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

## **Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: towards a rescue plan for people and planet**

**Report of the Secretary-General (special edition)**

### *Summary*

The present report on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution [70/1](#), entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. At the midpoint to 2030, this special edition report provides an update on the progress made since 2015 against the global Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework. In the report, the Secretary-General finds that many of the Goals are moderately to severely off track and puts forward five major recommendations to rescue the Goals and accelerate implementation between now and 2030, for the consideration of Member States in advance of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit.

\* [A/78/50](#).



## I. Promise in peril

1. Leave no one behind. That defining principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a shared promise by every country to work together to secure the rights and well-being of everyone on a healthy, thriving planet. But halfway to 2030, that promise is in peril. The Sustainable Development Goals are disappearing in the rear-view mirror, as is the hope and rights of current and future generations. A fundamental shift is needed – in commitment, solidarity, financing and action – to put the world on a better path. And it is needed now.

2. We can do better, and in moments of severe challenge, humanity has always come through. Now is another of those moments. The Sustainable Development Goals Summit, to be held in September 2023, must signal a genuine turning point. It must mobilize the political commitment and breakthroughs our world desperately needs. It must right the historic injustices at the core of the international financial system to give the most vulnerable countries and people a fair chance at a better future. It must deliver a rescue plan for people and planet.

### A. Delivering on commitments: where do we stand halfway to 2030?

3. Early efforts after the Sustainable Development Goals were adopted produced some favourable trends. Extreme poverty and child mortality rates continued to fall. Inroads were made against such diseases as HIV and hepatitis. Some targets for gender equality were seeing positive results. Electricity access in the poorest countries was on the rise, and the share of renewables in the energy mix was increasing. Globally, unemployment was back to levels not seen since before the 2008 financial crisis. The proportion of waters under national jurisdiction covered by marine protected areas had more than doubled in five years. But it is clear now that too much of that progress was fragile and most of it was too slow. In the past three years, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the war in Ukraine and climate-related disasters have exacerbated already faltering progress.

4. It is time to sound the alarm. At the midpoint on our way to 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals are in deep trouble. A preliminary assessment of the roughly 140 targets for which data is available shows that only about 12 per cent are on track; more than half, although showing some progress, are moderately or severely off track; and some 30 per cent have either seen no movement or regressed below the 2015 baseline.

5. Under current trends, 575 million people will still be living in extreme poverty in 2030, and only about one third of countries will meet the target to halve national poverty levels. Shockingly, the world is back at hunger levels not seen since 2005, and food prices remain higher in more countries than in the period 2015–2019. The way things are going, it will take 286 years to close gender gaps in legal protection and remove discriminatory laws. And in the area of education, the impacts of years of underinvestment and learning losses are such that, by 2030, some 84 million children will be out of school and 300 million children or young people who attend school will leave unable to read and write.

6. If ever there was an illumination of the short-sightedness of our prevailing economic and political systems, it is the ratcheting up of the war on nature. A small window of opportunity is fast closing to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius, prevent the worst impacts of the climate crisis and secure climate justice for people, communities and countries on the front lines of climate change. Carbon dioxide levels continue to rise to a level not seen in 2 million years. At the current rate of progress, renewable energy sources will continue to account for a mere

fraction of our energy supplies in 2030, some 660 million people will remain without electricity, and close to 2 billion people will continue to rely on polluting fuels and technologies for cooking. So much of our lives and health depend on nature, yet it could take another 25 years to halt deforestation, while vast numbers of species worldwide are threatened with extinction.

7. The lack of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals is universal, but it is abundantly clear that developing countries and the world's poorest and most vulnerable people are bearing the brunt of our collective failure. This is a direct result of global injustices that go back hundreds of years but are still playing out today. The compounding effects of climate, COVID-19 and economic injustices are leaving many developing countries with fewer options and even fewer resources to make the Goals a reality.

