



# PROTECTING OUR PLANET...

## ...for present and future generations

Through its support to the High-level Dialogue on Energy, the Second Global Sustainable Transport Conference and the United Nations Forum on Forests, among others, the Department contributed a global narrative of interlinked key messages and recommendations for protecting our planet through sustainable use of natural and capital resources and climate action.

### UN DESA...

- Co-convened a series of webinars on Harnessing Climate and SDGs Synergies highlighting the benefits of integrated climate and SDG action.
- Continued implementation of the UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All 2014-2024, and the preparatory process of the High-level Dialogue on Energy.
- Launched the Global Forest Goals Report 2021.
- Drew on the Climate, Land, Energy and Water systems (CLEWs) tool to deliver capacity development in support of policy coherence.



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## Protecting our planet

Commitments on combatting climate change and protecting our planet's essential ecosystems have increased in an encouraging way in recent months across the world, but at the global level they still fall way short of what is needed to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement and the SDGs. Policy makers need to urgently address the interrelated major challenges of poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental protection and the recovery from COVID-19 pandemic simultaneously. Today, synergistic and integrated policymaking and action are more important than ever before.

### Harnessing Climate and SDGs synergies

UN DESA in collaboration with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) co-convened a series of webinars on the theme, *Harnessing Climate and SDGs Synergies*, highlighting the benefits of integrated climate and SDG action and a variety of options for synergistic policy interventions in different sectors, including issues related to capacity development, financing strategies, monitoring and reporting. Hundreds of experts and practitioners from developing countries joined to share their experiences and learn how countries and stakeholders are advancing synergetic implementation

of climate action and SDGs as they recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. UN DESA, together with UNFCCC and UNITAR, launched an on-line eLearning course on the topic of harnessing Climate and SDGs synergies in the margins of the HLPF 2021, together with the synthesis reports of the 2020-2021 webinar series. The eLearning course is available to the public and was accessed by more than 207 users within 6 weeks of the launch.

### Accelerating universal energy access and net-zero emissions

UN DESA serves as secretariat for the High-level Dialogue on Energy in 2021, supporting the preparatory



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process. The Department supported the 30 Member State ministerial-level global champions and multi-stakeholder Technical Working Groups composed of 160 experts, to produce a set of recommendations towards the achievement of SDG7 and net zero emissions. The Ministerial Thematic Forums for the Dialogue, supported by UN DESA in June 2021, were attended by 50 ministers, 500 speakers, 2,000 participants, and reached an online audience of 100,000 through social media and newsletters.

As the Secretariat of UN Energy, UN DESA also supported the development of a new strategic focus, including a pledge to assist countries in their efforts on the following

objectives by 2025: providing 500 million people with access to electricity, 1 billion people with clean cooking, and establish 100% renewables targets in 100 countries. UN-Energy facilitated the development of a series of 'Energy Compacts,' including USD 1 billion commitments from philanthropies to increase energy access through renewable energy in developing countries. Around 40 Energy Compact workshops were organized ahead of the September Dialogue, with more than 1,000 participants joining from all stakeholder organizations including member states, sub-national authorities, private sector, NGOs, and civil society groups. UN DESA launched the online platform for Energy Compacts as part of SDG Acceleration Actions.

Convened by UN DESA, the SDG 7 Technical Advisory Group, developed the SDG 7 Policy Briefs, which are released annually in support of the deliberations at the High-level Political Forum, contributing also to the High-Level Dialogue on Energy in September. The Briefs are developed in collaboration with 40 experts from Governments, UN, international organizations, and other stakeholders. This year, the compilation of Policy Briefs places a special focus on the interlinkages of SDG 7 with all other SDGs.

