



## FRAMING THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT

UNICEF/FRANK DEJONGH

### ... with resilience and preparedness

UN DESA delivered strategic foresight, focusing on long-term intergenerational thinking and strengthening the capacities of countries and the multilateral system. By providing innovative tools, policy recommendations, and fostering multilateral cooperation, UN DESA worked to build resilience and preparedness for future challenges.

### UN DESA...

- Supported Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to plan and implement national sustainable development strategies that build resilience.
- Enhanced policymakers' capacity to use strategic foresight and systems thinking for sustainable development planning.
- Highlighted the impact of recurrent crises on social development and calling for global action, through the World Social Report 2024.
- Advanced evidence-based action on the SDGs through the UN Economist Network.
- Fostered meaningful youth engagement in global policymaking and ensured youth as the agents of change for digital transformation and climate action.
- Strengthened UN DESA's internal capacities to support Member States through enhancement of a digital learning hub, development policy seminars and data-driven intergovernmental support systems.

# 07

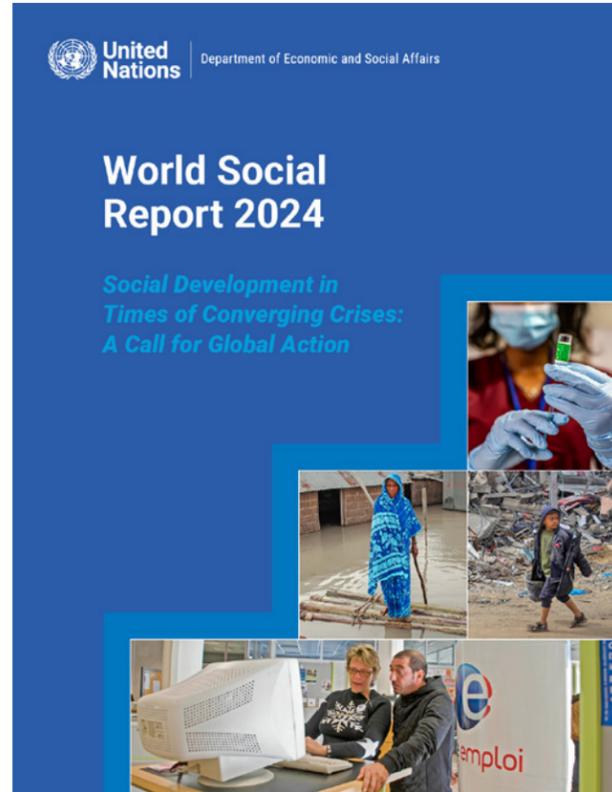
## FRAMING THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT

As the world navigates complex and interconnected challenges, UN DESA's focus on forecasting, foresight, and long-term intergenerational thinking is critical for advancing sustainable development. In 2023–2024, UN DESA's efforts aimed at strengthening the underlying capacities of countries and the multilateral system, as well as the future generations to address present and future challenges.

### Calling for global action on social development in times of converging crises

Emphasizing the need for coherent national action and enhanced multilateral support to build resilience, UN DESA published the *World Social Report 2024* on the impact of recurrent crises on social development. UN DESA organized a side event during the High-level Political Forum, in partnership with the Permanent Mission of Samoa to the United Nations, which brought together high-level representatives and experts from Member States, international organizations, academia, NGOs and civil society to discuss the key messages of the report. Following this event, there was a special briefing to Member States in the ECOSOC Chamber.

The report highlights the importance of eradicating poverty, strengthening social protection, and fostering innovative insurance mechanisms. Amid a confluence of shocks and crises, less than a fifth of the SDG targets are on track. This serves as a wake-up call, signaling the need for extensive changes along different fronts to achieve social development. While national-level



efforts for achieving social goals remain vital, they must be complemented by international support and global actions. Such joint actions can greatly reduce the impact of recurrent crises on social development and preserve valuable resources for its further advancement.

### Developing national recovery and sustainable development strategies for SIDS

UN DESA supported several Small Island Developing States to plan and implement national sustainable development strategies and build resilience in response to crises, developing longer-term approaches to sustainable development and mobilizing climate finance. The project empowered government officials and national stakeholders in Mauritius, Seychelles, Guinea-Bissau, and Jamaica to conduct integrated policy and strategy assessments, including the valuation of ecosystem services for national planning and pandemic recovery. It aims to improve evidence-based decision-making by presenting scenarios and pathways for sustainable development.



Capacity building workshop in Mauritius. | UN DESA

In Mauritius, UN DESA also developed capacities for integrated strategic planning and institutional arrangements for policy coherence. The initiative has enhanced knowledge among participants to apply systems thinking in SDG implementation. The Government of Mauritius has requested further support to build capacities in systems thinking for policy coherence and strategic foresight through “Maurice Strategie” – a new entity fostering evidence-based dialogue between the private sector, public sector, and civil society organizations.