## **B. Breaking through to a better future for all**

8. We cannot simply continue with more of the same and expect a different result. We cannot persist with a morally bankrupt financial system and expect developing countries to meet targets that developed countries met with far fewer constraints. The 2030 Agenda stated that this generation could be the first to succeed in ending poverty – and the last to have a chance of saving the planet. This higher purpose remains within our grasp, but it requires an unprecedented effort by individual Governments, a renewed sense of common purpose across the international community and a global alliance for Sustainable Development Goals-related action across business, civil society, science, young people, local authorities and more. It requires that we come together in September to deliver a rescue plan for people and planet.

9. Building on the evidence captured in the Global Sustainable Development Report and on the lessons since 2015, the present report identifies a series of urgent actions for your consideration in five key areas.

**10. First, I urge Heads of State and Government to recommit to seven years of accelerated, sustained and transformative action, both nationally and internationally, to deliver on the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals.**

11. This calls for the strengthening of social cohesion in order to secure dignity, opportunity and rights for all while reorienting economies through green and digital transitions and towards resilient trajectories that are compatible with the goal of the Paris Agreement to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius. It calls for a once-in-a-generation commitment to overhaul the international financial and economic system so that it responds to today's challenges, not those of the 1940s, as well as unprecedented collaboration among members of the Group of 20 and support for all developing countries to advance Sustainable Development Goals-related and climate-related action.

12. I encourage Member States to adopt an ambitious and forward-looking political declaration and to present global and national commitments for Goals-related transformation at the Sustainable Development Goals Summit.

**13. Second, I call upon Governments to advance concrete, integrated and targeted policies and actions to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and end the war on nature, with a particular focus on advancing the rights of women and girls and empowering the most vulnerable.**

14. This means the following: giving meaning to the commitment to leave no one behind by expanding social protection floors and access to essential services; creating job opportunities in the care, digital and green economies; urgently tackling the profound crisis in education; strengthening action to advance gender equality,

leveraging digital technologies to close divides; supporting the inclusion of persons displaced by crises; and tackling the exclusion of marginalized groups, such as persons with disabilities.

15. I also urge leaders to embrace my climate acceleration agenda to drive a just renewables revolution and secure climate justice for those on the front lines of the climate crisis. We must also deliver on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, work to further reduce risks from disasters and build integrated and sustainable food, water and sanitation systems while making the right to a healthy environment a reality for all people.

**16. Third, I urge Governments to strengthen national and subnational capacity, accountability and public institutions to deliver accelerated progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.**

17. Delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals must become a central focus for national planning, oversight mechanisms and domestic budgets. Major investment is needed to strengthen public sector capacity and build appropriate digital infrastructure. Local and subnational governments must be empowered and supported to bring implementation of the Goals to the ground level. An effective regulatory framework is needed to align private sector governance models with sustainable development objectives. A fresh push is needed to reap the data dividend, and the monitoring, follow-up and review of the Goals must be taken to the next level, including by strengthening civic space and public engagement in policy- and decision-making.

**18. Fourth, to ensure developing countries can deliver in the above areas, I strongly encourage the international community to recommit in September to deliver on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and to mobilize the resources and investment needed for developing countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those in special situations and experiencing acute vulnerability.**

19. In that regard, I encourage Member States to endorse and deliver a \$500 billion per year Sustainable Development Goals stimulus plan between now and 2030. This calls for immediate action: (a) to tackle the high cost of debt and the rising risks of debt distress, including by converting short-term, high-interest borrowing into long-term (more than 30 year) debt at lower interest rates; (b) to massively scale-up affordable, long-term financing for development, especially through multilateral development banks, rechannelling special drawing rights and aligning all financing flows with the Goals; and (c) to expand contingency financing to all countries in need.