UN DESA supported a capacity-building project in Bangladesh on solar microgrids, with some 50 grids now completed. UN DESA also continues to strengthen the links between energy and health as well as energy and water. As one of the co-conveners of the Health and Energy Platform of Action, together with WHO, UNDP and the World Bank, UN DESA has intensified its efforts to ensure universal access to reliable electricity for health-care facilities and universal access to clean cooking, with UN DESA Under-Secretary-General Mr. Liu Zhenmin joining the High-Level Coalition on Health and Energy. The UN DESA-facilitated multi-stakeholder Sustainable

Water and Energy Solutions Network, supported by ITAIPU Binational and 20 other institutions, convened a series of capacity development seminars and analysis, to share knowledge and data promoting integrated sustainable water and energy solutions that address climate change.

### Promoting Water for Sustainable Development

UN DESA supported the World Water Day 2021 campaign to celebrate water and raise awareness for the 2.2 billion people living without access to safe water. This year's theme, *Valuing Water*, is about what water means to people, its true value and how we can better protect this vital resource. The value of water is about much more than its price – water has enormous and complex value for our households, culture, health, education, economics, and the integrity of our natural environment.

This year's campaign generated a global, public conversation on social media about how people value water for all its uses. The aim is to create a more comprehensive understanding



of how water is valued by different people in different contexts so people can value and safeguard this precious resource for everyone.

### Protecting our oceans

UN DESA supported the High-level Thematic Debate on the Ocean and Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water, convened by the President of the General Assembly on 1 June 2021. This event provided a platform for the international community to take stock of the progress and challenges related to the implementation of SDG14 and raised ambition ahead of the 2nd UN Ocean Conference to be held in Lisbon in 2022.

As part of the Task Force, UN DESA contributed substantively to the narratives on the state of the ocean, Sustainable Blue Economy, global implementation of SDG14 and how to leverage the synergies and interlinkages between ocean, biodiversity, and climate change. Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin served as a panellist, calling for enhanced coordination and collaboration among UN ocean processes and wider participation of stakeholders especially through registering Voluntary Commitments to

transfer commitments to tangible actions in the lead-up to the 2nd UN Ocean Conference. UN DESA continues to share knowledge and build capacity on ocean related issues through webinars, substantive reports and providing support to the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean.

### Protecting our forests

UN DESA continues to lead global efforts to promote sustainable forest management and the international forest policy dialogue. This includes supporting countries to strengthen their capacity to monitor progress towards sustainable forest management and in mobilizing forest financing. The Department's work directly supports the implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 and the UN Forest Instrument and is guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other relevant global agreements.

The **Global Forest Goals Report 2021** (GFGR 2021), launched by UN DESA in April 2021, is the first stocktaking report on progress towards the six Global Forest Goals of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030. It shows that



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## SUPPORTING COUNTRIES IN SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Promoting integrated approaches to sustainable development: Climate, Land, Energy and Water Systems

UN DESA is collaborating with UNDP to deliver a capacity development programme to support the adoption of integrated approaches to policy formulation for sustainable development by countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including countries in special situations. In 2020-2021, Bhutan, Mongolia and Nepal participated in the programme and began use of the Climate, Land, Energy and Water Systems (CLEWS) tool in support of policy coherence in these areas. The inherent flexibility of CLEWS, as a quantitative modeling tool, facilitates adaption and tailoring of the analysis to the unique situation, priorities and circumstances of each country.



## STRENGTHENING PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Institutional arrangements in support of integrated approaches to global climate, land, energy and water strategies

UN DESA is helping Member States to establish effective institutional arrangements that promote coordination and cooperation among national stakeholders for formulating coherent sustainable development policy and strategy.

In 2020-2021, Cameroon, Ethiopia and Namibia received assistance to strengthen national mechanisms to adopt integrated approaches to policy formulation with specific focus on the areas of food, energy and water security and their vulnerability to climate change. The capacity development programme combines support for institutional integration with quantitative assessments using the CLEWS tool.



progress is being made in increasing global forest area through afforestation and restoration, expanding protected forests, and increasing forest carbon stocks. Asia, Europe, and Oceania appear to be on track to reach one of the key targets of the Global Forest Goals of increasing forest area by three percent by 2030. But there are growing concerns that some of those gains could be at risk due to the devastating socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the escalating impacts of the global climate and biodiversity crises.

