



ACCELERATING ACTION ON THE SDGs...

...moving the world towards sustainable development for all

UN DESA's work in 2020-2021 ensured that Member States had the support, information and advice they needed for effectively evaluating their progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The Department continued its work to identify and share good practices of implementation, including through its analysis and by supporting peer-to-peer learning and exchange.

UN DESA...

- Provided analysis, data expertise, and related policy recommendations to support a successful 2021 HLPF.
- Led the substantive preparations and organization of the HLPF reviews of SDG implementation and on the HLPF overall theme.
- Supported Member States in conducting Voluntary National Reviews of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (VNRs) through VNR global preparatory workshops and webinars.
- Conducted 17 VNR Labs for experience-sharing and reflection on the VNR theme and process.
- Ensured that diverse voices could be heard and spread awareness of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs through organized special events, side events and exhibitions on the margins of the HLPF.
- Supported the intergovernmental negotiations on the 2021 HLPF Ministerial Declaration, reaffirming the 2030 Agenda as a plan of action and global blueprint to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, build back better, and prevent future pandemics.

06

Accelerating action on the SDGs

The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals are the blueprint to a just, inclusive and sustainable future. Most of UN DESA's work helps Member States centre their development efforts around these commitments and aspirations. A strong system of follow-up and review of progress, at national, regional and global levels is critical for identifying policies that work, spotting area of progress, gaps, or pitfalls, undertaking course correction and securing support for accelerating implementation. The United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) is central to the follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. UN DESA is constantly exploring innovative ways of strengthening the work of the HLPF and its leadership, including in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Supporting the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

UN DESA supported the substantive preparations for the High-level Political Forum, convened from 6 to 15 July 2021, which focused on sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Support included review of the main theme and in-depth assessment of nine SDGs - Goals 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16 and 17 and their interlinkages. The Department prepared the Secretary-General's annual report on progress towards the SDGs and the synthesis of

the voluntary submissions by functional commissions of ECOSOC and other intergovernmental bodies and forums. UN DESA also coordinated with regional commissions on regional forums on sustainable development and helped the HLPF to build on the outcomes of the Forum on Financing for Development Follow-up, the STI Forum, the Development Cooperation Forum, and other intergovernmental bodies. Ten Heads of State and Government and about 160 Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers and Vice-Ministers participated in the HLPF opening, thematic interactive panels, town hall

2021 HLPF



7

HLPF Special Events



5000+ Registrations



1 million+ Tweet Impressions



5000+ Video views

SPECIAL EVENTS



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



HIGHER EDUCATION SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE SPECIAL EVENT

950+ Registrants
72 Countries Represented



2021 SDGS LEARNING, TRAINING AND PRACTICE

2800+ Registrants
3200+ YouTube Views



2021 HLPF SPECIAL EVENT ON SDG 6

120K+ Organic Tweet Impressions
2300+ Event Page Views



LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS FORUM (LRGF)

570+ Registrants
1000+ YouTube Views



2021 HLPF SPECIAL EVENT ON SDG ACCELERATION ACTIONS

500+ Registrants
50+ Tweets for Social Media Campaign



SDGS IN ACTION FILM FESTIVAL AWARD CEREMONY

5000+ Online Votes Received
1200+ Vimeo Impressions



2021 CHIEF SUSTAINABILITY OFFICERS FOR SDGS

300+ Registrants
13 Speakers

© UN HLPF Special Events Summary

meeting, fireside chats, and the general debate. The Heads of the UN system and other organizations were also among the participants, including WHO, IMF, WTO, UNDP, UNICEF, OHCHR, UNCTAD, ITU, IOM, Regional Commissions, IUCN, and others. Participating distinguished experts included the 2019 Nobel Laureate, mayors, and local authorities. Civil society was also featured among the participants, with representatives of other major stakeholder groups, including the business sector, women, and youth.