20. I also call upon Member States to recognize and address the need for deep reforms of the international financial architecture through a new Bretton Woods moment, including by enhancing the voice and participation of developing countries in the governance of international financial institutions. This is essential in order to ensure that the financial architecture delivers for all developing countries and secures urgent access to grants and long-term concessional finance as they transition to renewable energy-based, climate-resilient, inclusive economies. It requires building on the lessons from recent efforts to mobilize private finance, including by revising risk appetite and the criteria used by credit ratings agencies and adjusting policies and instruments.

**21. Finally, I urge Member States to facilitate the continued strengthening of the United Nations development system and to boost the capacity of the multilateral system to tackle emerging challenges and address Sustainable Development Goals-related gaps and weaknesses in the international architecture that have emerged since 2015.**

22. The United Nations development system continues to play a crucial role in supporting countries in delivering their national Goals-related ambitions. What the system offers has evolved considerably since 2015, enabled by the most ambitious reforms in decades. I will continue to work with Principals across the system to further strengthen our offer. I urge Member States to continue to support the contribution of Resident Coordinators and United Nations country teams by delivering against the funding compact, ensuring the resident coordinator system is fully funded and further capitalizing the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund.

23. Many of the proposals in Our Common Agenda are already supporting acceleration towards achieving the Goals. I call upon Member States, through the forthcoming Summit of the Future, to build on the commitment and direction provided by the Sustainable Development Goals Summit to ensure progress in other areas of particular importance for Goals-related progress, including reforming the international architecture, going beyond gross domestic product (GDP), strengthening digital cooperation, boosting youth participation in decision-making, transforming education, establishing an emergency platform and advancing a new agenda for peace. Further action is also needed to boost the capacities of developing countries in the areas of trade and technology, to align global trading rules with the Sustainable Development Goals and to establish more efficient and effective technology transfer mechanisms.

24. History has shown that the worst hardships can be overcome through human determination, solidarity, leadership and resilience. The destruction brought about by World War II was followed by new forms of solidarity and cooperation through the United Nations and the Marshall Plan. This period also witnessed advances in global positioning systems, modern air travel and satellite communications, as well as accelerated decolonization. Preventing widespread hunger and starvation in the 1960s galvanized investment in agriculture and the green revolution. Other more recent examples include the global responses to fight HIV/AIDS and, in part, the surge in action and community to save lives and livelihoods during the COVID-19 pandemic.

25. These outcomes, by no means inevitable, resulted from unique combinations of purpose, solidarity, ingenuity and technology. This moment of peril demands a similar response if we are to deliver on our 2015 promise.

## **II. Sounding the alarm: Sustainable Development Goals progress at the midpoint**

26. At the midpoint of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the world is not on track to meet most of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. There has been progress in some areas, but progress against a very worrying proportion of targets is either moving much too slowly or has regressed.

