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**High-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council**

## Special edition: progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals

### Report of the Secretary-General\*

#### *Summary*

The present report on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals is submitted in response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1).

As the first cycle of the implementation and review of the Sustainable Development Goals comes to a close and Member States prepare for the high-level political forum in July and five major meetings focused on sustainable development to be held in September, this “special edition” of the progress report on the Goals was written in cooperation with the United Nations System Task Team on the High-level Political Forum, co-chaired by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme.

The report demonstrates that over the past four years, progress has been made with regard to a number of Sustainable Development Goals and their targets, and a number of actions have been undertaken by Governments and other stakeholders to respond to the 2030 Agenda more broadly.

The report also demonstrates, however, that progress has been slow on many Sustainable Development Goals, that the most vulnerable people and countries continue to suffer the most and that the global response thus far has not been ambitious enough.

\* The present report was submitted after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.



With the next decade of implementation in mind, the present report identifies a series of cross-cutting areas where political leadership and urgent, scalable multi-stakeholder action are needed to dramatically accelerate progress. Doing so will allow the United Nations to shift the world onto a trajectory that is compatible with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

## I. Introduction

1. Four years ago, world leaders came together at the United Nations and adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
2. Governments responded to the common challenges they faced and the changing world around them by uniting behind a truly forward-looking, yet urgent, plan to end poverty and create shared prosperity on a healthy and peaceful planet. It was a moment of great hope and promise, when the light of an inclusive multilateralism shone brightly, as it did throughout 2015 with the adoption of other significant and related global agreements: the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2020 and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
3. In September, Heads of State and Government will gather once again, this time to take stock of how far we have come in realizing our sustainable development commitments. Through the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the Climate Action Summit and high-level meetings of the General Assembly on universal health coverage, financing for development and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, leaders from all sectors will also have an opportunity to signal the urgent steps they will take to increase the ambition and impact of implementation efforts.

### **Progress thus far**

4. Though the availability of timely, disaggregated data across all countries and all targets and indicators to inform the present report remains a challenge, a clear picture is emerging of the state of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals four years on.
5. First, progress is being made and some favourable trends with regard to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals are evident. Extreme poverty and child mortality rates continue to fall. Progress is being made against diseases such as hepatitis, where the incidence of new chronic hepatitis B virus (HBV) infections has been reduced considerably. Certain targets regarding gender equality are seeing progress, including the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting. Electricity access in the poorest countries has begun to increase. Globally, labour productivity has increased and unemployment is back to pre-financial crisis levels. The proportion of the urban population living in slums is falling. The proportion of waters under national jurisdiction covered by marine protected areas has more than doubled since 2010. And progress on some means of implementation is moving rapidly.
6. This progress is an illustration of the hard work that many Governments and their partners have been undertaking since 2015. The voluntary national reviews provide the United Nations with additional insights. They show that Governments have prioritized integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into their national plans and policies and are creating the institutional arrangements that will help drive and also monitor progress towards the transformation needed in their economies and societies. Importantly, the reviews show that there has been a near universal response and that country ownership of the 2030 Agenda remains strong. We have also seen a significant response from regional governments and cities, businesses, civil society, academia, young people and others, which, through a wide range of actions and initiatives, have identified entry points to align with and advance Goal implementation. The United Nations too, as a key actor, is making foundational changes, and the United Nations development system is undergoing the deepest reform in decades so as to be better able to respond to the paradigm shift at the heart

of the 2030 Agenda. I am confident that with continued support from Member States and the Organization's leadership and staff, the United Nations will begin to see the fruits of these reforms in the quality of its support provided to Governments, as they work to accelerate implementation at the scale needed to achieve the Goals by 2030.

7. Second, notwithstanding these positive trends and the breadth of action and initiatives that the 2030 Agenda has inspired, the shift in development pathways to generate the transformation required to meet the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 is not yet advancing at the speed or scale required.

8. It is cause for great concern that the extreme poverty rate is projected to be 6 per cent in 2030, missing the global target to eradicate extreme poverty; hunger is on the rise for the third consecutive year and little progress is being made in countering overweight and obesity among children under the age of 5; biodiversity is being lost at an alarming rate, with roughly 1 million species already facing extinction, many within decades; greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase; the required level of sustainable development financing and other means of implementation are not yet available; and institutions are not strong or effective enough to respond adequately to these massive interrelated and cross-border challenges.

9. In the context of the 2030 Agenda's central principle of leaving no one behind, there is progress, albeit at a slow pace. Population groups with documented disadvantages largely remain excluded. Globally, youth are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. Children are overrepresented among the poorest people – one child in five lives in extreme poverty. Rural and urban differentials are also evident in such areas as education and health care. Persons with disabilities and those living with HIV/AIDS continue to face multiple disadvantages, denying them both life opportunities and fundamental human rights.

10. Gender inequalities also persist. Women represent less than 40 per cent of those employed, occupy only about a quarter of managerial positions in the world and (according to data available from a limited set of countries) face a gender pay gap of 12 per cent. About a fifth of those aged 15 to 49 had experienced physical or sexual partner violence in the past 12 months. There is simply no way that the world can achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals without also achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

11. Unsurprisingly, there are significant divergences across regions and among countries in very different situations. Regrettably, the most vulnerable countries are bearing the brunt of the current obstacles to Sustainable Development Goal implementation.

12. Third, there is no escaping the fact that the global landscape for Sustainable Development Goal implementation has generally deteriorated since 2015, hindering the efforts of Governments and other partners. Moreover, the commitment to multilateral cooperation, so central to implementing major global agreements, is now under pressure.

13. Conflicts and instability in many parts of the world have intensified, causing untold human suffering, undermining the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and even reversing progress already made. With developing countries hosting more than 85 per cent of the 68.5 million people who were forcibly displaced in 2017, pressures on existing support systems are immense.

14. Direct economic losses from disasters have increased by more than 150 per cent over the past 20 years, with losses disproportionately borne by vulnerable developing countries. Without a surge in mitigation, global warming will continue at a rapid pace, amplifying the challenges of adaptation and entrenching a sense of vulnerability and insecurity among large population groups.

15. Economic changes have also made Sustainable Development Goal implementation more challenging. Global economic growth is anticipated to remain slow and uneven across regions amid lingering trade tensions and unsustainable levels of household and corporate debt. Debt vulnerability in low-income countries has increased substantially in recent years. In addition to an expected slowdown in emerging economies, lower growth rates are projected in developed economies in general. And several Governments are taking more protectionist approaches across the board, risking growth rates, poverty reduction and economic diversification.

16. Rising income and wealth inequality risk undermining efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. They threaten to erode social cohesion, entrench insecurity and dampen productivity growth. Rising intolerance in many parts of the world threatens fundamental human rights and human progress. The nexus among inequality, injustice, insecurity and lack of sufficient trust in Governments and institutions can further hinder the necessary conditions for advancing sustainable development.

### **Gearing up for a decade of action for sustainable development**

17. Against this backdrop, when world leaders gather again this September, an honest and frank reflection on the world's current direction of travel is necessary. A renewed commitment to multilateralism, to prevention and to diplomacy is essential. And much greater urgency and ambition regarding Sustainable Development Goal response is required. This is especially the case when it comes to the response to the existential threat of climate change, where a failure to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement will directly threaten the attainment of all other Sustainable Development Goals.

18. In this spirit, I welcome the progress made thus far, and encourage all countries and all Sustainable Development Goal partners to do more, and faster. I also identify a series of systemic gaps in the overall response to the 2030 Agenda and call for specific actions to fill them. These include placing special focus on the most vulnerable to ensure that as countries progress, they leave no one behind; ensuring adequate and well-directed financing; strengthening institutions and making them more effective and inclusive; bolstering local action to accelerate implementation; strengthening economies and building resilience; strengthening collection, access and effective use of data for the Goals; and harnessing science, technology and innovation with a greater focus on digital transformation for sustainable development.

19. The commitment to the 2030 Agenda remains strong. Hundreds of millions of young people believe in and are demanding the change at the heart of this agenda. Action on the Sustainable Development Goals is growing, and safely deployed new technologies, including artificial intelligence, can help the world take the next leap forward. I am convinced that with sufficient focus, effort, innovation, political commitment and resolve, with partners who are fully behind this transformation and with multilateral collaboration that is focused on results, these challenges can be surmounted and the Sustainable Development Goals can be reached by 2030.

20. The world will soon enter a decade that will be decisive for both current and future generations and for all life on this planet. It is the world's responsibility and within its power to make it a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.

## II. Where we are in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>1</sup>

21. This chapter reviews progress in the fourth year of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It presents highlights of progress for all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, based on the latest available data, and examines some of interconnections across Goals and targets. It is important to note that for more than half of the global indicators, data are not regularly collected by most of the countries or there is no established methodology to measure them. This has a negative impact on the ability to fully understand Sustainable Development Goal progress and challenges.

### Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

22. The decline of global extreme poverty continues, but has slowed. The deceleration indicates that the world is not on track to achieve the target of less than 3 per cent of the world living in extreme poverty by 2030. People who continue to live in extreme poverty face deep, entrenched deprivation often exacerbated by violent conflicts and vulnerability to disasters. Strong social protection systems and government spending on key services often help those left behind get back on their feet and escape poverty, but these services need to be brought to scale.

- The share of the world population living in extreme poverty declined to 10 per cent in 2015, down from 16 per cent in 2010 and 36 per cent in 1990. However, the pace of poverty reduction is decelerating, with a “nowcast” of 8.6 per cent in 2018. Moreover, baseline projections suggest that 6 per cent of the world population will still be living in extreme poverty in 2030, missing the target of ending poverty.
- Despite having a job, 8 per cent of the world’s workers and their families still lived in extreme poverty in 2018. The situation remains particularly alarming in sub-Saharan Africa, where the share of working poor stood at 38 per cent in 2018.
- Social protection systems help prevent and reduce poverty and provide a safety net for the vulnerable. However, social protection is not a reality for a large majority of the world’s population. In 2016, 55 per cent – as many as 4 billion people – were not covered by any social protection cash benefits, with large variations across regions: from 87 per cent without coverage in sub-Saharan Africa to 14 per cent in Europe and Northern America.
- Only 22 per cent of unemployed persons receive unemployment cash benefits, only 28 per cent of persons with severe disabilities receive disability cash benefits, only 35 per cent of children worldwide enjoy effective access to social protection and only 41 per cent of women giving birth receive maternity cash benefits.
- Disasters often lead to a downturn in the trajectory of socioeconomic development and exacerbate poverty. From 1998 to 2017, direct economic losses from disasters were estimated at almost \$3 trillion, of which climate-related disasters accounted for 77 per cent of the total – a rise of 151 per cent compared with the period from 1978 to 1997 – and climate-related and geophysical disasters claimed an estimated 1.3 million lives. More than 90 per cent of deaths reported internationally were due to disaster events in low- and

<sup>1</sup> A supplementary document containing a statistical annex to the present report and a database of available global, regional and country data and metadata for the Sustainable Development Goal indicators will be made available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs>.

middle-income countries, and economic losses from disasters as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) were also much higher in these countries.

- Countries have reported progress in the development and implementation of national and local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. As at 31 March 2019, 67 countries had reported progress in such alignment and 24 countries reported that their respective local governments had developed local strategies consistent with national strategies and plans.
- Only one third of all countries spend between 15 per cent and 20 per cent of total government expenditure on education, as recommended in the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

## **Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture**

23. Hunger is on the rise again globally and undernutrition continues to affect millions of children. Public investment in agriculture globally is declining, small-scale food producers and family farmers require much greater support and increased investment in infrastructure and technology for sustainable agriculture is urgently needed.