Participants at the World Social Report 2024 side event at HLPF 2024. | UN DESA



Speakers at the Global Policy Dialogue on “The Economic Prospects of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)” at the fourth International Conference on SIDS in Antigua and Barbuda, May 2024. | UN DESA

### Projecting global population trends

The 2024 volume of UN DESA’s *World Population Prospects* report projected that the world’s population will peak in the mid-2080s, growing over the next sixty years from 8.2 billion people in 2024 to around 10.3 billion in the mid-2080s, and then will return to around 10.2 billion by the end of the century. The size of the world’s population in 2100 is now expected to be six per cent lower—or 700 million fewer—than anticipated a decade ago. The report also offered policy recommendations to prepare countries for a population size, age structure, and spatial distribution that may differ appreciably from that of their recent past.

### Empowering capacity-development programmes

UN DESA expanded its digital learning hub to further provide client-focused, adaptable, and effective e-learning opportunities for Member States and other stakeholders, driving transformative change and supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This initiative continues the commitment outlined in the Secretary-General’s Strategy on New Technologies, reinforcing UN support for governmental capacity building, and aligns with the UN 2.0 framework and the “Quintet of Change”.

The Digital Learning Centre hub serves as a substantial adjunct to UN DESA’s capacity development work. Covering a wide array of topics such as tax treaties, digital government, disaster risk reduction, and social inclusion, the available UN DESA courses address diverse and critical areas of public sector innovation and governance. The e-learning courses are designed either to supplement traditional, in-person training sessions or to function as standalone educational offerings. UN DESA monitors best practices, scales innovative approaches, and fosters a user-friendly experience. To date, over 5,700 individuals from 185 Member States have taken advantage of the learning opportunities offered by the hub, collectively earning more than 2,400 certificates across 47 different courses.



Assistant Secretary-General Navid Hanif presents the *World Population Prospects 2024* report to the press in New York, in July 2024. | UN DESA

### Advancing the SDGs through evidence-based research and analysis

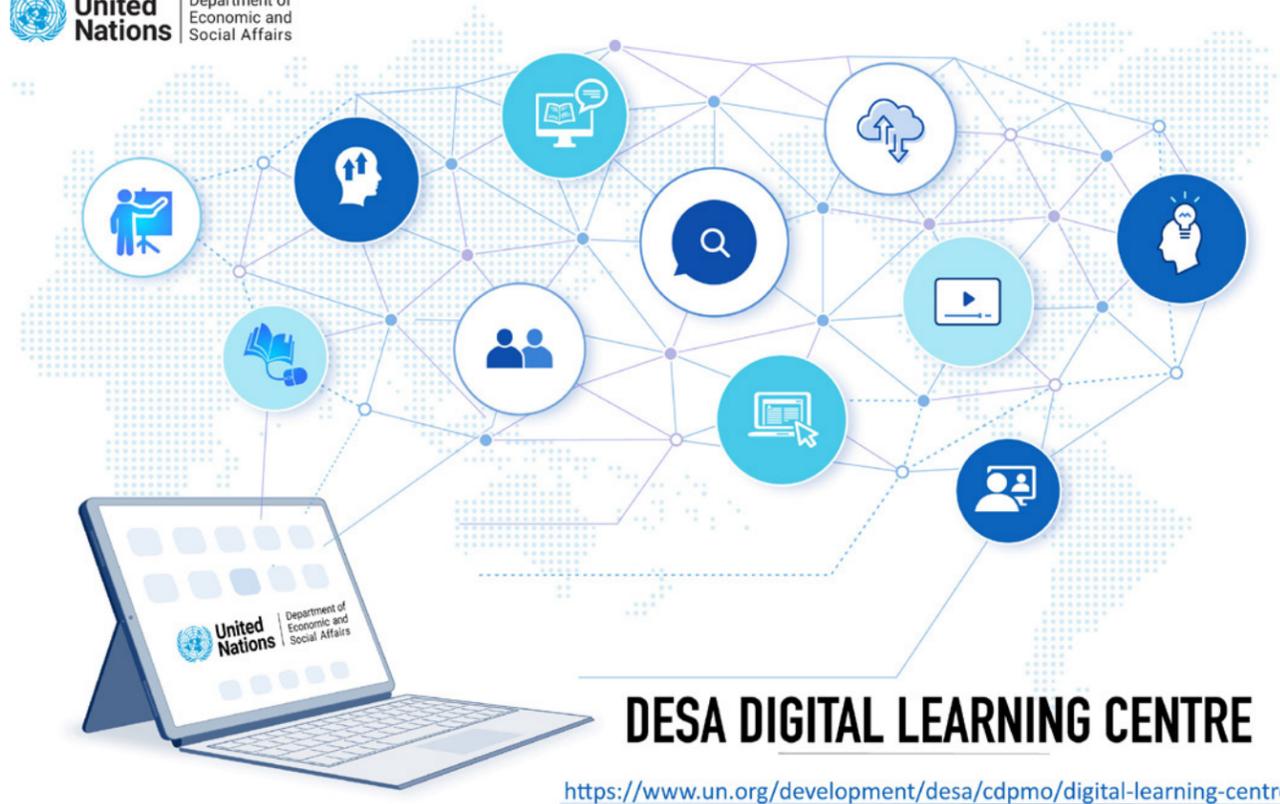
Convened by UN DESA, the UN Economist Network (UNEN) conducted research and organized events to assist Member States in shaping policies relevant to the SDGs. Throughout the year, UNEN prepared and disseminated policy research on the informal economy, taxation, and migration, presenting evidence-based actions to help accelerate the SDGs. UNEN organized a virtual HLPF side-event on the topic of “How can economists in UN system address the most pressing challenges of the day?”. The event was chaired by Assistant Secretary-General Navid Hanif, with a keynote address by Ms. Mariana Mazzucato, professor in the Economics of Innovation and Public Value at University College London, and member of the UN High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs (HLAB). UNEN also examined ways to strengthen strategic engagements between the UN and international financial institutions at the country level. The network facilitates collaboration among UN system experts on issues relevant to sustainable development, fostering a cross-cutting approach to actionable research and policy analysis.