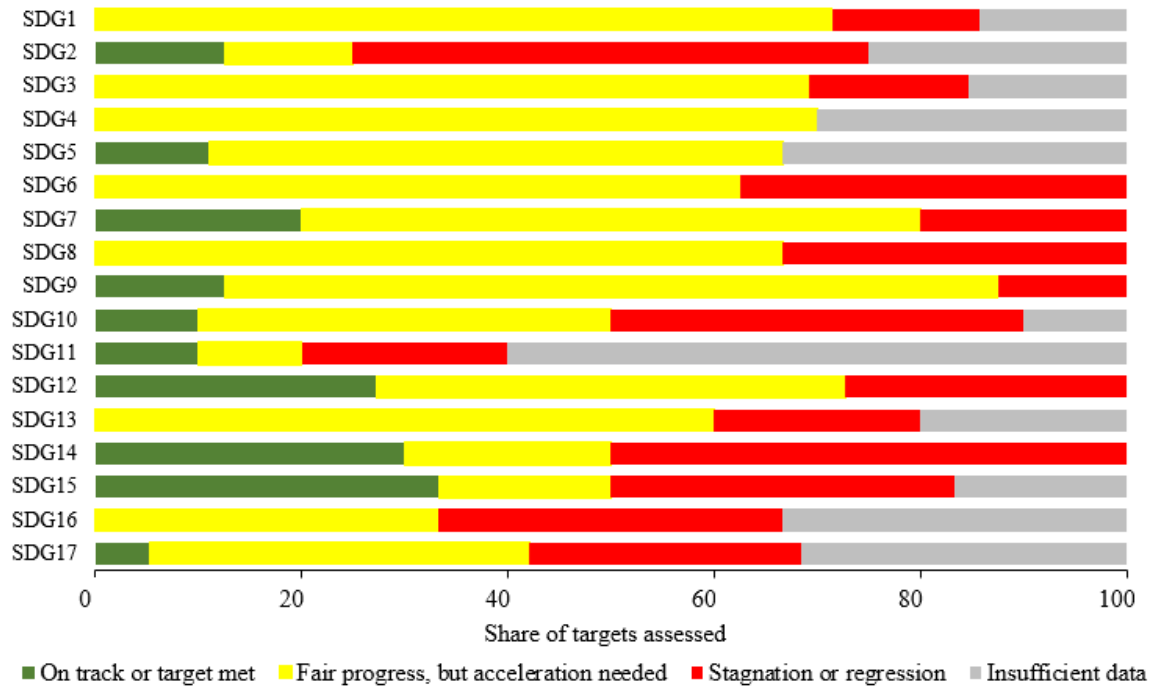
27. The present section provides an overview of the progress achieved under each Goal, with a brief assessment for selected targets. Global and regional data and assessments for all targets and indicators for which information is available can be found in the statistical annex.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Sustainable Development Goals indicator framework, the statistical annex to the present report and the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database are available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs>.

Figure I  
**Progress assessment for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals based on assessed targets, 2023 or latest data**

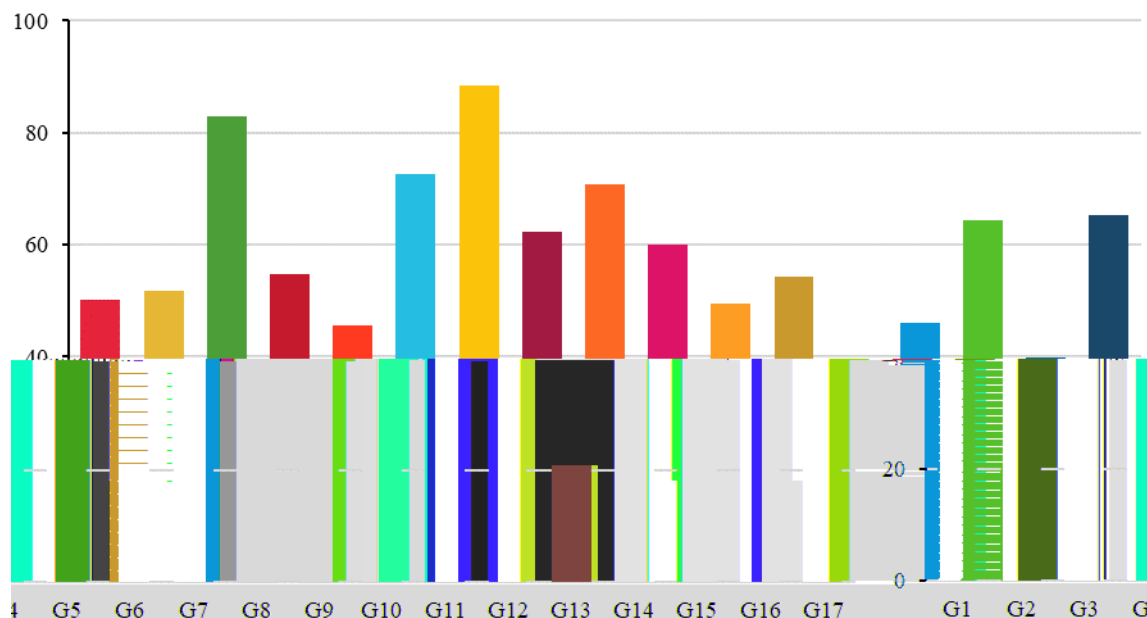
(Percentage)