- An estimated 821 million people – approximately 1 in 9 people in the world – were undernourished in 2017, up from 784 million in 2015. This represents a worrying rise in world hunger for a third consecutive year after a prolonged decline. Africa remains the continent with the highest prevalence of undernourishment, affecting one fifth of its population (more than 256 million people). Consistent with the continued growth in undernourishment, 770 million people faced severe food insecurity in 2017.<sup>2</sup>
- Stunting has been decreasing in nearly every region since 2000. Still, more than 1 in 5 children under 5 years of age (149 million) were stunted in 2018. Globally, 49 million children under 5 were affected by wasting and another 40 million were overweight in 2018.
- Strengthening the resilience and adaptive capacity of small-scale and family farmers, whose productivity is systematically lower than all other food producers, is critical to reversing the trend of the rise in hunger. The share of small-scale food producers in terms of all food producers in countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America ranges from 40 to 85 per cent, compared with fewer than 10 per cent in Europe.
- Government spending on agriculture compared to agriculture's contribution to the total economy has declined by 37 per cent; the ratio fell from 0.42 in 2001 to 0.26 worldwide in 2017. In addition, aid to agriculture in developing countries fell from nearly 25 per cent of all donors' sector-allocable aid in the mid-1980s to only 5 per cent in 2017, representing a decrease of \$12.6 billion.
- A continuous downward trend has been observed in export subsidy outlays reported to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The total outlays fell from close to \$500 million in 2010 to around \$120 million in 2016. This reduction in export subsidies by Governments is leading to lower distortions in agricultural markets.

<sup>2</sup> An update on undernourishment, food insecurity and malnutrition figures will be released in *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019*, to be published by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in July 2019.

### **Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**

24. Major progress has been made in improving the health of millions of people, increasing life expectancy, reducing maternal and child mortality and fighting against leading communicable diseases. However, progress has stalled or is not happening fast enough with regard to addressing major diseases, such as malaria and tuberculosis, while at least half the global population does not have access to essential health services and many of those who do suffer undue financial hardship, potentially pushing them into extreme poverty. Concerted efforts are required to achieve universal health coverage and sustainable financing for health, to address the growing burden of non-communicable diseases, including mental health, and to tackle antimicrobial resistance and determinants of health such as air pollution and inadequate water and sanitation.

#### *Reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health*

- An estimated 303,000 women around the world died due to complications of pregnancy and childbirth in 2015. Almost all of these deaths occurred in low- and middle-income countries, and almost two thirds of those were in sub-Saharan Africa. These deaths are preventable with appropriate management and care. Globally in 2018, 81 per cent of births took place with the assistance of a skilled birth attendant, a significant improvement from 69 per cent in 2012. Coverage of skilled birth attendants in 2018 was only 59 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa.
- The under-5 mortality rate fell to 39 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2017, a 6.7 per cent reduction from 42 deaths in 2015, and an overall reduction of 49 per cent from 77 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2000. The total number of under-5 deaths dropped to 5.4 million in 2017 from 9.8 million in 2000. Still, most of these deaths were from preventable causes and almost half, or 2.5 million, occurred in the first month of life – the most crucial period for child survival. The global neonatal mortality rate has continued to decline after a long downward trend from 31 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2000 to 18 in 2017, a 41 per cent reduction.
- Immunization saves millions of lives and is widely recognized as one of the world's most successful and cost-effective health interventions. Coverage of the required three doses of the vaccine that prevents diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis increased from 72 per cent in 2000 to 85 per cent in 2015 and has remained unchanged between 2015 and 2017. An estimated 19.9 million children did not receive the vaccines during the first year of life, putting them at serious risk of these potentially fatal diseases. The global coverage of pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, which has the potential to significantly reduce deaths in children under age of 5, has yet to reach 50 per cent. Two doses of the measles vaccine are required to prevent the disease and the illnesses, disabilities and deaths caused by complications associated with it. Coverage with the second dose of measles vaccine increased from 59 per cent in 2015 to 67 per cent in 2017, but that is still insufficient to prevent this highly contagious disease.
- Expanding access to modern contraceptive methods is essential to ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services. Globally, the proportion of women of reproductive age (15 to 49 years old) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern contraceptive methods has continued to increase slowly, from 74 per cent in 2000 to 76 per cent in 2019.



- Adolescent fertility declined from 56 births per 1,000 adolescent women in 2000 to 45 births in 2015 and 44 births in 2019. The level of adolescent fertility has remained high in sub-Saharan Africa, at 101 births per 1,000 adolescent women.

#### *Infectious diseases*

- Strong and steady domestic and international commitment and funding has fuelled an acceleration of evidence-informed HIV prevention, testing and treatment programmes. As a result, the incidence of HIV in sub-Saharan Africa (among adults aged 15 to 49) has declined by 37 per cent, from 3.39 infections per 1,000 uninfected people in 2010 to 2.49 in 2015 and 2.14 in 2017. However, the rate of global HIV incidence among adults aged 15 to 49 declined from 0.44 to 0.40 between 2015 and 2017 and overall by 22 per cent between 2010 and 2017, well short of the declines required to meet 2020 and 2030 targets.
- Tuberculosis remains a leading cause of ill health and death. In 2017, an estimated 10 million people fell ill with tuberculosis. The burden is falling globally: incidence of tuberculosis has continued to decline from 170 new and relapse cases per 100,000 people in 2000 to 140 in 2015, and 134 in 2017; and the tuberculosis mortality rate among HIV-negative people fell by 42 per cent between 2000 and 2017. However, large gaps in detection and treatment persist and the current pace of progress is not fast enough to meet the Sustainable Development Goal target, with drug-resistant tuberculosis remaining a continuing threat.
- After more than a decade of steady advances in fighting malaria, progress has stalled. No significant gains were made in reducing the number of malaria cases worldwide in the period 2015–2017. Sub-Saharan Africa continues to carry the heaviest burden of disease, accounting for more than 90 per cent of the global malaria burden. Worryingly, there were an estimated 3.5 million more malaria cases in the 10 highest-burden African countries in 2017 compared with the previous year.
- In 2015, an estimated 325 million people worldwide were living with hepatitis B virus or hepatitis C virus infection. The widespread use of hepatitis B vaccine in infants has considerably reduced the incidence of new chronic HBV infections, as reflected by the decline in hepatitis B prevalence among children under 5 years of age, from 4.7 per cent in the pre-vaccine era to 0.8 per cent in 2017.
- In 2017, 1.58 billion people were reported as requiring mass or individual treatment and care for neglected tropical diseases, down from 1.63 billion in 2015 and 2.03 billion in 2010. Improved surveillance meant that further populations requiring interventions against such diseases were identified in 2017. The 522 million people requiring treatment and care in least developed countries represented 52 per cent of those countries' populations, down from 584 million in 2015.

#### *Non-communicable diseases, mental health and environmental risks*

- The probability of dying from any of the four main non-communicable diseases – cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes – between the ages of 30 and 70 was 18 per cent in 2016. The risk remains markedly higher for men globally, at 21.6 per cent, compared with 15 per cent for women.
- Progress has been made in reducing the global suicide rate (from 12.9 per 100,000 in 2000 to 10.6 per 100,000 in 2016). However, suicide remains the

second-highest cause of death among people aged 15 to 29 globally, with 79 per cent of suicides found in low- and middle-income countries in 2016.

- The prevalence of tobacco use declined from 27 per cent in 2000 to 20 per cent in 2016. Prevalence fell faster for women, from 11 per cent in 2000 to 6 per cent in 2016, compared with men: prevalence in men only fell from 43 per cent to 34 per cent. Despite the positive trends, the number of people dying from a tobacco-related illness was estimated to be more than 8.1 million in 2017.
- The number of road traffic deaths climbed from 1.31 million in 2013 to 1.35 million in 2016. Road traffic injury is the leading cause of death for children and young adults aged 5 to 29.
- Air pollution, both ambient and household, increases the risk of cardiovascular and respiratory disease and, in 2016, led to some 7 million deaths worldwide. Sub-Saharan Africa and most of Asia and Oceania (excluding Australia/New Zealand) have the highest mortality rates associated with air pollution, as a large proportion of the population still rely on polluting fuels and technologies for cooking.
- Inadequate and unsafe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene is linked to 60 per cent of the disease burden from diarrhoea, 100 per cent of the burden from infections with soil-transmitted helminths and 16 per cent of the burden from protein-energy malnutrition, leading to a total of 870,000 deaths in 2016 from the three conditions.

#### *Health systems and funding*

- Official development assistance (ODA) for basic health from all donors increased by 61 per cent in real terms since 2010 and reached \$10.7 billion in 2017. In 2017, some \$2.0 billion was spent on malaria control, \$1.0 billion on tuberculosis control and \$2.3 billion on other infectious diseases, excluding HIV/AIDS.
- Available data from 2013 to 2018 indicate that close to 40 per cent of all countries had fewer than 10 medical doctors per 10,000 people, and more than 55 per cent had fewer than 40 nursing and midwifery personnel per 10,000 people. All least developed countries had fewer than 10 medical doctors and fewer than 5 dentists and 5 pharmacists per 10,000 people, and 98 per cent had fewer than 40 nursing and midwifery personnel per 10,000 people.

#### **Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**

25. Despite the considerable progress on education access and participation over the past years, 262 million children and youth aged 6 to 17 were still out of school in 2017, and more than half of children and adolescents are not meeting minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics. Rapid technological changes present opportunities and challenges, but the learning environment, the capacities of teachers and the quality of education have not kept pace. Refocused efforts are needed to improve learning outcomes for the full life cycle, especially for women, girls and marginalized people in vulnerable settings.

- In 72 countries with recent data, approximately 7 in 10 children aged 3 and 4 were developmentally on track in at least three of the following domains: literacy-numeracy, physical development, social-emotional development and learning.

- In 2017, two out of every three children globally participated in organized learning one year before the official primary entry age. Such learning is linked to fostering children's readiness for school and their future learning experience. That rate is less than 50 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and in least developed countries.
- In 2015, an estimated 617 million children and adolescents of primary and lower secondary school age worldwide – more than 50 per cent – were not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics. Of these, about two thirds were attending school but were not learning in the classroom, or dropped out school.
- Some 750 million adults – two thirds of them women – remained illiterate in 2016. Half of the global illiterate population lives in South Asia, and a quarter live in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Many developing countries still lack basic infrastructure and facilities to provide effective learning environments. Sub-Saharan Africa faces the biggest challenges: at the primary and lower secondary levels, less than half of schools have access to electricity, the Internet, computers and basic drinking water.
- ODA for scholarships amounted to \$1.3 billion in 2017. Australia, France, Japan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and institutions of the European Union accounted for nearly two thirds of this total.
- Globally, there has been little progress in the percentage of primary school teachers who are trained: it has been stagnating at about 85 per cent since 2015. The proportion is lowest in sub-Saharan Africa (64 per cent).

### **Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**

26. While some indicators of gender equality are progressing, such as a significant decline in the prevalence of female genital mutilation and early marriage, the overall numbers continue to be high. Moreover, insufficient progress on structural issues at the root of gender inequality, such as legal discrimination, unfair social norms and attitudes, decision-making on sexual and reproductive issues and low levels of political participation, are undermining the ability to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5.