### Bringing the voices of development experts to build capacities

UN DESA brought new insights to the forefront and engaged in cutting-edge reflections with experts from across the UN system and academia through its Development Policy Seminars. Topics in the series included reforming the multilateral development banks system, rethinking public debt sustainability assessment for the SDGs, policy choices for the future of work in developing countries, and using AI to generate synthetic data for SDG monitoring.

### Fostering meaningful youth engagement and empowering the voices of youth

UN DESA reinforced the ECOSOC Youth Forum’s position as a vital platform for young people to engage in global policymaking, demonstrating the Department’s commitment to inclusive and forward-thinking sustainable development practices. The 2024 Forum saw unprecedented participation with over 1,000 attendees, including 36 Ministers and 43 high-level Government representatives from 83 countries, as well as 92 youth delegates. It featured plenary sessions on



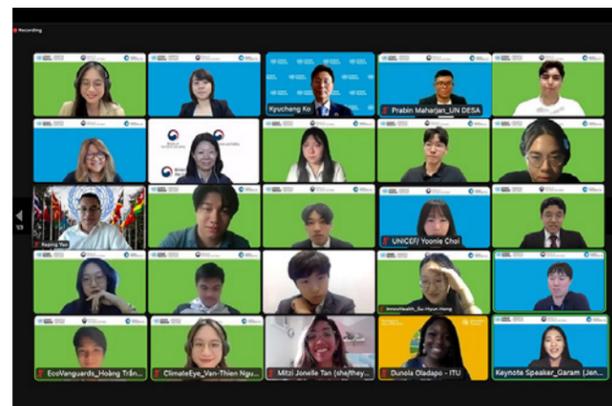
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/cdpmo/digital-learning-centre>

SDGs under HLPF review, discussions on cutting-edge topics like AI and sustainable cities, and six targeted regional breakout sessions. The Department facilitated crucial dialogues between youth and high-level officials, including sessions with the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, and other senior UN leadership. UN DESA's work with the Forum culminated in a Presidential statement, set to inform HLPF and Summit of the Future deliberations, ensuring that youth perspectives directly influence global policy processes.

### Enabling youth as agents of change for digital transformation and climate action

UN DESA provided young people a platform to showcase innovative ideas to address global challenges at the 7th Youth Forum on SDG Implementation. In

collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS) and Incheon Metropolitan City of the Republic of Korea, the Youth Forum was held online under the theme, "Enabling Youth as Agents of Change for Digital Transformation and Inclusive Climate Action". Over



Screenshot from 7th Youth Forum on SDG Implementation. | UN DESA



Participants of the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2024. | UN DESA

200 participants from all over the world discussed the role of young people in the age of digital transformation and as key players for climate action. The Forum also continued to run its annual speech contest, through the Ideas for Change Contest, which invited young people to develop innovative solutions.

### Enhancing data-driven intergovernmental support

In the past year, UN DESA has enhanced its data-driven intergovernmental support. A newly established

Information Management Task Force aims to optimize work processes, improve information sharing and integration, and enhance collaboration for greater impact. The initiative emphasizes the use of data visualization and storytelling as effective communication and outreach tools for Member States and key partners. The Task Force's objectives include developing an online collaborative space to facilitate informed decision-making, providing upskilling opportunities through workshops and creating a supportive environment for digital skill development, and identifying methods to streamline visual elements in UN DESA's work. This comprehensive approach seeks to eliminate inefficiencies and boost the Department's overall effectiveness in supporting intergovernmental processes.