28. The picture is incomplete owing to persistent challenges in securing timely data across all 169 targets. While progress has been made in improving data for monitoring the Goals, with the number of indicators included in the global Sustainable Development Goals database increasing from 115 in 2016 to 225 in 2022, there are still significant gaps in geographic coverage, timeliness and disaggregation. The chart below indicates that, for 9 of the 17 Goals, only around half of the 193 countries or areas have internationally comparable data since 2015, and only around 21 per cent of countries have data for Goal 13 (climate action). About 8 per cent of the latest available data is from 2023, 21 per cent is from 2022 and 54 per cent is from 2021 and 2020. In the coming period, country profiles on Goals-related progress, together with an overview of data availability against the Goals in every country, will be shared with all Member States. Closing the data gaps to reap the data dividend will be a key priority for the United Nations system in advance of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit and beyond.

Figure II  
Proportion of countries or areas with available data since 2015, by Goal

(Percentage)



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

29. Since 2015, global poverty reduction had already been slowing down. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic then reversed three decades of steady progress, with the number of people living in extreme poverty increasing for the first time in a generation. Recovery from the pandemic has been slow and uneven as the world is presently facing multiple geopolitical, socioeconomic and climatic risks. Given the current trends, 575 million people (nearly 7 per cent of the world's population) will still be living in extreme poverty in 2030, compared with 800 million in 2015 (or 10.8 per cent). Eradicating extreme poverty will be particularly difficult in sub-Saharan Africa and conflict-affected areas. Despite the expansion of social protection during the COVID-19 pandemic, over 4 billion people globally remain entirely unprotected. A surge in action and investment to enhance job opportunities and extend social services to the most excluded is crucial in order to deliver on the central commitment to ending poverty.

- **Target 1.1:** In 2020, the pandemic pushed millions of people into extreme poverty, currently defined as those who live on less than \$2.15 per person per day at 2017 purchasing power parity. The extreme poverty rate increased from 8.5 per cent in 2019 to 9.3 per cent in 2020. By the end of 2022, nowcasting suggests 8.4 per cent of the world's population, or as many as 670 million people, could still be living in extreme poverty today and that the figure will drop to 575 million by 2030 – a fall of less than 30 per cent since 2015.
- **Target 1.2:** Given historical trends, only one third of countries will have halved their national poverty rates by 2030 from 2015.
- **Target 1.3:** By 2020, only 47 per cent of the global population was effectively covered by at least one social protection cash benefit, up slightly from 45 per cent in 2015. Only 26 per cent of children under 15 received a social protection benefit; only one in three persons with severe disabilities worldwide received a disability

benefit; only 35 per cent of workers were covered in case of work injury; and only 18.6 per cent of unemployed workers worldwide were effectively covered.

- **Target 1.4:** Shifting public resources towards essential services is one of the key policy interventions for reducing poverty and building a better social safety net. The 2021 data for 100 countries shows that the global average proportion of total government spending on essential services is approximately 53 per cent, with an overall average of 62 per cent for advanced economies and 44 per cent for emerging market and developing economies.



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

30. The number of people facing hunger and food insecurity has been on the rise since 2015, with the pandemic, conflict, climate change and growing inequalities exacerbating the situation. In 2015, 589 million people were experiencing hunger, and by 2021, that number had risen to 768 million. Projections show that, by 2030, approximately 670 million people will still be facing hunger – 8 per cent of the world’s population, the same as in 2015. Despite global efforts, too many children continue to suffer from malnutrition, and the current annual rate of reduction in stunting must increase by 2.2 times to meet the global target. To achieve zero hunger by 2030, immediate and intensified efforts are required to transform food systems, ensure food security and invest in sustainable agricultural practices.