- Recent data from 106 countries show that 18 per cent of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 to 49 have experienced physical and/or sexual partner violence in the previous 12 months. The prevalence is highest in least developed countries, at 24 per cent.
- The practice of child marriage has continued to decline around the world, largely driven by progress in South Asia, where a girl's risk of marrying in childhood decreased by about one quarter between 2013 and 2018. In sub-Saharan Africa, levels of child marriage have declined at a more modest rate.
- At least 200 million girls and women have been subjected to female genital mutilation, based on data from 30 countries where the practice is concentrated and where nationally representative prevalence data is available. In these countries, the prevalence of this harmful practice declined by one quarter between approximately 2000 and 2018.
- According to recent data from some 90 countries, women devote on average roughly three times more hours a day to unpaid care and domestic work than men, limiting the time available for paid work, education and leisure and further reinforcing gender-based socioeconomic disadvantages.

- Women continue to be underrepresented at all levels of political leadership. As at 1 January 2019, women's representation in national Parliaments ranged from 0 to 61.3 per cent, with the average standing at 24.2 per cent, an increase from 19 per cent in 2010. At the local level, data from 99 countries and areas show that women's representation in elected deliberative bodies varies from less than 1 per cent to 48 per cent, with the median of the distribution at 26 per cent. When legislated gender quotas are adopted, significantly higher proportions of women are elected at both national and local levels.
- While women represented 39 per cent of world employment, only 27 per cent of managerial positions in the world were occupied by women in 2018, up only marginally from 26 per cent in 2015. The proportion of women in management has increased since 2000 in all regions except in least developed countries.
- In 51 countries with data on the subject, only 57 per cent of women aged 15 to 49, married or in union, make their own decisions about sexual relations and the use of contraceptives and health services.
- Over the past 25 years, there has been progress in reforming laws towards improving gender equality, yet discriminatory laws and gaps in legal protection remain in many countries. On the basis of data collected across four areas of law in 2018 from 53 countries, almost a third have legal gaps in the area of overarching legal frameworks and public life (e.g., constitutions, antidiscrimination laws, quotas, legal aid); more than a quarter have legal gaps in the area of violence against women; and 29 per cent and 24 per cent have legal gaps in the employment and economic benefits area and in the marriage and family area, respectively.
- Despite progress in implementing gender-responsive budgeting globally, gaps remain in country efforts to establish comprehensive and transparent tracking systems. Based on 2018 data from 69 countries, 13 countries fully met the criteria of having in place a tracking system that measures and makes publicly available gender budget data, and 41 countries approached the requirements.

#### **Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all**

27. Despite progress, billions of people still lack safe water, sanitation and handwashing facilities. Data suggests that achieving universal access to even basic sanitation service by 2030 would require doubling the current annual rate of progress. More efficient use and management of water are critical to addressing the growing demand for water, threats to water security and the increasing frequency and severity of droughts and floods resulting from climate change. As of the time of writing, most countries are unlikely to reach full implementation of integrated water resources management by 2030.

- Globally, the proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services increased from 61 to 71 per cent between 2000 and 2015 and remained unchanged in 2017. An additional 19 per cent of the global population used basic drinking water services. This means that 785 million people still lacked even a basic drinking water service.
- The global population using safely managed sanitation services increased from 28 per cent in 2000 to 43 per cent in 2015 and to 45 per cent in 2017, with the greatest increases occurring in Latin America and the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa and East and South-East Asia. Between 2000 and 2017, the proportion lacking even a basic sanitation service decreased from 44 to 27 per cent, yet 701 million people still practiced open defecation in 2017.

- In 2017, some 60 per cent of people worldwide and only 38 per cent in least developed countries had a basic handwashing facility with soap and water at home, leaving an estimated 3 billion people without basic handwashing facilities at home.
- In 2016, one third of all primary schools lacked basic drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services, affecting the education of millions of schoolchildren, but particularly girls managing menstruation, and one in four health-care facilities worldwide lacked basic water services, affecting more than 2 billion people.
- Approximately one third of countries have medium or high levels of water stress. Almost all countries that have registered high water stress are located in North Africa and West Asia or in Central and South Asia, and these levels indicate serious water difficulties in the supply of freshwater, at least during parts of the year.
- Of 172 countries, 80 per cent have medium-low implementation or better of integrated water resources management. However, 60 per cent of countries are unlikely to reach the target of full implementation by 2030.
- A significant effort is needed to ensure that cooperation is operational in all transboundary basins. According to data from 67 of 153 countries that share transboundary waters, the average percentage of national transboundary basins covered by an operational arrangement was 59 per cent in the period 2017–2018, with only 17 countries reporting that all their transboundary basins were covered by such arrangements.
- Following several years of steady increases and after reaching \$9 billion in 2016, ODA disbursements to the water sector declined by 2 per cent from 2016 to 2017. However, ODA commitments to the water sector jumped by 36 per cent between 2016 and 2017, indicating a renewed focus by donors on the sector.

#### **Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all**

28. Access to electricity in the poorest countries has begun to accelerate, energy efficiency continues to improve and renewable energy is making gains in electricity sector. Despite this progress, some 800 million people remain without electricity while access to clean cooking fuels and technologies needs dedicated attention. In addition, if Sustainable Development Goals 7, 13 and related Goals are to be met, much higher levels of ambition are required with regard to renewable energy, including transportation and heating.

- The global electrification rate rose from 83 per cent in 2010 to 87 per cent in 2015, with the increase accelerating to reach 89 per cent in 2017. However, some 840 million people around the world are still without access to electricity.
- The global share of the population with access to clean cooking fuels and technologies reached 61 per cent in 2017, up from 57 per cent in 2010. Despite this progress, close to 3 billion people still rely primarily on inefficient and polluting cooking systems.
- The renewable energy share of total final energy consumption gradually increased from 16.6 per cent in 2010 to 17.5 per cent in 2016, though much faster change is required to meet climate goals. Even though the absolute level of renewable energy consumption has grown by more than 18 per cent since 2010, only since 2012 has the growth of renewables outpaced the growth of total energy consumption.

- Global primary energy intensity (ratio of energy used per unit of GDP) improved from 5.9 in 2010 to 5.1 in 2016, a rate of improvement of 2.3 per cent, which is still short of the 2.7 per cent annual rate needed to reach target 3 of Sustainable Development Goal 7.
- International financial flows to developing countries in support of clean and renewable energy reached \$18.6 billion in 2016, almost doubling from \$9.9 billion in 2010.

**Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all**

29. Inclusive and sustainable economic growth can drive progress and generate the means to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. Globally, labour productivity has increased and unemployment is back to pre-financial crisis levels. However, the global economy is growing at a slower rate. More progress is needed to increase employment opportunities, particularly for young people, reduce informal employment and the gender pay gap and promote safe and secure working environments to create decent work for all.

- In 2017, the global growth rate of real GDP per capita was 1.9 per cent and is expected to remain at about 2 per cent from 2018 to 2020. This is significantly less than the 3 per cent rate attained in 2010 and slightly higher than the 2015 rate of 1.63 per cent. Real GDP growth rate for least developed countries is expected to increase from 4.5 per cent in 2017 to 5.7 per cent in 2020, which is less than the 7 per cent envisioned by the 2030 Agenda.
- Since the global economic downturn of 2009, labour productivity (measured as GDP per employed person) has been increasing in the world, recording positive annual growth rates consistently since 2010. In 2018, the world's labour productivity increased by 2.1 per cent, its highest annual growth since 2010.
- Informal employment, which has an impact on the adequacy of earnings, occupational safety and health and working conditions, remains pervasive: in three quarters of countries with data on the subject, more than half of all persons employed in non-agriculture sectors are in informal employment.
- Based on data for 62 countries, the median hourly gender pay gap stood at 12 per cent. The median gender pay gap exceeded 20 per cent in managerial and professional occupations, among workers in crafts and related trades and among plant machine operators and assemblers.
- The global unemployment rate has finally recovered from the global economic crisis. In 2018, the global unemployment rate stood at 5.0 per cent – matching pre-crisis levels. Youth were three times more likely to be unemployed than adults.
- In 2018, one fifth of the world's youth were not in education, employment or training, meaning that they were neither gaining professional experience nor acquiring or developing skills through educational or vocational programmes in their prime years. There is a stark gender difference. Young women were more than twice as likely as young men to be unemployed or outside the labour force and not in education or training.
- Many workers around the world are exposed to undue risks in their workplaces. Based on recent data from some 55 countries, a median of 3 deaths occurred per 100,000 employees and a median of 889 non-fatal injuries occurred per 100,000 employees.

- Access to finance is on the rise globally, but the mode of access seems to be changing with growing reliance on technology. From 2010 to 2017, the number of automated teller machines (ATMs) per 100,000 adults grew by close to 50 per cent from 45 to 66 globally, and from 2.3 to 5.8 in the least developed countries. The number of commercial bank branches per 100,000 adults grew by only 2 per cent between 2010 and 2017, with more customers using digital banking solutions.
- In 2017, aid-for-trade commitments increased to \$58 billion and more than doubled when compared to the 2002–2005 baseline, when they represented \$23.1 billion. In absolute terms, the increase was highest in the agriculture sector (\$1.7 billion), the industry sector (\$1.0 billion) and in banking and financial services (\$1.0 billion).

### **Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation**

30. Aspects of the prevailing global economic environment have not been conducive to rapid progress on Sustainable Development Goal 9. While financing for economic infrastructure has increased in developing countries and impressive progress has been made in mobile connectivity, countries that are lagging behind, such as least developed countries, face serious challenges in doubling the manufacturing industry's share of GDP by 2030, and investment in scientific research and innovation remains below the global average.

- Efficient transportation services are key drivers of economic development, and more than 80 per cent of world merchandise trade by volume is transported by sea, making maritime transport a critical enabler of trade and globalization. International maritime freight increased by an estimated 3.7 per cent globally in 2017 and projected growth will test the capacity of existing maritime transport infrastructure to support increased freight volumes.
- In 2018, global manufacturing slowed in both developing and developed regions. The slowdown was attributed mainly to emerging trade and tariff barriers that constrained investment and future growth. Despite this slowdown, the global share of GDP in terms of manufacturing value added increased marginally from 15.9 per cent in 2008 to 16.5 per cent in 2015, but stalled at the same level in 2018. The share of manufacturing in least developed countries remained low, posing a serious challenge to the target of doubling the industry's share of GDP by 2030.
- Meanwhile, the share of manufacturing employment in total employment declined from 15.3 per cent in 2000 to 14.7 per cent in 2015 and to 14.2 per cent in 2018, as countries gradually reallocated production factors from agriculture and low-value added manufacturing towards high-value added manufacturing and services.
- The intensity of global carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions from manufacturing industries declined by more than 20 per cent between 2000 and 2016, to 0.30 kg CO<sub>2</sub> per United States dollar, showing a general decoupling of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and GDP growth.
- The proportion of global GDP invested in research and development increased from 1.52 per cent to 1.68 per cent from 2000 to 2016, with Europe and Northern America standing at 2.21 per cent of GDP spent on research and development and most developing regions falling short of the world average in 2016.