On the margins of the HLPF, UN DESA also organised seven dedicated high-level special events, three report launches, 17 VNR Labs, 276 side events, and 12 exhibitions. These events provided great opportunities for Member States and other stakeholders to share diverse views on the theme and the SDGs under review, deepen the discussion

on the voluntary national reviews (VNRs), identify new issues, listen to all voices, and help spread greater awareness of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at all levels.

Supporting preparation of voluntary national reviews (VNRs)

UN DESA organized three Global Workshops for countries presenting a voluntary national review (VNR) of their implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2021, in collaboration with the Regional Commissions. The virtual workshops explained and supported the VNR process and showcased how VNR countries are incorporating the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs into national strategies, frameworks and institutions. The workshops provided an opportunity for countries to share the challenges



BOOSTING PARTNERSHIPS AND MULTISTAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Bringing diverse voices to the table: Major Groups and Other Stakeholders in the HLPF

In preparation for the 2021 HLPF, UN DESA maintained a close partnership with the Major Groups and other Stakeholders Coordination Mechanism (MGoS). UN DESA worked to ensure the participation of MGoS representatives during the informal

consultations on the HLPF/HLS Ministerial Declaration and as lead discussants in the thematic official sessions of the HLPF. The Department also secured space for MGoS representatives worldwide to collaborate in submitting questions to countries presenting VNRs.

MGoS constituencies, organisations accredited with ECOSOC consultative status, and organizations on the CSD Roster submit inputs to the HLPF. These organizations can also submit applications for side events and exhibitions, participate in the VNR Labs and Special Events.



FACILITATING MULTILATERAL ACTION AND COMMITMENT

Building Member State capacity for an effective QCPR

UN DESA partnered with UNITAR to provide a training series for delegations in preparation for the General Assembly's 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of UN system operational activities (QCPR) .

The training covered the QCPR content and the repositioning of the UN development system as well as key issues related to the role of the QCPR in advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development while responding to the crisis during the Decade of Action. Over 170 delegates participated.

they are facing and successful policy initiatives they are implementing in support of the 2030 Agenda. There were also five regional workshops to support regional exchange of experiences and lessons learnt in implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda. 42 countries presented their VNRs at the 2021 HLPF. Eight Member States presented for the first time, 24 for the second time and 10 for the third time. To date, 177 countries have presented a VNR, with 59 countries having presented more than once.

Promoting an SDG-focused pandemic recovery

Convened by the UN Secretary-General, the first SDG Moment of the Decade of Action was held virtually on 18 September 2020. UN DESA supported a digital platform with the SDG outlook for each VNR country, based on the latest data and research. The SDG Moment helped world leaders to map out a vision for the Decade of Action and recovering better from COVID-19. It highlighted plans and actions to tackle major implementation gaps. It demonstrated the power and impact of action and innovation by SDG stakeholders.

Relatedly, UN DESA supported the 2021 ECOSOC High-level segment, which focused on strengthening the ECOSOC, at its 75th anniversary, for shaping a sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, while advancing the 2030 Agenda. The Department provided analysis to support the segment that assessed medium-term, long-term and emerging socioeconomic trends and scenarios that could impact recovery from the pandemic and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The meeting underscored that, while working to recover better from the pandemic, we should also look at what we want to achieve by 2030, and beyond.

“

The topics covered in the webinars are very important to us because it allows us to learn about other experiences and good practices in the implementation of the SDGs.

Participant in Global Workshop for 2021 VNR Countries

“

The webinar helped refine our SDG financing and statistics component in the upcoming 2nd VNR.

Participant in Global Workshop for 2021 VNR Countries



Strengthening ECOSOC and the HLPF to better support the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda

UN DESA supported the 75th General Assembly's review of ECOSOC and the HLPF, co-facilitated by the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Senegal. The review aimed to improve the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level.

