synergies and multiplier effects towards inclusive growth and accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. The sectors are aligned with the six key transitions identified by the United Nations system, in the areas of food systems, energy, digitalization, education, jobs and social protection, and climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. At the seventh meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, ECLAC presented its analysis of how each transition can accelerate progress on the Goals and the required policy, institutional and investment interventions.
- The intergovernmental conclusions and recommendations of the Forum emphasized the need for strengthened financing for development, including climate finance. The rising development distress provoked by high debt and debt servicing pressures highlights the urgent need to identify financing solutions for the region's middle-income countries.
- The Forum provides spaces for peer learning among Governments, civil society and young people, as well as the regional United Nations system. The Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean presented its system-wide results and outlined priorities for joint efforts to accelerate progress on the Goals, including with regard to the six key transitions. In addition, ECLAC launched its regional guide for the preparation of local voluntary reviews to promote the local implementation of the 2030 Agenda and enhance the vertical integration of the global, regional, national and local levels.

UNECE REGION

- Strong headwinds have impaired the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the region, including the effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, food, financing and energy vulnerabilities, humanitarian and refugee crises, the triple planetary crisis and escalating conflicts. Nevertheless, the 2024 regional forum succeeded in providing a critical space for policy exchange and peer learning for member States and other stakeholders.
- Transitions in the areas of digital transformation, climate action, youth engagement, and innovation and technology can be powerful drivers of change, and this is reflected in the Summit of the Future. The Summit will reinforce the 2030 Agenda and can benefit from the “Geneva spirit” of collaboration and technical expertise in the preparatory process.
- Sustained commitment to social protection linked with wider employment development programmes already contributes to poverty reduction. This can be strengthened with a greater focus on green skills and the empowerment of women and girls.
- Food systems are highly vulnerable to climate change impacts while also contributing significantly to greenhouse gas emissions. They must be part of climate change mitigation and adaptation solutions to ensure food security.
- Risk assessments, response plans and social protection play a vital role in mitigating climate risks for the poor and vulnerable. The interconnectedness of climate change and biodiversity loss demands integrated policy solutions, including budgeting.
- Digital technologies and services are critical drivers of sustainable development. Actions to bridge both persistent and emerging digital gaps and advance gender inclusion are essential.
- Armed conflicts, corruption, widening inequalities and democratic backsliding hinder progress on the Sustainable Development Goals in the region. There is an urgent need for partnerships and innovation, collaboration, evidence-based solutions, stronger local governance, decentralization and effective public participation.
- Insufficient mobilization of public and private financing for sustainable development continues to be a major impediment to progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. Collaboration with multilateral development banks and the private financial sector at the regional and subregional levels can foster progress regarding specific sectors and financial instruments.
- Reliable, comparable and up-to-date data and statistics enable effective strategies for the Sustainable Development Goals, assessing progress, identifying shortcomings and gaps, and anticipating the future.

Percentage of Sustainable Development Goals targets by progress status, 2024



The regional commissions would like to recognize and thank the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the regional forums on sustainable development, including for their role in presenting the forums' outcomes at the global level.