



**SUPPORTING COUNTRIES  
IN SPECIAL SITUATIONS**

### Promoting free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education in low-income countries

UN DESA supported the Commission on Population and Development to examine the linkages between population, education, and sustainable development at its 56th session in April 2023. To inform the Commission, *The Report of the Secretary-General on population, education and sustainable development* underlined how the COVID-19 pandemic deepened the global learning crisis by exacerbating pre-existing inequalities in access to and quality of education. The global number of children aged 6-11 years, corresponding to those in primary education, is expected to reach an all-time high

of 820 million in 2023, whereas the secondary school-aged population (12-17 years) will peak at 816 million in 2029. These trends will require significant investment in education and skills training particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where the school-age population will see the largest increase between now and 2050.

Member States noted that insufficient budgetary allocations, extreme poverty, early childbearing, armed conflicts, and natural disasters are key factors keeping students out of school, especially in low-income countries. Many recognized that meeting the objectives of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, particularly around preventing

early marriage and childbearing and gender-based violence, will help to keep girls in school. There was also acknowledgement in several sessions that population data – from national censuses, population registers and other sources, with disaggregation by age, sex, and geographic unit – together with administrative data on school enrolment, attendance and completion are essential for planning educational services and monitoring progress towards the education-related targets of the SDGs.

### Scaling up development cooperation to better support the most vulnerable

Kicking off this year's SDG financing discussions, UN DESA supported the organization of Development Cooperation Forum (DCF), in which Member States and other stakeholders identified concrete measures and built momentum for transformative action among all development partners to rescue the SDGs and strengthen the SDG Stimulus. Discussions emphasized the role of international development cooperation – such as official development assistance (ODA), South-South and triangular cooperation and philanthropy – in reducing risks among the most vulnerable countries and people. More risk-informed development cooperation will be increasingly critical in addressing crises linked to pandemics, global food and energy shocks and climate change, particularly in countries that face special structural vulnerabilities such as LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and conflict-affected States. The recommendations delivered at the DCF will further inform the discussions at the SDG Summit, High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development and beyond.

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Leaving no one behind is a solemn commitment made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Development Cooperation Forum is indispensable for the attainment of this goal.

by **Chen Chunjiang**  
Assistant Minister of Commerce,  
People's Republic of China

### Mobilizing SDG investment where it is needed the most

The SDG Investment Fair continues to offer a platform for interactions between governments and private sector actors, peer-to-peer knowledge exchange and capacity building towards closing the SDG financing gap. In 2022-23, the SDG Investment Fair shifted from an annual to a continual platform to connect countries to private investors.

The 7th SDG Investment Fair, held in December 2022, opened with a high-level dialogue on mobilizing investment in LDCs as a prelude to the Private Sector Forum of the Fifth UN Conference on Least Developed Countries (LDC5) in Doha in March 2023. At the LDC5, the Fair brought senior officials from Angola, Ethiopia, Malawi, and São Tomé and Príncipe to a side event, which focused on presenting policy reforms and projects that could attract investment in aid of LDC graduation.

At the 8th SDG Investment Fair in April 2023, several commercial banks, investment funds, and development finance institutions discussed



Wolfgang Lutz, Interim Deputy Director General for Science, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), delivers a keynote address during the opening of the 56th session of the Commission on Population and Development - Photo credit: UN Photo/Loey Felipe

solutions that could support investment risk sharing in vulnerable countries. A dozen projects and programmes were showcased, representing \$6 billion in deal flow. The Ethiopian Investment Holdings Co. and Mauritanian Investment Promotion Agency highlighted key projects in sustainable agriculture and infrastructure. Eswatini also featured prominently, with active participation from its Minister of Finance.

To date, roughly one-third of all participating countries are considered as LDCs, LLDCs or SIDS. More investors are signalling interest in these projects and emerging markets. A few recently presented projects in Namibia, Rwanda, Nigeria, and secured partial funding or started implementation. The Fair also provided technical advisory services to Kenya to design and enhance the bankability of three innovative SDG financing projects supported by three UN agencies.

### Strengthening integrated planning and decision-making capacities of policymakers and stakeholders in Caribbean SIDS

UN DESA supported SIDS in the Caribbean region to strengthen national capacities for a sustainable, resilient and green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and to respond to other shocks and build back better towards achieving the SDGs. In cooperation with UN ECLAC and other UN partners, UN DESA conducted national consultations in Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, and Trinidad and Tobago, and provided capacity-building support to Dominica and Trinidad and Tobago that included technical advisory assistance and training workshops. The joint initiative assessed the social and economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic and other global crisis setbacks for SIDS in the Caribbean region and developed methodologies for future analysis and forecasts. It also made policy recommendations

and practical measures for sustainable, green and resilient recovery and transition that have multiplier effects and can accelerate achieving the SDGs.

### Future-proofing sustainable development strategies for SIDS

UN DESA, working with UNITAR, has helped to reinvigorate the Resident Coordinator system by providing substantive guidance and advice on strategic planning and systems thinking for SIDS. This capacity development support led to greater focus on risk and foresight analysis, seeking to “future-proof” sustainable development strategies for SIDS. It has also helped the United Nations Sustainable Cooperation Frameworks to identify interventions that will allow the UN to best define its comparative advantage and policy and programme interventions that can accelerate the implementation of the SDGs.

**UN DESA's (and UNITAR's) capacity building approach in the field of coherent strategic planning is a "best practice case" which should be replicated in other SIDS to help with the implementation of the SDGs at the UN country level.**

by **Christine N. Umutoni**  
former UN Resident Coordinator  
in Mauritius and Seychelles



Opening of the 8th SDG Investment Fair – Photo credit: Martin Fernandez Cardona



Participants at a workshop on sustainable and green growth opportunities, held in April 2023 in Trinidad and Tobago – Photo credit: Ministry of Planning and Development, Trinidad and Tobago