The review process resulted in two General Assembly resolutions, A/RES/75/290 A on ECOSOC, and A/RES/75/290 B on the HLPF. Member States introduced measures to strengthen ECOSOC, including an earlier kick-off of the work of ECOSOC, with a coordination segment and a partnership forum convened by early February each year. They broadened the focus of the ECOSOC event on *Transition from Relief to Development* to include support

to building peaceful societies and strengthened ECOSOC cooperation with the Peace-building Commission. In the resolution on the HLPF, Member States decided on the themes for the 2022 and 2023 HLPF and ECOSOC, and the SDGs for HLPF review in those two years. The resolution also provides new ideas on the VNRs and recognizes the local and regional dimensions.



DRIVING INNOVATION

Sharing innovative approaches to the VNR process

For the fourth year, UN DESA supported Member States in reflecting on innovations related to the VNRs. It organized 17 VNR Labs in the margins of the 2021 HLPF. The VNR Labs

provide an informal platform for experience-sharing and reflection on the VNR process. Some discussed issues cutting across the VNRs, such as policy coherence, the principle of leaving no one behind, data and statistics, resource mobilization and partnerships. In addition, three countries, Japan, Tunisia and Uruguay, presented their national processes in detail and engaged in longer interactions.

SUPPORTING COUNTRIES IN SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Supporting the poorest and most vulnerable countries in responding to the crisis and getting on track for the SDGs:

UN DESA supported the organization of the special meeting of the ECOSOC President on SIDS and LDCs, in cooperation with OHRLLS. The special meeting contributed to the 18 June meeting of the Presidents of the General Assembly and ECOSOC, aimed at providing an input to the upcoming LDC5 Conference. Those meetings resulted in important messages on the continuing support to countries in special situations, paving the ground for an ambitious outcome at LDC5 and the continuing work to address the multi-dimensional vulnerability of SIDS.

Building country capacity for monitoring implementation of the 2030 agenda: Namibia and Cabo Verde

UN DESA provided capacity building support to national VNR processes at the request of Cabo Verde and Namibia. In Cabo Verde, UN DESA collaborated with the Resident Coordinator's Office to organize a capacity-building workshop focusing on the process, good practices and tools to support the engagement of



© Belinda Fewings on Unsplash

stakeholders in the VNR process and on how to feature the information in the report to be presented at the HLPF. In Namibia, UN DESA worked with the Resident Coordinator's Office and the National SDG Multi-Stakeholder Committee for handling the SDGs Agenda to support preparation of the country's second VNR. Before the report was produced, UN DESA participated in the discussions on improving the report, through sharing best practices and lessons learned.

Assisting Member States to review UNDS support to realizing the SDGs

UN DESA provided the analysis, data, and evidence needed to help Member States review progress in the implementation of the 2016 General Assembly Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of UN system operational activities (QCPR) and on the repositioning of the UN development system (UNDS). As part of the process, UN DESA surveyed Governments in over 110 countries where UN country teams are supporting national development actions. The Department's analysis was presented in the report of the Secretary-General that helped inform the QCPR and the discussions at ECOSOC's Operational Activities Segment, supporting Member States to form effective guidance for improving UN-system support to implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda over the next four years.

Relatedly, UN DESA led the development of a new framework for keeping track of progress in the implementation of the QCPR. The framework uses a new generation of key performance indicators for giving greater insights to Member States on the efficiency and impacts of the UNDS support to countries' implementation of the 2030 Agenda.



PLACING WOMEN AT THE CENTRE

Promoting gender equality and the advancement of women in ECOSOC and the HLPF

At the 2021 HLPF, gender equality and the empowerment of women were critical dimensions of measures considered for transforming economies and building more just, equal and inclusive societies in response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. UN DESA actively promoted the consideration of gender concerns in the Forum's deliberations by providing clear guidance to session organizers to mainstream gender perspectives into the discussions.

As a result, gender considerations were systematically integrated in HLPF meetings, and women's critical role in the COVID-19 response was recognized in the Ministerial Declaration adopted by HLPF and ECOSOC by consensus. The Forum agreed that gender equality and women's empowerment were fundamental for a more inclusive and just society and key for a sustainable recovery. In addition, UN DESA ensured that 47% of featured speakers were women.

