

FOURTH GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON STRENGTHENING SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE PARIS AGREEMENT AND THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Delivering a Just Transition through Climate and SDG Synergies

Conference Summary by Co-conveners

16 July 2023 (short version)

1. The Conference was co-convened by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 16 July 2023. It was held as a special event associated with the 2023 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.
2. The Conference brought together 20 Ministers, heads of UN organizations and agencies, as well as other High-level Representatives, including from business, youth, and academia. The Conference was attended in person by 400 participants, with over 60 speakers from diverse technical backgrounds, representing all together 140 countries around the world. In addition, close to 4000 participants joined virtually.
3. At the High-level Segment, Ministers, High-level Representatives and Heads of United Nations organizations noted with great concern the immense global challenges and the growing sustainable development gaps faced by the world today. They called for higher levels of ambition to achieve both the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the targets under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change by 2030. They recognized that profound transformation was not only needed and urgent, but also possible, and that – if done well – transition may offer significant benefits for all.
4. Participants noted key outcomes of previous conferences on Climate and SDG synergies, including [a set of recommendations](#) that emerged from the 3rd Global Conference on Climate and SDG Synergies.
5. Participants also noted outcome of intergovernmental processes with recognition of the importance of integrated approaches and synergistic implementation of climate action, environmental protection, and sustainable development. This included the [2019 SDG Summit Political Declaration](#), 2023 [Climate, Energy, and Environment Ministers' Communique](#) and [G20 2023 Action Plan to Accelerate Progress on the SDGs](#).

6. The Conference placed its thematic focus on *Delivering a just transition through climate and SDG synergies*. It also featured three substantive roundtables focusing on: (1) A just, equitable and low-carbon transition – how to get it right? (2) Climate action as an avenue for social and economic change – how to get all stakeholders on board? (3) Unlocking finance and partnerships for climate and SDG action – how can it be done?
7. The following highlights key messages and recommendations emerging from the day-long deliberations. The present summary and a full report of the Conference will be published on the Conference website in due course.

Key messages

8. **Breaking down silos and strengthening synergies between climate action, environmental protection and the SDGs are critical to accelerating transitions urgently needed for a just, inclusive and net-zero future.** There is an increasing recognition by many countries around the world that integrated and synergistic approaches to climate action, environmental protection and the SDGs can help ensure that principles of equity, inclusiveness and leaving no one behind are built into global, national and local efforts for advancing climate-resilient and net-zero development pathways.
9. **Growing evidence indicates that pursuing the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement in concert can significantly advance both agendas.** A strong synergistic relationship exists between addressing climate change and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, whereby advancements in one can lead to improvements in the other. The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, for example, recognizes the close linkages between climate change adaptation and mitigation, ecosystem health, human well-being, and sustainable development. It also demonstrates that many mitigation and adaptation actions have multiple synergies with the SDGs. In this regard, the Conference noted the ongoing work on the Expert Group on Climate and SDG Synergies and deepening analysis of potential synergies and trade-offs between climate action and the SDGs.
10. **Enhanced policy coherence is fundamental to maximizing synergies and navigating potential trade-offs.** A strategic vision for achieving climate and development co-benefits must be underpinned by a clear political commitment and institutional leadership to enhance policy coherence and integrated approaches. Effective and inclusive institutional and governance mechanisms to address policy interaction across sectors and align actions between levels of government are critical.

11. **Stakeholder engagement is a core element of a just transition towards climate-resilient and net-zero pathways.** A just transition demands an inclusive and transparent planning process that takes into account voices of all sectors of society, including those who are impacted the most. This will ensure that the benefits and costs of the transition are distributed in a just and equitable manner, reducing inequalities rather than exacerbating them.
12. **Pursuing just transitions towards a net-zero and climate-resilient future is a challenge for countries at all stages of development. Developing countries, however, face distinctive difficulties and require support in ways that take their realities into account.** Meeting the capacity needs of developing countries is critical. International financial and technical support for transition should prioritize those regions with low capacity, lower responsibilities for historical emissions, or high dependence on carbon-intensive economic activities.

The way forward

13. **Renew leadership and political commitment to accelerated action on the SDGs and the Paris Agreement goals in the next decade.** Halfway to the deadline for the 2030 Agenda, just 12 percent of the SDG targets are on track and climate catastrophe is just around the corner with global temperature rise already at 1.1 degrees Celsius. Strong political leadership to close the ambition gap on climate action and the SDGs while leaving no one behind is a must. Upcoming milestones later this year, including the SDG Summit, the Climate Ambition Summit and the first global stocktake under the Paris Agreement to be finalized at COP28, are important opportunities to showcase leadership and commitment on advancing these two critical agendas.
14. **Deepen the evidence base and analytical work related to synergies and trade-offs across sectors.** The conference benefitted from the participation of members of the Expert Group entrusted to prepare the *Global Report on Climate and SDG Synergies*. Their report can be seen as an opportunity to compile a broad and convincing evidence base showcasing the advantages of synergistic approaches and policy making. The report will also provide an analytical framework, fill existing knowledge gaps, and provide scientific underpinnings for accelerated synergistic action towards 2030 and beyond.
15. **Ensure integration of just transition in development and implementation of countries' national climate plans and development strategies.** National planning instruments and processes related to climate and the SDGs can be used to harness the benefits and opportunities of transitions and ensure just and inclusive policies in support of the workforce and others who may be adversely impacted.
16. **Take into account existing inequalities in providing financial and technical support to enable just transitions.** Social equity and the empowerment of vulnerable social groups must be an explicit goal in designing support measures, evaluating economic opportunities, assessing impacts, and prioritizing transition support

outcomes. Investment gaps can be significantly reduced if development and climate targets are pursued together.

17. **Strengthen multi-stakeholder cooperation and dialogue at all levels.** All stakeholders have a role to play in enabling transitions towards a climate-resilient and net-zero future. Multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation must be strengthened globally, as well as at regional and local levels. The annual Global Conference on Climate and SDG Synergies as well as the UNFCCC Regional Climate Weeks provide unique platforms to further enhance integration of climate and SDG synergies into global and regional fora.
18. **Leveraging intergovernmental processes to enhance integrated approaches and synergistic action.** Relevant intergovernmental milestones, including the SDG Summits (2023, 2024), the High-level Political Forum (HLPF), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties (UNFCCC COPs), the Convention of Biological Diversity Conference of Parties (CBD COPs), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), International Conference on Small Island Developing States (2024) must be leveraged to mainstream and strengthen synergistic action at all levels.