- **Target 2.1:** The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already deteriorating food security situation, with about 150 million more people facing hunger in 2021 than in 2019. In addition, nearly 1 in 3 (2.3 billion people) were moderately or severely food insecure in 2021. This represents an increase of almost 350 million people since the beginning of the pandemic. The most worrisome increases were seen in sub-Saharan Africa. The ongoing crisis in Ukraine is yet another threat to food security.
- **Target 2.2:** Globally in 2022, an estimated 22.3 per cent of children under the age of 5 (148 million) were affected by stunting, down from 24.6 per cent in 2015. Overweight affected 37.0 million children under 5 (or 5.6 per cent) and wasting affected 45 million (or 6.8 per cent) in 2022. The global prevalence of overweight children has stagnated, and, if current trends continue, the 2030 target will be missed by 17.5 million children. The prevalence of anaemia in women of reproductive age continues to be alarming, stagnant at around 30 per cent since 2000. Furthermore, low and lower-middle income economies bear the greatest burden of stunting, wasting, low birth weight and anaemia.
- **Target 2.5:** Although 71 per cent of local livestock breeds with a known status are at risk of extinction, progress has been made in ex situ cryopreservation. Between 1995 and 2022, the number of local and transboundary breeds for which sufficient material is available increased from 57 to 287 (out of 7,688 local breeds) and from 31 to 175 (out of 1,115 transboundary breeds), respectively. At the end of 2021, an estimated 5.8 million accessions of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture were conserved under medium- or long-term conditions in 846 gene banks in 115 countries and 17 regional and international research centres, representing a 1.1 per cent year-on-year increase in 2021.
- **Target 2.a:** Investment in agriculture is falling. Government expenditure on agriculture relative to the agriculture sector’s contribution to GDP has declined from 0.50 in 2015 to 0.45 in 2021 in all regions except North America and Europe, which was driven mostly by the COVID-19 pandemic response.
- **Target 2.b:** In December 2015, member States of the World Trade Organization (WTO) adopted the ministerial decision on export competition, thus formally



agreeing to eliminate all forms of agricultural export subsidy entitlements. Total notified annual export subsidy outlays fell from their peak of 218 million in 2015 to almost zero in 2021.

- **Target 2.c:** In 2021, the share of countries facing moderately to abnormally high food prices was 21.5 per cent, a significant decline from the record-high of 48 per cent in 2020, when the easing of COVID-19-related restrictive measures prompted strong demand. However, this is still above the 2015–2019 average (15.2 per cent), reflecting continued increases in food prices, mainly supported by elevated production and transport costs on account of costlier fertilizers and energy. In sub-Saharan Africa and among the least developed countries, the proportion of countries experiencing high food prices increased for the second consecutive year in 2021.



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

31. The pandemic and other ongoing crises are hindering progress in achieving Goal 3, exacerbating existing health inequalities and threatening progress towards universal health coverage. As a result, 25 million children missed out on important routine immunization services in 2021, and deaths from tuberculosis and malaria increased compared with the pre-pandemic period. This has been particularly challenging in low- and middle-income countries, where health systems were already underresourced before the pandemic. The pandemic has also highlighted the need for stronger global health security systems to prevent and respond to future pandemics. Overcoming these setbacks and dealing with long-standing shortcomings in health-care provision requires an urgent strengthening of health systems.