- While there has been an increase in the number of researchers per million inhabitants from 804 in 2000 to 1,163 in 2016, that number reached only 91 in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Total official flows for economic infrastructure in developing countries reached \$59 billion in 2017, an increase of 32.5 per cent in real terms since 2010. Within this total, the main sectors assisted were transport (\$21.6 billion) and banking and financial services (\$13.4 billion).
- In 2016, medium-high and high-tech sectors accounted for 44.7 per cent of the global manufacturing value added. Medium-high and high-tech products continued to dominate manufacturing production in Northern America and Europe, reaching 47.4 per cent in 2016 compared with 10.4 per cent in least developed countries.
- Almost all people around the world now live within range of a mobile-cellular network signal, with 90 per cent living within range of a 3G-quality or higher network. This evolution of the mobile network, however, is growing more rapidly than the percentage of the population using the Internet.

### **Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries**

31. Inequality within and among nations continues to be a significant concern despite progress in and efforts at narrowing disparities of opportunity, income and power. Income inequality continues to rise in many parts of the world, even as the bottom 40 per cent of the population in many countries has experienced positive growth rates. Greater emphasis will need to be placed on reducing inequalities in income as well as those based on other factors. Additional efforts are needed to increase zero-tariff access for exports from least developed countries and developing countries, and assistance to least developed countries and small island developing States.

- In more than half of the 92 countries with comparable data during the period 2011–2016, the bottom 40 per cent of the population experienced a growth rate that was higher than the overall national average. However, the bottom 40 per cent received less than 25 per cent of the overall income or consumption. In many places, the increasing share of income going to the top 1 per cent of earners is of significant concern.
- Robust and sound financial systems are essential for supporting equal access to financial services. High loan asset impairment, measured by the ratio of non-performing loans to total loans for deposit takers, is a potential risk to the soundness of the banking system. For almost half of the 138 reporting countries, the percentage of non-performing loans to total loans was less than 5, while the average median for the period 2010–2017 was 4.3 per cent.
- While countries in developing regions represent over 70 per cent of the membership of the General Assembly and World Trade Organization, which utilize a one member, one vote system, their voting share in other international organizations remains far below these levels. Governance reforms are being negotiated at the International Monetary Fund, and changes were adopted at the World Bank in October 2018. However, full implementation will leave developing countries with just over 40 per cent of the voting rights, still short of the 75 per cent they represent in World Bank membership in terms of the number of countries.
- Duty-free access continued to increase for least developed countries, small island developing States and developing regions at large. More than 50 per cent of exports from developing countries are now eligible for duty-free treatment.



The increase of duty-free access in world markets was the largest for least developed countries, namely in the industrial and agricultural sector.

- In 2017, total receipts by developing countries from donors of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, multilateral agencies and other key providers were \$414 billion, of which \$163 billion were ODA. Total ODA to small island developing States from all donors was \$4.3 billion in 2017, a decrease of 33 per cent in real terms over 2016, due to exceptional debt relief operations for Cuba in 2016.

### **Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**

32. Substantial progress has been made in reducing the proportion of the global urban population living in slums, though more than 1 billion people continue to live in such situations. Urgent action is needed to reverse the current situation, which sees the vast majority of urban residents breathing poor-quality air and having limited access to transport and open public spaces. With the areas occupied by cities growing faster than their populations, there are profound repercussions for sustainability.

- Between 1990 and 2016, the proportion of the global urban population living in slums fell from 46 to 23 per cent. This progress was largely offset by internal population growth and rural-urban migration. In 2016, just over 1 billion people lived in slums or informal settlements, with over half (589 million) living in East, South-East, Central and South Asia.
- The proportion of urban residents who have convenient access to public transport (defined as living within 500 m walking distance of a bus stop and within 1,000 m of a railway and/or ferry terminal) remains low, particularly in developing countries. Based on data from 227 cities from 78 countries in 2018, on average, 53 per cent of urban residents in all regions had convenient access to public transport, from a low of 18 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa to a high of 75 per cent in Australia and New Zealand. In some regions that have low access to public transport, informal transport modes are highly prevalent and in many cases provide reliable transport for the majority of urban populations.
- Globally, urban areas are expanding at a faster rate than their populations. Between 2000 and 2014, areas occupied by cities grew 1.28 times faster than their populations. Closely related to this trend is that the urban densities of cities have been declining, creating profound repercussions for environmental sustainability at the local, regional and global scale. Better management of urban growth will be crucial in order to guarantee sustainable urbanization.
- Globally, 2 billion people do not have access to waste collection services and 3 billion people lack access to controlled waste disposal facilities. With increasing urban populations and the existence of consumer-oriented economies amid rising income levels and rapid urbanization, it is estimated that the total waste generated in the world will double from nearly 2 billion tons in 2016 to about 4 billion tons by 2050. While from 2010 to 2018 the proportion of solid waste collected was about 81 per cent globally, in sub-Saharan Africa it was only 52 per cent.
- In 2016, 9 in 10 people living in urban areas still breathed air that did not meet the World Health Organization's air quality guidelines value for particulate matter – that particulate matter 2.5 microns or less in size (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) not exceed an annual mean of 10 micrograms per m<sup>3</sup> or a daily mean of 25 micrograms per m<sup>3</sup> – and more than half of the world population experienced an increase in PM<sub>2.5</sub> from 2010 to 2016.

- Most cities have struggled to ensure that their populations have convenient access to open public spaces (defined as spaces within 400 m walking distance of their residence). Based on data from 220 cities in 77 countries in 2018, only 21 per cent of the population had convenient access to open public spaces. However, these results do not necessarily mean that there is an inadequate share of land dedicated to open public spaces in these cities, but rather that their distribution across urban areas is uneven.
- National urban policies are policy strategies that specifically respond to the urbanization challenges of today. As of the beginning of 2019, 150 countries had developed such policies, and almost half are already implementing them.

### **Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns**

33. Worldwide material consumption has expanded rapidly, as has material footprint per capita, seriously jeopardizing the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 12 and the Goals more broadly. Urgent action is needed to ensure that current material needs do not lead to the overextraction of resources or to the degradation of environmental resources, and should include policies that improve resource efficiency, reduce waste and mainstream sustainability practices across all sectors of the economy.

- In 2017, worldwide material consumption reached 92.1 billion tons, up from 87 billion in 2015 and a 254 per cent increase from 27 billion in 1970, with the rate of extraction accelerating every year since 2000. This reflects the increased demand for natural resources that has defined the past decades, resulting in undue burden on environmental resources. Without urgent and concerted political action, it is projected that global resource extraction could grow to 190 billion tons by 2060.
- Material footprint per capita has increased considerably as well: in 1990 some 8.1 tons of natural resources were used to satisfy a person's need, while in 2015, almost 12 tons of resources were extracted per person.
- Well-designed national policy frameworks and instruments are necessary to enable the fundamental shift towards sustainable consumption and production patterns. In 2018, 71 countries and the European Union reported on a total of 303 policy instruments.
- Parties to the Montreal Protocol and the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions are required to transmit information on the implementation of their obligations under those agreements. However, the rate of transmission varies, with the average compliance rate across these four agreements at approximately 70 per cent.

### **Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts**

34. With rising greenhouse gas emissions, climate change is occurring at rates much faster than anticipated and its effects are clearly felt worldwide. While there are positive steps in terms of the climate finance flows and the development of nationally determined contributions, far more ambitious plans and accelerated action are needed on mitigation and adaptation. Access to finance and strengthened capacities need to be scaled up at a much faster rate, particularly for least developed countries and small island developing States.

- Increasing greenhouse gas emissions are driving climate change. In 2017, greenhouse gas concentrations reached new highs, with globally averaged mole fractions of CO<sub>2</sub> at 405.5 parts per million (ppm), up from 400.1 ppm in 2015, and at 146 per cent of pre-industrial levels. Moving towards 2030 emission

objectives compatible with the 2°C and 1.5°C pathways requires a peak to be achieved as soon as possible, followed by rapid reductions.

- As indicated under Sustainable Development Goal 1 (see para. 22 above), during the period 1998–2017, direct economic losses from disasters were estimated at almost \$3 trillion. Climate-related and geophysical disasters claimed an estimated 1.3 million lives.
- As of April 2019, 185 parties had ratified the Paris Agreement. Parties to the Paris Agreement are expected to prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions, and 183 parties had communicated their first nationally determined contributions to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, while 1 party had communicated its second. Under the Agreement, all parties are required to submit new nationally determined contributions, containing revised and much more ambitious targets, by 2020.
- Global climate finance flows increased by 17 per cent in the period 2015–2016 compared with the period 2013–2014.
- As at 20 May 2019, 28 countries had accessed Green Climate Fund grant financing for the formulation of national adaptation plans and other adaptation planning processes, with a value of \$75 million. Of these, 67 per cent were for least developed countries, small island developing States and African States. Proposals from an additional seven countries, with a value of \$17 million, are in the final stage of approval. In total, 75 countries are seeking support from the Green Climate Fund for national adaptation plans and other adaptation planning processes, with a combined value of \$191 million.

#### **Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development**

35. The expansion of protected areas for marine biodiversity and existing policies and treaties that encourage responsible use of ocean resources are still insufficient to combat the adverse effects of overfishing, growing ocean acidification due to climate change and worsening coastal eutrophication. As billions of people depend on oceans for their livelihood and food source and on the transboundary nature of oceans, increased efforts and interventions are needed to conserve and sustainably use ocean resources at all levels.

- Ocean acidification is caused by the uptake of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> by the ocean, which changes the chemical composition of the seawater. Long-term observations of ocean acidification over the past 30 years have shown an average increase of acidity of 26 per cent since pre-industrial times, and at this rate, an increase of 100 to 150 per cent is predicted by the end of the century, with serious consequences for marine life.
- To achieve sustainable development of fisheries, fish stocks must be maintained at a biologically sustainable level. Analyses reveal that the fraction of world marine fish stocks that are within biologically sustainable levels declined from 90 per cent in 1974 to 66.9 per cent in 2015.
- As of December 2018, over 24 million km<sup>2</sup> (17.2 per cent) of waters under national jurisdiction (0–200 nautical miles from a national border) were covered by protected areas, a significant increase from 12 per cent in 2015 and more than double the extent covered in 2010. The global mean percentage of each marine key biodiversity area covered by protected areas increased from 31.2 per cent in 2000 to 44.7 per cent in 2015 and to 45.7 per cent in 2018.

- Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing remains one of the greatest threats to sustainable fisheries, the livelihoods of those who depend upon them and marine ecosystems. A framework of international instruments has been developed that addresses different aspects of fisheries management. Most countries have taken measures to combat such fishing and have adopted an increasing number of fisheries management instruments in the past decade. For example, the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, the first international binding agreement to combat such fishing, entered into force in June 2016. The number of parties to the Agreement has rapidly increased and stood at 58 as of February 2019.
- Small-scale fisheries are present in almost all countries, accounting for more than half of total production on average, in terms of both quantity and value. To promote small-scale fishers' access to productive resources, services and markets, most countries have developed targeted regulatory and institutional frameworks. However, more than 20 per cent of countries have a low to medium level of implementation of such frameworks, particularly in Oceania and Central and South Asia.

**Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss**

36. There are some encouraging global trends in protecting terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity. Forest loss is slowing down, more key biodiversity areas are protected and more financial assistance is flowing towards biodiversity protection. Yet, the 2020 targets of Sustainable Development Goal 15 are unlikely to be met, land degradation continues, biodiversity loss is occurring at an alarming rate, and invasive species and the illicit poaching and trafficking of wildlife continue to thwart efforts to protect and restore vital ecosystems and species.