UN DESA provided effective support to the intergovernmental discussions at the 16th Session of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF16) through the preparation of six notes by the Secretariat, as well as six regional studies which gave an initial assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on sustainable forest management, and a background paper on the impacts of disasters on forests, in particular forest fires. In April 2021, UNFF16 successfully adopted the Forum's programme of work for the period 2022-2024. The session included a High-Level Round Table where senior officials highlighted the critical importance of preservation, conservation and restoration of forests including in the

context of preventing infectious and zoonotic diseases, and offsetting many of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and other global challenges. The session featured the launch of the GFGR 2021 report as well as the launch of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network online clearing house, which shares practical information on funding opportunities, learning materials, lessons learned, and best practices related to forest financing.

UN DESA also highlighted the interlinkages between forest restoration, livelihoods, mitigating climate change, safeguarding biodiversity, and reducing the risk of future pandemics. It is estimated that some two billion hectares of degraded land worldwide, an area almost twice the area of Europe, have the potential to be restored. The Department campaigned on the International Day of Forests (21 March), by promoting the central theme of *Forest restoration: a path to recovery and well-being*. The campaign hashtag #IntlForestDay was featured in over 21,000 tweets by 13,200 contributors during the International Day, with 224 million timeline deliveries, and over 141 million accounts reached, according to estimates.



## FACILITATING MULTILATERAL ACTION

### Drawing high-level attention to biodiversity

The first United Nations Summit on Biodiversity at the level of Heads of State and Government was convened by the President of the General Assembly on 30 September 2020 under the theme of *Urgent action on biodiversity for sustainable development*. UN DESA as part of the Secretariat provided substantive support to the Summit.

At the Summit, Member States and other actors demonstrated strong commitment and highlighted the need for urgent action at the highest levels in support of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework that contributes to implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and moves the world toward the goal of the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity, *Living in harmony with nature*.





## DRIVING INNOVATION

### Harmony with Nature

Earth-centered law has emerged in many of the United Nations Member States, linking planetary health and human well-being, and gaining visibility and momentum because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The United Nations Harmony with Nature Programme has documented and analyzed

legislation and policies on the rights of nature that have been either adopted or for which work is currently ongoing in 36 countries. It has also documented and analyzed collaboration among NGOs, civil society organizations, legislators and legislative bodies working together to draft, adopt and implement laws or policies recognizing nature as a subject of rights and/or a legal “person” protected by law. UN DESA launched an online platform of country profiles and practices that will serve as a reservoir for new initiatives.



## PLACING WOMEN AT THE CENTRE

### Putting gender at the heart of SDG 7

UN DESA's work in the SDG 7 Technical Advisory Group brought insight on the lack of progress towards gender equality in energy access. While the impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis somewhat overshadowed efforts in this area, the pandemic has shed light on the urgency of accelerating women's engagement in the energy sector. Women play important roles in expanding and decentralizing renewable energy supply chains, both for productive and household purposes. UN DESA's work showcased how new stimulus plans can promote economies

and support greater access to energy by increasing investments in women's access to modern energy services, appliances and cooking technologies; ensuring women's participation in decision making at all levels of energy production, supply and consumption; and strengthening data, research and innovation on gender and energy interconnections. The Department highlighted areas critical to closing the gender energy gap, including gender action plans and gender responsive policies, investments to support female entrepreneurship, and more mandated positions for women in public and private sector energy management.

## BOOSTING PARTNERSHIPS AND MULTISTAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Strengthening synergies between the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Synergistic and integrated policymaking and action is more important than ever before. Policy makers seeking to advance climate action will need to identify the most economically feasible and socially acceptable solutions that also generate SDG co-benefits. Similarly, stakeholders seeking to advance economic and social progress towards one or the other SDG will need to anticipate the impacts of such action on future climate emissions. To this effect, UN DESA and UNFCCC continued their joint focus on strengthening synergies between the Paris Agreement and 2030 Agenda. Due to the pandemic, 2020 featured a virtual Global Synergies Consultation throughout May and June 2020. The Third Climate and SDGs Synergy Conference will take place in Japan in 2022.



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