STRENGTHENING PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Supporting data provision for evidence-based VNRs

UN DESA helps countries to use data and statistics for supporting data-driven and evidence-based voluntary national reviews (VNRs).The Department held a workshop in January 2021 on Preparing Evidence-based VNRs, ahead of the 2021 HLPF. The workshop aimed to equip countries with tools, resources and best practice examples for assessing and including the impacts of COVID-19 in VNRs, best practices for integrating new data sources and data innovations with official statistics, data disaggregation and ways to engage data users and communicate data in the VNRs.

Feedback from country participants highlighted the usefulness of the presentations and good practice examples, and identified additional topic areas for future trainings, including data visualization, rapid evaluations for VNRs and methodologies for assessing COVID-19 impacts.

SDG 16 Conference

The SDG 16 Conference, held on 28-30 April 2021, focused on SDG 16 as a key part of the roadmap to respond to

COVID-19 and build back better. It gave the positive message that institutional and policy innovations at all levels can accelerate the implementation of SDG 16 and promote integrated approaches to tackle complex challenges.

Aware of governance challenges posed by the pandemic, experts underscored the importance of strengthening institutional capacity for a sustainable recovery that supports SDG 16 and the 2030 Agenda. Institutional and policy innovations at all levels can accelerate the implementation of SDG 16 and promote integrated approaches to tackle complex challenges including conflict, increasing inequalities, gender inequality, social and economic insecurity, climate change and rapid technological disruption.

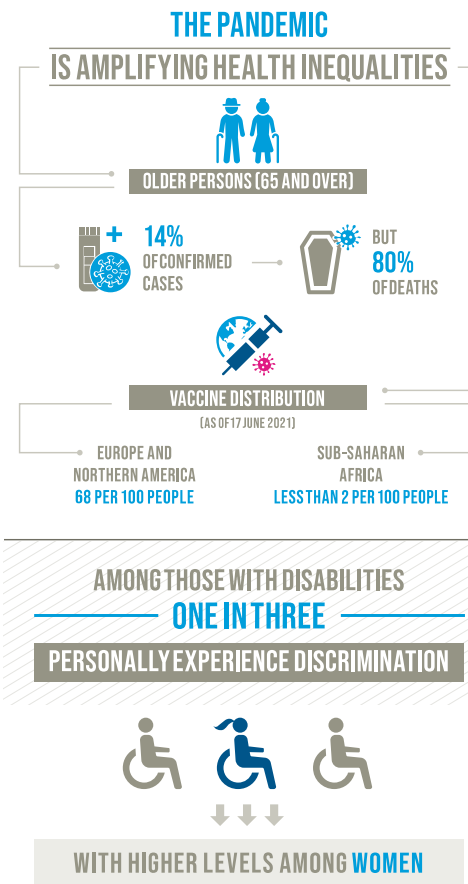
UN/INTOSAI Symposium

The 25th UN-INTOSAI Symposium on *Working during and after the pandemic: Building on the experience of supreme audit institutions for strengthening effective institutions and achieving sustainable societies* was held virtually from 28 to 30 June 2021. The meeting discussed the impact of COVID-19 on the operations, working methods and oversight work of Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs). UN DESA and partners brought together about 500 participants from 120 countries, including representatives from SAIs, the United Nations and other international organizations and resource experts. The discussions were organized around four sub-themes: (i) the impact of COVID-19 on the organization,

working methods and processes of SAIs; (ii) experiences and good practices in the external oversight of COVID-19 responses and recovery plans; (iii) innovation in enhancing transparency and accountability on COVID-19 responses, and (iv) resilient

accountability systems and institutions in the aftermath of COVID-19. Discussions underscored the dynamism and flexibility of SAIs in their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, both internally and externally and in very different contexts.

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND



DISAGGREGATED DATA ARE ESSENTIAL FOR TRACKING COVID-19