- Protecting important sites for terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity is vital for ensuring long-term and sustainable use of terrestrial and freshwater natural resources. The global mean percentage of each key biodiversity area covered by protected areas increased from 33.1 per cent in 2000 to 46.1 per cent in 2018 for terrestrial areas, from 30.5 per cent in 2000 to 43.2 per cent in 2018 for freshwater areas, and from 32.9 per cent in 2000 to 44.7 per cent in 2018 for mountain areas.
- Healthy mountain ecosystems are fundamental to ensuring the provision of ecosystem services to upland communities as well as lowland peoples. As of 2017, 76 per cent of the world's mountain areas were covered by a form of green coverage: 41 per cent by forests, 29 per cent by grassland/shrubland and only 6 per cent by cropland.
- From 2000 to 2015, more than one fifth of the Earth's total land area was degraded, largely due to human-induced processes, such as desertification, cropland expansion and urbanization. During the same period, there were significant productivity declines in land cover, with grasslands incurring some of the greatest losses.
- The most fundamental and irreversible human impact on nature is species extinction. The Red List Index – which measures the risk of extinction, in which a value of 1 indicates no threat to any species, and a value of 0 indicates that all species are extinct – has deteriorated from 0.82 in 1993 to 0.73 globally in 2019.

- The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity creates incentives to conserve and sustainably use genetic resources and biodiversity. As at 1 February 2019, 116 countries had ratified the Nagoya Protocol (an increase of 46 since 2016) and 61 countries had shared information on their access and benefit-sharing frameworks through the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House (representing an increase of 55 countries).
- In 2017, bilateral ODA in support of biodiversity was \$8.7 billion, an increase of 15 per cent in real terms over 2016.

**Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels**

37. Advances in ending violence, promoting the rule of law, strengthening institutions and increasing access to justice are uneven and continue to deprive millions of their security, rights and opportunities and undermine the delivery of public services and broader economic development. Attacks on civil society are also holding back development progress. Renewed efforts are essential to move towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16.

- The number of intentional homicides per 100,000 people increased from 6.0 in 2015 to 6.1 in 2017. This slight uptick was largely the result of an increase in the homicide rates in Latin America and the Caribbean and in some countries in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Various forms of violence against children persist. In 83 countries (mostly from developing regions) with recent data on the subject, nearly 8 in 10 children from 1 to 14 years of age were subjected to some form of psychological aggression and/or physical punishment at home. In all but seven of these countries, at least half of children experienced violent disciplinary methods. Sexual violence is perhaps the most disturbing of children's rights violations. Based on the limited data available, in 14 of 46 countries with comparable data, at least 5 per cent of women between the ages of 18 and 29 experienced sexual intercourse or other sexual acts that were forced, physically or in other ways, for the first time before they were 18 years of age.
- There has been an overall increase in the detection of victims of trafficking in persons, which could reflect either a positive (enhanced efforts by authorities to identify victims) or negative (larger trafficking problem) development. In a departure from prior findings, recent data show that most trafficking victims were detected domestically: 58 per cent in 2016, up from 43 per cent in 2014. The vast majority (70 per cent) of detected victims of human trafficking were women and girls, most of whom were trafficked for sexual exploitation.
- The share of unsentenced detainees in the overall prison population has remained largely constant at 30 per cent in recent years. This occurred in a context where the total prison population grew in absolute values while remaining constant as a share of the total population.
- Killings of human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists are on the rise. From 2017 to 2018, the United Nations recorded and verified 431 killings across 41 countries. Every passing week saw at least eight people murdered at the front lines of efforts to build more inclusive and equal societies – a worrying increase from the previous average of one victim per day observed from 2015 to 2017. Ninety-nine journalists and bloggers were among the victims.

- Birth registration plays a primary role in ensuring individual rights and access to justice and social services. Even if many regions have reached universal or near universal birth registration, globally the average is just 73 per cent. Fewer than half (46 per cent) of all children under the age of 5 in sub-Saharan Africa have had their births registered.
- Binding laws and policies giving individuals a right to access information held by public authorities have been adopted by 125 countries, with at least 31 countries adopting such laws since 2013. Among the 123 countries for which data on the legal framework is available, 40 do not include the right to appeal to an independent administrative body, which has been assessed as key for the proper implementation of this right.
- The pace of progress to put in place national human rights institutions compliant with the Paris Principles must be accelerated. In 2018, a total of 39 per cent of all countries had in place an institution that was fully compliant with the internationally agreed standard, seven countries more than was the case in 2015. If growth continues at the same rate, by 2030 only a little over one half (54 per cent) of all countries worldwide will have compliant national human rights institutions.
- The difference between the approved and the implemented budget reflects a government's ability to achieve development objectives, including delivering services to the public. Deviation between the approved and actual spending during the period 2006–2017 in 108 countries shows that actual spending was within plus or minus 5 per cent of the approved budget in about half of the countries. One out of 10 countries had a deviation of more than plus or minus 15 per cent. Almost half of low-income economies showed more than plus or minus 10 per cent deviation in budget execution.

### **Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development**

38. Progress on some means of implementation targets is moving rapidly: personal remittances are at an all-time high, an increasing proportion of the global population has access to the Internet and the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries has been established. Yet, significant challenges remain: ODA is declining, private investment flows are not well aligned with sustainable development, there continues to be a significant digital divide and there are ongoing trade tensions. Enhanced international cooperation is needed to ensure that sufficient means of implementation exist to provide countries the opportunity to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

#### *Finance*

- Net ODA flows totalled \$149 billion in 2018, down 2.7 per cent in real terms from 2017, with a declining share going to the neediest countries. Bilateral ODA to least developed countries fell by 3 per cent in real terms from 2017, aid to Africa fell by 4 per cent, and humanitarian aid fell by 8 per cent.
- In 2019, annual remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries are projected to reach \$550 billion. That would make remittance flows larger than foreign direct investment and ODA flows to low- and middle-income countries. In 2018, remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries reached \$529 billion, an increase of 9.6 per cent over 2017.
- The average overall rate of taxation among the Group of 20 and other advanced economies was around 23 per cent of GDP in 2018, compared with 18 per cent

among the developing and emerging market economies. Assessing an appropriate level of “tax burden” (revenue in the form of taxes) is a critical element of fiscal policy with implications for economic growth.

#### *Information and communications technology*

- At the end of 2018, more than half the world’s population (3.9 billion people) had access to the Internet – a step towards a more inclusive global information society. Over 80 per cent in developed countries were online in 2018, compared with 45 per cent in developing countries and only 20 per cent in least developed countries.

#### *Capacity-building*

- Total ODA for capacity-building and national planning stood at \$33.5 billion in 2017, representing 14 per cent of total sector-allocable aid – a level that has been stable since 2010. The main sectors assisted were public administration, energy and the financial sector, which received a combined total of \$13.0 billion. Latin America and the Caribbean enjoyed the largest share of aid at \$7.6 billion, followed by sub-Saharan Africa (\$6.1 billion) and South Asia (\$5.0 billion).

#### *Trade*

- Decreasing tariffs applied worldwide provide wider access to goods and contribute to a more open trading system. In 2017, trade-weighted tariffs decreased to an average of 2.2 per cent worldwide, but there still remain large differences at the regional level that reflect global economic imbalances. The highest average tariff rates in 2017 were applied across African regions. In 2018, doubt was cast over the future of a sound multilateral trading system under WTO, as there were significant trade tensions among large economies.
- Despite a slight upturn in 2017, the share of least developed countries in world merchandise exports remains just below 1 per cent. The slow growth could lead to missing the trade target set by the Istanbul Programme of Action – to double the least developed countries’ share of global exports by 2020. The exports from least developed countries will have to grow approximately four times faster than global exports to see their share doubled in two years.
- Preferential tariffs applied to imports from the least developed countries and developing countries in the developed markets remained unchanged in 2017. While the clothing sector continued to be strongly protected in these markets, the exports from least developed countries benefited from the high preferential margins – 5.9 percentage points – in this sector.

#### *Systemic issues*

- Bilateral development partners’ respect for country policies declined from 64 per cent in 2016 to 57 per cent in 2018. Some 76 per cent of new development projects and programmes aligned their objectives to those defined in the country strategies and/or plans in 2018. However, only around half of result indicators – 52 per cent – for these interventions were drawn from country-owned result frameworks and only 44 per cent of result indicators were monitored using data and statistics from government monitoring systems.
- In 2018, 51 of 114 countries reported overall progress towards strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships and the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Improvements were reported with regard to the quality and use

of public financial management and reporting systems for development cooperation activities and flows channelled through the public sector. There was a need to increase the space for civil society's contribution to sustainable development and for a more inclusive and relevant dialogue between the public and private sectors.

#### *Data, monitoring and accountability*

- In 2018, 111 countries had national statistical legislation that was compliant with the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, up from 71 countries in 2017. Entrusted with the production of official statistics, national statistical offices need to comply with strict international principles, including scientific methods, professional ethics and standard procedures for the collection, processing, storage and presentation of statistical data.
- In 2016, countries received \$623 million in support from multilateral and bilateral donors for all areas of statistics, up from \$591 million in 2015. However, this amount accounts for only 0.33 per cent of total ODA. Over the past four years, countries in sub-Saharan Africa benefited most (\$932 million), followed by Central and South Asia (\$180 million) and Latin America and the Caribbean (\$177 million). For developing countries to meet the data needs of the Sustainable Development Goals, current donor support for data and statistics will need to increase by nearly \$200 million per year.
- Population and housing censuses are a primary source of the disaggregated data needed to formulate, implement and monitor development policies and programmes. During the 10-year period from 2008 to 2017, 89 per cent of countries or areas around the world conducted at least one population and housing census.
- The coverage of birth and death registration and the completeness of vital statistics remain a challenge, even among countries with functioning civil registration systems. During the period 2013-2017, 143 countries had birth registration data that were at least 90 per cent complete and 149 countries had death registration data that were at least 75 per cent complete. However, only 9 of 53 sub-Saharan African countries met these standards.

#### **Regional and country variations**

39. While many trends regarding the Sustainable Development Goals are common to all regions, there are significant regional differences regarding progress towards the Goals and related obstacles.

40. In sub-Saharan Africa, access to electricity is increasing and efficiency in energy use is improving, but the region's abundant renewable energy potential remains largely untapped. Africa is also the fastest urbanizing region globally, and its potential benefits have yet to be fully realized. At the same time, the targets on poverty, hunger, maternal deaths and education are not being met in sub-Saharan Africa, and it is estimated that a tripling of Africa's 2018 economic growth rate to 3.2 per cent is needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2017, life expectancy was 61 in sub-Saharan Africa and 72 for the world. Africa has the highest rate of estimated informal employment in the world, at 85.8 per cent of total employment, and the highest rate of vulnerable employment globally, averaging 66 per cent. Five out of the eight worst food insecurity crises in 2018 were in Africa.

41. In the Arab region, extreme poverty had previously been below 3 per cent. However, the conflicts in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen have raised the region's poverty rate and exacerbated hunger. Conflict, instability and climate change



have local and transboundary impacts – 14 of the world’s 20 most water-stressed countries are in the region, leading to increasing freshwater scarcity. The region is the origin of over half the world’s refugees (while also being home to one third of them). Youth unemployment in the Arab region exceeds 30 per cent, and reaches 48 per cent among young women.

42. The Asia-Pacific region has made notable headway on poverty, quality education and affordable and clean energy, but has also gone backwards on clean water and sanitation, decent work and economic growth and responsible consumption and production. Furthermore, progress is insufficient with regard to increasing good health and well-being, improving gender equality and strengthening partnerships. The region also remains extremely vulnerable to disasters and climate change, given its large rural population, the pervasiveness of resource-dependent livelihoods and poverty, and the region’s unique geographical and hydrological features.

43. Latin America and the Caribbean made significant progress regarding social indicators, such as the reduction of poverty and inequality. Yet progress has slowed or stalled in the past several years. Extreme poverty can be eradicated only through radically different approaches. Globalization in trade and finance, technological change, the restricted role of trade unions and the limited redistributive power of taxes and social policies have contributed to high levels of inequality. This has made the commitment to leave no one behind particularly challenging.

44. Europe has already reduced extreme poverty to below 3 per cent. At same time, Europe is facing pressing challenges, such as environmental degradation and climate change, demographic transition, inequality and pressure on public finances. Progress in reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the region has been slow, with emissions per capita remaining much higher than global averages. Climate finance from the region has been a growing trend, but more resources are still required to speed up change.

45. Certain country groupings also demonstrate pronounced shortfalls – on average, there are only 3.1 medical doctors per 10,000 people in low-income countries compared with a global average of 15.1 per 10,000, while high-income countries have twice the global average. Economic growth rates for least developed countries, measured in terms of real GDP growth per capita, was about a third of the 2030 Agenda target of 7 per cent. For many least developed countries, a more rapid structural transformation of their economies would help speed Sustainable Development Goal progress. Landlocked developing countries face infrastructure deficits – only 52 per cent of their populations have access to electricity, compared with the world average of more than 87 per cent. For many small island developing States, extreme environmental and climate vulnerability is exacerbated by the economic exposure characterized by less-diversified economies, high debt burdens and a lack of access to concessional finance (due to their middle-income country status). Disasters can wipe out years of progress in achieving the Goals in small island developing States and in least developed countries.

46. The bleak situation in countries in situations of conflict or fragility is all the more troubling given that, by 2030, more than half the world’s poor are projected to live in countries affected by conflict.

47. High and pervasive levels of poverty and inequality, vulnerability to shocks and the prospect of a “middle-income trap” pose formidable development challenges to a large number of middle-income countries. Other challenges include natural resources management, reliance on commodity exports, climate change, rapid urbanization and capacity issues at the local level.

48. Disparities between developed and developing countries are also apparent along other dimensions – while Europe and Northern America spend 2.21 per cent of

GDP on research and development, this figure falls below the global average of 1.68 per cent in most developing countries.

49. Rural and urban differentials are also evident – some 85 per cent of countries with data on the subject reported higher out-of-school rates for students in primary and secondary school in rural areas compared with students in urban areas, and that most people lacking access to basic sanitation services were in rural areas. Within rural areas, incomes of small-scale food producers are systematically lower than all food producers.

### **III. Looking beyond the data: a truly global response**

50. While the data demonstrate that the world is not yet on a trajectory to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, this fails to tell the full story of the response to Goals over the past four years.

51. The 2030 Agenda has kicked off dynamic efforts to implement its vision in many countries and among many communities. Actions have come in many forms. Communities have focused on establishing foundations for transformation. Governments and others are grappling with complex and interconnected development challenges that require deep changes to systems people have relied on for decades to govern their societies and manage their economies. Though such actions represent an almost universal commitment to implementation, they have not gone far enough to adequately respond to the paradigm shift required by the 2030 Agenda and will need to be built upon and scaled up over the coming years to significantly accelerate progress.

#### **Responses by Governments**

52. By July 2019, 141 countries will have presented voluntary national reviews of their implementation efforts at the high-level political forum on sustainable development. At a time of intense domestic pressures and significant challenges to multilateralism, this is an indication of robust engagement with and meaningful country ownership of the 2030 Agenda. Countries are committed to sharing experiences and opportunities for implementation.

53. It is from those reviews, and the often extensive and inclusive processes that have accompanied them, that the breadth and depth of actions being taken by Governments and others can be seen. This provides lessons to take forward the case for scale and the investment needed to deliver all 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

#### *Mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals into national plans, policies and budgets*

54. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the challenge of addressing the interdependent nature of the Sustainable Development Goals have revived interest in development planning and national sustainable development strategies. Many countries have been mainstreaming the Goals into their planning documents or sustainable development policies.

55. For some countries, the 2030 Agenda has served as a blueprint for new or revised plans or strategies. In a number of cases, this was made possible by the timing of their planning cycles, as their national planning/policy documents were meant to be revised after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. Other countries, especially those whose national plans or policies predate 2015, have mainly mapped the Sustainable Development Goals against their existing documents and analysed how these

documents can advance the 2030 Agenda. In some cases, countries have focused on both longer-term planning/policy frameworks – sometimes a vision document – and shorter-term documents, such as national development plans. With time, it can be expected that the Goals will be more systematically incorporated into planning and policy design, and focus on the prioritization and acceleration of progress through interventions that will have potential multiplier effects across the Goals. This will contribute to accelerating implementation and enhancing coherence and integration among sectoral and other national strategies.

56. Countries have also sought to align plans and policies not only with the 2030 Agenda, but with regional agreements, such as Agenda 2063 of the African Union, and with global frameworks, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, as well as with programmes of action for least developed countries, landlocked least developed countries and small island developing States. Similar efforts are being undertaken in relation to the implementation of the Paris Agreement and nationally determined contributions that cannot proceed in isolation from broader efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and doing so can leverage the synergies across both.

57. The 2030 Agenda is also being pursued directly or indirectly through the sectoral and other policies of many countries. In particular, countries have adopted policies to strengthen the sustainability of their economies. Measures have been taken, in both the public and private sectors, to decouple economic growth from the use of natural resources. The concepts of circular and low-carbon economies are gaining ground.

58. Budgeting for the Sustainable Development Goals and incorporating them into national financial frameworks has faced challenges. National efforts to link budget processes with the Goals have been limited in developed and developing countries alike so far, though a few countries have taken this approach at the initiative of government ministries, parliamentarians and other political actors. Only a small number of countries appear to have concrete financing plans for Goal implementation. Applying development finance assessments that gauge the financing landscape can be a useful tool. Some countries have carried out a cost assessment of national implementation of the Goals in an effort to prioritize and link key investments that have multiplier effects with their budgets. A significant factor is securing the engagement of ministries of finance, as the main custodian of the budget process, in developing budgets that are aligned with and inspired by the Goals.

#### *Coordination and integration*

59. In their voluntary national reviews, a number of countries have indicated that developing integrated policies is a challenge. It requires dedicated coordination within public institutions and beyond, as numerous gaps and challenges still persist despite the coordination structures that have already been put in place.

60. Countries have put in place a variety of institutions that emphasize coherence, integration and multisectoral involvement. These include, for example, interministerial commissions or similar bodies. In the Caribbean, countries that have formalized such institutions, such as the Dominican Republic or Jamaica, report that these arrangements have been important in advancing Sustainable Development Goal implementation.

61. Overall, it is important that the institution leading the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals has sufficient authority and powers to mobilize the entire government, including regional and local levels, and the entire society around the Goals. It is also critical that such coordination structures go beyond information exchange or superficial matching exercises. They must focus instead

on developing and overseeing the implementation of comprehensive, integrated and coherent policies and the requisite results-based budgets. The initiative of many countries – including Bangladesh, Belarus, Costa Rica and Nigeria, among others – that have placed a high-level entity, such as a department in the office of a President or Prime Minister, to promote, oversee, coordinate and in some cases review the implementation of the Goals, is a notable step in this direction. This breaks from the traditional approach where sustainable development is a subject solely of the environment ministry or some other sectoral ministry.

62. Parliaments have an important role in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through their oversight and legislative functions and their adoption of budgets. Some countries have involved their Parliaments in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Goals, although this is far from widespread. In a few countries, such as Finland and the Netherlands, the Government reports annually to the Parliament on the Goals. Some Parliaments have also taken the initiative to engage in the implementation of the Goals, for example through the creation of dedicated parliamentary committees or the convening of hearings.

63. Supreme audit institutions are also starting to play an important role, auditing the preparedness of Governments for Sustainable Development Goal implementation in well over 20 countries. Taken together, the conclusions of those audits provide important lessons on the challenges that countries face. Enshrining the Goals in institutions such as parliaments and supreme audit institutions will help ensure that the Goals remain a priority regardless of political change after elections.

64. At the high-level political forum, countries have emphasized that policy coherence, both horizontal (across government) and vertical (from national to regional and subregional levels of government) presents a key challenge. Nevertheless, a number of countries have engaged local and regional governments in implementation efforts and thus strengthened vertical coordination. Just as important, many local governments have taken the initiative to implement the Sustainable Development Goals systematically, in some cases going further than national Governments in this regard. There are, however, considerable variations in the degree to which local governments are engaged, as well as in the level of coordination and collaboration across government levels on the implementation of the Goals.

#### *Increasing public awareness and ownership*

65. Creating awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals is essential in order to shift mindsets and mobilize creative action from all levels of society. Thus, many Governments have undertaken awareness-raising campaigns to inform people about the Goals and increase ownership, sometimes in partnership with United Nations entities or local universities. India, for example, has pursued social media campaigns to reach out to the public. The Government of Japan has established a new Cabinet body called the “Sustainable Development Goals Promotion Headquarters”, headed by the Prime Minister and comprising all ministers, to raise awareness and engage all stakeholders in their implementation.

66. Despite a number of actions undertaken at all levels, public awareness of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals appears to remain relatively modest, especially at the grass-roots and community levels. Awareness and communications strategies sometimes suffer from a lack of sustainable and sufficient institutional and financial resources. There is a need to step up awareness-raising activities in the next phase of implementation. Fostering sustainable and long-term behaviour change with the younger generations, including through integrating the Goals into education curricula, is important.

### **Engagement of civil society and the private sector**

67. The 2030 Agenda can only be realized through a whole-of-society approach, with actors beyond Government embracing the paradigm shift behind the Agenda, aligning their own systems with the Sustainable Development Goals, actively participating in implementation efforts and becoming champions for continued improvement.

68. Over the past years, stakeholders have engaged in, for example, designing, implementing and evaluating policies and reviewing progress. In some countries, such as Latvia, they have been able to participate in the preparation of planning documents and support policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In others, stakeholders are engaged through the multi-stakeholder institutions that were created to implement the 2030 Agenda or those that had already existed, such as National Councils for Sustainable Development. Dedicated meetings or forums have been held with civil society, including youth organizations, movements and networks, or the business sector. Public consultations have offered the public an opportunity to join related informal and formal working groups, advisory councils and other forums.

69. Building on the critical role that they played in developing the 2030 Agenda, since 2015, civil society actors throughout the world have turned their attention to supporting its faithful implementation. Many have contributed directly to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, for example through programmes to support the poorest and most vulnerable groups. They have also repeatedly called upon Governments to meet the level of ambition of the Agenda and sought to hold them accountable when it is not met. Grass-roots civil society organizations are helping to reach marginalized and vulnerable groups, and many countries have taken steps towards such efforts and the engagement of those groups, in line with their national circumstances. At the same time, reaching the most marginalized and vulnerable groups is difficult, all the more so because there has been a tendency to involve larger non-governmental organizations, rather than smaller, community-based organizations and individuals.

70. The academic and scientific communities have also been playing an important role in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, through their dialogue with policymakers and other segments of society. Many have sought to orient their work behind the Goals, developing sustainable solutions and technology to meet specific challenges and conducting increasingly important research. Some academic institutions have also worked to instil the Goals into the core of their graduate and postgraduate programmes, helping to ensure that sustainable development-oriented thinking is integrated increasingly into the mindset and skill sets of those entering the labour market.

71. Many countries and the United Nations system have made efforts to mobilize the private sector for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and several have noted that good practices and models are needed to scale up engagement. The private sector must become a long-term partner in accelerating progress related to the Goals, including through its role in spurring innovation and technological development and finding new solutions to move the Sustainable Development Goal agenda forward. There has been a strong mobilization of many businesses. Eighty per cent of the member companies of the United Nations Global Compact are taking actions to advance the Goals, with chief executive officers increasingly embedding corporate sustainability into their companies' strategies and operations and publicly committing to them. However, more needs to be done, and more companies need to be convinced of the benefits to the company, society at large and the planet of aligning their business practices with the 2030 Agenda and the Goals.

### **Role of the United Nations development system**

72. The 2030 Agenda requires a change of approach on the part of all development actors. In this regard, through two landmark resolutions, resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system, the General Assembly called for a United Nations development system that was more strategic, accountable, transparent, collaborative, efficient, effective and results-oriented.

73. Since the adoption of resolutions 71/243 and 72/279, the United Nations development system has made significant progress in repositioning itself to better support countries in their efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. A new generation of United Nations country teams is being built, led by an independent and empowered resident coordinator system and supported by a revitalized regional approach. Measures to strengthen strategic guidance, transparency and accountability have been taken. Several work streams have been launched to ensure that the United Nations has enhanced skill sets and mechanisms to help countries to take partnerships to scale and realign financing to achieve the Goals everywhere.

74. A revamped United Nations Sustainable Development Group is guiding strategic, policy-related and operational decision-making to enable a whole-of-system approach. Working closely with the Group, the United Nations development system is taking a much more ambitious approach to advance common services and more efficient operations in countries in order to ensure that more resources are allocated to development activities rather than to administrative structures. In addition, a funding compact between Member States and the United Nations development system is being proposed to facilitate a fundamental shift in the way the system is funded and to realign skewed incentives, realize the full potential of the Organization and re-enter an era of renewed trust.

75. Two extensive reviews of multi-country offices and United Nations assets at the regional level have also led to a series of recommendations aimed at improving United Nations support and capacities in relation to the 2030 Agenda. The repositioning process will continue to unfold until all changes take root and the system fully pivots to a more collaborative way of working.

## **IV. Responding to gaps and accelerating implementation**

76. In the present report, the state of progress of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals has been described according to the data available to the United Nations today. It has also been shown that, beyond the data, a wealth of actions has been taken in response to the 2030 Agenda. It is clear from the information that, to realize the promise at the heart of 2030 Agenda for people and planet alike, the United Nations must be much more ambitious. The Organization must embrace deeper structural changes and ramp up international cooperation and multi-stakeholder action.

77. Based on the information that has emerged from the voluntary national reviews and many other intergovernmental forums that have contributed to the annual high-level political forum, fundamental changes are required in a number of systemic and cross-cutting areas. Eight such areas that are interrelated are set out below, along with a number of policy actions.

## A. Leaving no one behind

78. The pledge to leave no one behind is among the defining features of the 2030 Agenda and is at the very core of global efforts to realize human rights for all. It is seldom disputed in principle, but the complexity of its practical implementation and the political nature of the issues that it involves are often insufficiently acknowledged.

79. The experiences of certain countries show, however, that it is possible to make significant advances towards leaving no one behind in relatively short periods of time. Doing so requires the transformation of deeply rooted systems – including economic, social and political systems, governance structures and business models – that are often based on the unequal distribution of wealth and decision-making power. In addition to the specific actions that are included in the present chapter the steps below could be pursued.

- The national policy choices that are most effective at leaving no one behind should be carefully identified and evidenced-based. In addition to targeted programmes, a combination of policies that are conducive to equitable and sustainable growth, productive capacity development, public participation and the realization of human rights should be pursued. Universal and targeted actions, as well as pre-market, in-market and post-market redistribution, are also essential. Trade-offs along the path towards the achievement of leaving no one behind must be understood and addressed.
- Advancing economic, social and cultural rights by ensuring the access of the most vulnerable groups to high-quality essential services, such as social protection, health care, education, water and sanitation, energy and the Internet, will go a long way to reducing inequalities. To do so, however, Governments and their partners must address gaps in capacity and financing, as well as challenges with respect to physical infrastructure, poor governance, corruption and lack of accountability in service provision.
- Governments must ensure that, through policies designed to support the most vulnerable groups, they recognize and respond to multiple and intersecting deprivations and sources of discrimination that are compounded by one another and make it harder to escape poverty, live with dignity and enjoy human rights. A girl who is born into a poor household and forced into early marriage, for example, is more likely to drop out of school, give birth at an early age, suffer complications during childbirth and experience violence than a girl from a higher-income household who marries at a later age.
- Focusing on those at the bottom is not enough. It is also necessary to address the concentration of wealth, income and decision-making power at the top and attenuate the link between economic and social exclusion and decision-making power.
- In order to leave no person behind and to advance the right to development, it is critical that international action also be aimed at countries that are experiencing the greatest challenges and vulnerability. Development cooperation, for example, must support countries' capacity to enact and finance their development strategies and advance towards poverty eradication and other Sustainable Development Goals.

## **B. Mobilizing adequate and well-directed financing**

80. Massive investments are needed to reach the Sustainable Development Goals – estimates of the amounts needed range in scale from the billions to the trillions. For example, the funding needed to close the infrastructure gap with regard to water, sanitation, transportation, energy, irrigation and flood protection could range from 2 to 8 per cent of GDP per year by 2030, depending on the policy choices made by countries. Notwithstanding signs of progress, investments in the Goals remain underfunded.

81. It is critical that individual Governments and international partners take the measures necessary to finance sustainable development adequately and appropriately, in keeping with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

- At the national level, steps should be taken to align financing with national sustainable development strategies and priorities. This includes developing risk-informed, integrated national financing frameworks that comprise various public and private financing policies and instruments and integrate disaster risk reduction considerations.
- Capacity development is likewise essential to assist countries in better aligning public expenditures with national sustainable development strategies and stimulating inclusive growth. Capacities also need to be strengthened for national resource mobilization and the expansion of fiscal space, preventing and tackling illicit financial flows and gaining access to available financing, as well as in trade-related aspects, in particular in the least developed countries.
- Governments should also strengthen the enabling environment for investments through, among other methods, creating predictable and consistent policies and requiring transparency and disclosure of the impact on sustainable development. This, along with positive incentives for inclusive and sustainable activities, could help to reduce investment risks.
- Policies and actions need to be focused more firmly on those who are the furthest behind. Striving for financial inclusion, coupled with financial technology, appropriate risk management and consumer protection, can enhance millions of people's access to credit, providing benefits for the most vulnerable groups. The digitalization of finance also has the potential to increase transparency radically and facilitate new kinds of investment flows. Financing for gender equality and women's empowerment can also strengthen economic growth, in addition to addressing inequalities and the lack of empowerment.
- In all of these and other measures, international cooperation can play a hugely supportive role. Further action is needed to support Governments to mobilize national resources, tackle tax evasion and illicit financial flows, align global economic policies and financial systems with the 2030 Agenda and help to reduce the perceived risk for private investment in developing countries. In addition, ODA providers should step up their efforts to meet the commitment to achieving the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income, as set out in General Assembly resolution 70/1. They should also do more to ensure that such investment supports the most vulnerable countries, in particular least developed countries for whom development finance remains critical.
- As a complement to ODA, the scaling up of initiatives relating to South-South and triangular cooperation to advance the 2030 Agenda was welcomed in the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, in March 2019. As this form of



cooperation is a response to the evolving needs of developing countries, steps should be taken to improve related systems, tools and transparency.

### **C. Strengthening effective and inclusive institutions for implementing integrated solutions**

82. Given the strong interlinkages among the Sustainable Development Goals, implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires actions that build on synergies among the Goals, enable progress on several Goals (enablers of development) and address trade-offs between targets and policy areas. Considerable knowledge exists about the interlinkages between the Goals and targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, yet institutions, governance and skill sets have not yet adapted to translate this nexus of information into effective whole-of-Government and whole-of-society approaches and cross-sectoral action aligned with the 2030 Agenda.

83. Decoupling environmental degradation from economic growth, for example, requires the scaling up of existing sustainable practices and more fundamental transitions in the ways in which people produce, consume and dispose of goods and materials throughout society. Yet such transitions are likely to be more effective if they are supported by long-term, comprehensive and science-based targets, which are beyond the capacity of many administrations. Similar challenges exist where economic policy has unintended negative social impacts, such as when poorly designed fiscal consolidation measures to reduce family and child benefits and allowances deprive vulnerable children of social protection.

84. Taken together, the actions below can bring about transformative change in governance and public policy.

- Efforts that have been made by many countries since 2015 to align their long-term plans with the Sustainable Development Goals should be sustained and further developed. Planning processes must take into account the interconnected nature of the Goals, as well as the synergies and trade-offs among them, and identify policies that have an impact on several Goals at once.
- Countries should step up efforts to link their budget processes to the Sustainable Development Goals in order to ensure that public spending reflects sustainable development priorities, which will also support the monitoring and evaluation of the Goals.
- The way that Governments are organized and work should facilitate integrated and cross-cutting approaches and the mobilization of multiple stakeholders, such as businesses, for coherent action. Such approaches can be inspired by the range of institutional arrangements highlighted in chapter III above.
- Strengthened capacity development for the public sector workforce will be critical to ensuring integrated and effective policymaking and implementation, including on issues such as the delivery of services, integrated planning and national resource mobilization, and through institutions such as schools of public administration. Actions taken by some Governments to raise awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals and their implications for public service work can serve as an inspiration for others.
- Political and administrative institutions should be further strengthened, including by ensuring that they are inclusive of all groups in society. Such mechanisms include National Councils for Sustainable Development, participatory planning and budgeting, community management of natural resources and many others.

- Governments should sustain efforts to enhance transparency and public participation. While a vast majority of countries have adopted legal frameworks for access to information, more needs to be done to make them effective. At the local level, access to information, when combined with participation, is a critical factor in improving the responsiveness and quality of public services. Other transparency tools, such as mandated disclosure and open government data, should be adopted to support enhanced government accountability and to help to tackle corruption, among other benefits. Empowerment and meaningful participation are central to efforts relating to the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The analysis of nexuses clearly indicates that no one set of actors alone can drive progress and that multi-stakeholder action is essential. The business sector, including small and medium-sized enterprises, for example, needs to be encouraged to innovate and advance and embrace technology with the aim of realizing the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Strengthening government accountability, including with regard to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, requires appropriate oversight mechanisms. Parliaments have a critical role to play in this regard. Ensuring that supreme audit institutions are independent and can usefully inform national assessments of progress on Sustainable Development Goal implementation is also important.
- Civil society can further promote accountability and understanding regarding Sustainable Development Goal implementation, including by engaging with formal oversight institutions, although action is needed to protect the civic space and the fundamental freedoms on which their activities rely.

#### **D. Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals locally**

85. Within many Sustainable Development Goal policy areas, local governments are often best placed to lead implementation, whether in terms of delivering basic services, protecting ecosystems or dealing directly with the challenges and opportunities associated with migration.

86. National Governments need to work collaboratively with local and regional governments. Local communities and stakeholders who know individual and collective needs and capacities best need to be engaged by national and local governments alike as critical partners in implementing and realizing the Sustainable Development Goals. The ability to strengthen the effectiveness of local action will have a major impact on whether or not many of the Goals and targets are achieved. A number of actions could be taken in this regard.

- The resources and capacities of local governments should be commensurate with their responsibilities, as local governments have a major responsibility for, as an example, the provision of basic public services. Therefore, countries need to put in place appropriate legal and financial frameworks to empower local and regional governments.
- Countries need to adopt measures to build the skills and capacities of elected officials and civil servants at the local level so that they are equipped to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Additional efforts are needed to ensure that actions at various levels of government complement one other and result in synergies. In many countries,

tracking public expenditures on the Sustainable Development Goals may require efforts to better align budget systems at various levels of government. Countries should consider how to devise ways to align Goal monitoring systems across levels of government, including through joint monitoring mechanisms when appropriate.

- Given their sheer number and variety, local governments represent a key source of policy innovation. Scaling up effective local actions will require ongoing dialogue and collaboration through participatory processes between government at all levels and local stakeholders. It is important that local efforts be supported seamlessly by international actions and measures. Networks of local governments working on policy areas such as climate change, migration and other subjects have developed in recent years and should support the sharing and diffusion of innovative practices in an effective way.

## E. Building resilience

87. Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in a rapidly changing world will be contingent on the ability to anticipate, prepare for and accommodate sudden changes. Shocks in one area spill over into impacts in others – weather-related hazards are believed to be the biggest cause of direct disaster-induced economic loss and the destruction of schools, homes, agricultural land and infrastructure, with attendant consequences for health, economic and sociopolitical systems. Vulnerability to disasters remains widespread, with disaster risk concentrated in low- and middle-income countries, in particular small island developing States.

88. Apart from disasters, the progressive changes in temperature, precipitation patterns and sea levels that result from climate change have an impact on multiple Sustainable Development Goals. A comprehensive response is needed, through adaptation and mitigation measures. Building resilience can therefore be a powerful tool to combat poverty and exclusion and a powerful way to prevent crises and the escalation of risks. In turn, progress towards many of the Goals is a critical way to build resilience. For example, a lack of education puts at risk people's chances of obtaining decent work that respects fundamental human rights, as well as workers' rights.

89. Building resilience, however, remains a challenge for many countries, as it requires a systemic approach, based on the understanding that many adverse events are occurring on global, regional, national, subnational and local scales, with knock-on effects among interconnected social, governance, economic, ecological and physical systems. A series of actions can be taken to strengthen resilience in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

- In the current global environment, all policies and investments need to be risk-informed, which requires dedicated knowledge and capacities on the part of public institutions and other actors. Governments, in conjunction with relevant stakeholders, need to take measures to reduce existing risk and avoid the creation of new risk.
- All risk-management measures must be human-centred and ensure a whole-of-society approach. Such measures must also maintain a special focus on the poorest and the most vulnerable groups and take into account the fact that vulnerabilities may emerge, change and persist over long periods, exacerbating disparities among genders, ethnicities and households and in social and economic status.

- Actions to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity also need to be accelerated in various sectors and areas. Building the resilience of food systems, for example, should be pursued along with actions to ensure that such systems continuously enhance natural resources, sustain rural and urban livelihoods and provide access to nutritious food from smallholder producers. A wide variety of options that can reduce the risks of climate change should also be pursued, such as lowering energy consumption while making the transition to low- or zero-carbon sources; reforestation or afforestation; sustainable agriculture and waste management to reduce methane emissions; and climate-proof and sustainable new construction or the retrofitting of existing buildings. Changing consumption and production patterns is critical, although differences in this regard will exist between developed and developing countries.
- Considering the transboundary nature of climate, natural ecosystems, pollution and resource use, regional, global and cross-sectoral collaboration and response are also required to deal effectively with the challenge, including through efforts targeted at those who are especially poor and vulnerable.
- At the global level, while existing countercyclical financing instruments play a vital role in moderating the impacts of abrupt shocks, least developed countries, landlocked least developed countries and small island developing States are often not able to benefit from them. This needs to be addressed, including by ensuring that existing countercyclical ex post financing mechanisms provide fast-track access to least developed countries, landlocked least developed countries and small island developing States to mitigate the impacts of disasters and shocks.

## **F. Investing in data for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda**

90. The availability of high-quality, timely, disaggregated and open data and statistics, as well as the capacity to use them, is vital for Governments, international organizations, the private sector, civil society and the general public to make informed decisions relating to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

91. Developing countries in particular continue to face immense challenges in generating such data and statistics. Gaps in accurate and timely information about certain aspects of people's lives render numerous groups and individuals invisible, resulting in many development challenges being poorly understood. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, where poverty is most severe, more than half the countries do not have adequate data to monitor poverty trends. Similarly, data that accurately reflect the challenges faced by women in their daily lives, including in undervalued areas, such as time spent caring for family members, are meagre.

92. While there has been much focus and effort to address such gaps over the past four years, progress has been limited, and the kinds of breakthroughs that are needed have yet to be made. The steps below can be taken to accelerate progress in this regard.

- Increased investments in national data and statistical systems and increased mobilization of international and domestic resources are imperative. A demand-driven funding mechanism under United Nations membership oversight that is able to respond quickly and efficiently to the priorities of national statistical systems, outlined in the Dubai Declaration, which was announced at the second United Nations World Data Forum, could be considered to make better data for all a reality. Support should include the design of statistical strategies and targeted data collection instruments that adequately capture the realities of disadvantaged groups, including hidden and

hard-to-reach groups. A variety of innovative data platforms, institutional arrangements and practices exists and can be drawn upon to share knowledge and experience in this area.

- Today, new technology, paired with existing data sources and methods, gives the world an unprecedented opportunity to address the increased demand for data to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals. This increased demand demonstrates the urgent need to ensure coordinated efforts and strengthen partnerships with all data producers, data users, leaders and innovators, with efficient and modernized national statistical offices at the centre. Members of the global data community are encouraged to work together to improve the accessibility of new technology, innovations and methods by making high-quality, timely global data sets and innovative data production and analysis methodologies easily accessible to data producers and data users; developing technical collaborations to build skills and knowledge and increase the standardization and uptake of new methods at scale; and catalysing or taking to scale new data partnerships in selected countries to increase the availability and use of timely data for decision-making on the Goals.

## **G. Realizing the benefits of science, technology and innovation for all**

93. Apart from improving data and monitoring, there is great potential to use technology in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals more broadly, in areas including water and energy, sustainable consumption and production, e-learning, urbanization and sustainable transport and e-governance and the ending of corruption.

94. All countries need institutional infrastructures to promote the innovation, diffusion and use of new technology most needed for sustainable development. This is another area where more can and must be done if countries are to put themselves on a trajectory for Sustainable Development Goal achievement by 2030.

- Policies and regulatory and other frameworks are needed to foster innovation and efficiency while ensuring fairness, equity and ethics in the development of new technology. All stakeholders, not only Governments, companies and scientists but also civil society and academia, need to be brought together to support such efforts. Multi-stakeholder approaches can also help to ensure that policies for the economy, science and technology, industrial development, human development and sustainability are coherent. United Nations multi-stakeholder platforms should be used fully to promote understanding among all actors of the kinds of interventions that need to be taken at the national and international levels.
- Greater international cooperation to facilitate technology transfers, steer technology towards sustainable development outcomes and mitigate the adverse effects of rapid technological change can encourage national innovation and harmonize technology standards.
- Engaging with communities, young people and vulnerable people in innovation processes can support the development of new products and services to serve people living in poverty or in remote areas. In this regard, at all levels it is important to strive to improve the skills of all people, including those of women, children and young people, older persons, persons with disabilities and other groups. Institutional infrastructures at the national level must also be supported through access to emerging technology and the skills to deploy it effectively according to the country's specific circumstances. The inability to do so risks widening inequalities within and across countries.

- Decisive action is needed, as today's skills will not match the jobs of tomorrow, and newly acquired skills may quickly become obsolete. Educational and learning systems need to be revolutionized in order to respond to the technology revolution. People's capacities must be invested in during their working lives in order to realize the gains from new technology and avoid its pitfalls. The strengthening of institutions that will ensure a people-centred approach to the technological transformations of the world is also needed.

## **H. Solving challenges through international cooperation**

95. From climate to disease, from economic downturn to migration and from health to frontier technology, today's challenges require a strong commitment to international cooperation and more effective multilateral institutions. Yet recent trends show some Governments are retreating from multilateral action and the global public is voicing dissatisfaction with the downsides of globalization.

96. Trade-restrictive measures, for example, present serious challenges for the multilateral trading system and amount to \$588.3 billion, seven times larger than in 2018. Physical and economic systems are deeply connected across national boundaries, yet the capacity to manage such transboundary systems is not yet well developed. As an example, the protection of ocean areas under national jurisdiction is increasing, but more than 60 per cent of oceans are still beyond national jurisdiction, and only about 1 per cent of the area is covered.

97. To realize the Sustainable Development Goals and arrest climate change, countries must renew their commitment to multilateralism, find new ways of working together and ensure that multilateral institutions keep pace with the rapid changes taking place around them.

- Global rules must be revised to ensure that they are supportive of the Sustainable Development Goals and conducive to fair globalization. They need to promote an equitable distribution of development opportunities and income at the international level. This requires international cooperation on tax and cross-border financial flows, debt relief and trade, technology, migration and remittances. Countries must preserve their multilateral trading systems, resist the temptation of trade-restrictive measures and implement provisions to support exports from least developed countries.
- It also requires adapting the governance and patterns of development cooperation so that they are representative and integrate donors and recipients and new and traditional providers. The United Nations must deliver on its commitment to making all international institutions responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative in decision-making. National Governments and the international community should also reshape international and national financial systems, in line with sustainable development.
- The fragmented nature of today's multilateralism must evolve into a networked multilateralism, with the United Nations at the core and close cooperation among international and regional organizations, including development banks, the African Union and others.

People must be firmly at the centre of today's multilateralism. The traditional focus on Governments and international organizations should evolve to be supported by collaboration with civil society, businesses, the academic and philanthropic communities and other actors, in particular young people.

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## V. Conclusion

98. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda was a victory for international cooperation, but most of all for the world's people. The high-level gatherings in September 2019, including the high-level political forum on sustainable development, will give the United Nations a moment to reflect on the first four years of this essential journey. Notwithstanding slow progress, I remain convinced that the Organization can bring the Agenda's inspiring vision to life.

99. On all fronts, multilateral action is essential. Only together can countries find solutions to poverty, inequality and climate change, the defining challenges of the times. Only together can they bolster their rules-based global trading system and mobilize the technology, solutions and financing needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Only together can countries transform economies and societies to empower all women and girls, truly benefit all people and preserve the health of the planet.

100. Let countries make the world gathering in September a moment when they summon the ambition required on climate change, re-energize and refocus their response to the Sustainable Development Goals and step up their commitment to reaching those who are the furthest behind and supporting the most vulnerable countries.

101. The pressures of the era are mounting; the trust that binds the world is fraying. Today's generations and the next need the world to do better. Fortunately, there is still time to achieve the future envisioned in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Let the world find the wisdom, the solidarity and the will to move ahead in order to ensure a life of dignity and prosperity for everyone, everywhere.

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