- **Target 3.1:** The global maternal mortality ratio decreased only from 227 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015 to 223 in 2020, still over three times higher than the target of 70 maternal deaths by 2030. This means that almost 800 women are still dying every day from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. Almost 95 per cent of those deaths occur in low and lower-middle-income countries. The global average annual rate of reduction was almost zero in the period 2016–2020, compared with 2.7 per cent rate from 2000 to 2015. To meet the target, the annual rate of reduction needs to increase to 11 per cent between 2020 and 2030. In 2022, 86 per cent of global births were attended by skilled health personnel, which increased from 81 per cent in 2015, but coverage in sub-Saharan Africa was only 70 per cent.
- **Target 3.2:** Between 2015 and 2021, the global under-5 mortality rate fell by 12 per cent, from 43 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2015 to 38 deaths, and the global neonatal mortality rate fell from 20 to 18 deaths. In 2021, 5 million children died before reaching their fifth birthday – down from 6.1 million in 2015. Of 200 countries and areas analysed, only 54 countries are not on track to meet the target of fewer than 25 deaths per 1,000 live births. Among those countries, 37 will need to more than double their current rate of progress or reverse a recent increasing trend in order to achieve the target by 2030.
- **Target 3.3:** Progress towards the target of ending communicable diseases by 2030 remains off course, despite the fact that progress varies across different diseases. Tremendous progress has, for instance, been made in reducing new HIV infections, particularly in the highest-burden regions. The estimated 1.5 million new HIV infections in 2021 was almost one third fewer than in 2010. This is, however, still far from the 2025 target of fewer than 370,000 new HIV infections as agreed by the General Assembly in 2021. In 2021, an estimated 1.6 million people died from tuberculosis and 10.6 million people fell ill with

the disease, an increase from 10.1 million in 2020. The tuberculosis incidence rate rose by 3.6 per cent between 2020 and 2021, reversing declines of about 2 per cent per year for most of the previous two decades. Between 2015 and 2021, the net reductions in tuberculosis incidence and death were 10 per cent and 5.9 per cent, respectively, which are only one fifth and one tenth of the way to achieving the 2025 milestone of the World Health Organization End TB Strategy. There were an estimated 247 million malaria cases globally in 2021, compared with 224 million in 2015. There were an estimated 619,000 malaria deaths globally in 2021, compared with 625,000 in 2020 and 568,000 in 2019. Despite significant disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the global number of people requiring treatment and care for neglected tropical diseases declined from 1.8 billion in 2015 to 1.65 billion in 2021. Notably, in the least developed countries, 47 per cent of the total population required neglected tropical disease treatment and care in 2021, down from 79 per cent in 2010.

- **Target 3.7:** The proportion of women of reproductive age (15–49 years) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern contraceptive methods has been increasing slightly, from 76.5 per cent in 2015 to 77.6 per cent in 2023, and is projected to reach 78.2 per cent by 2030. Despite the strong progress, this is still not sufficient to meet the target of ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services by 2030. Sub-Saharan Africa has witnessed the largest increase, from 51.6 to 57.4 per cent over the period, and is expected to increase to 62.1 per cent by 2030.
- **Target 3.b:** The percentage of children who received three doses of the vaccine against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis fell 5 percentage points between 2019 and 2021 to 81 per cent, causing the largest sustained decline in childhood vaccinations in approximately 30 years. As a result, 25 million children missed out on one or more doses of the vaccine through routine immunization services in 2021 alone. This is 2 million more than those who missed out in 2020 and 6 million more than in 2019. The global coverage of the last dose of human papillomavirus vaccine, targeting girls aged 9 to 14 years to prevent cervical cancer, was only 12 per cent in 2021.
- **Target 3.c:** A 2020 study showed that the projected global shortage of health workers by 2030 had decreased from 18 million to 10 million. Despite the tremendous increase in the health workforce globally, those regions with the highest burden of disease continue to have the lowest proportion of health workforce to deliver health services. According to data from the period 2014–2021, sub-Saharan Africa continues to have the lowest health worker density, with only 2.3 medical doctors and 12.6 nursing and midwifery personnel per 10,000 people. In contrast, Europe has the highest density of 39.4 doctors per 10,000 population, while North America has 152 nursing and midwifery personnel per 10,000 population.



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

32. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was already off-track to achieve its education targets. If no additional measures are taken, only one in six countries will meet Goal 4 and achieve universal access to quality education by 2030. An estimated 84 million children and young people will still be out of school and an estimated 300 million students will still not have the basic numeracy and literacy skills they need to succeed in life. To deliver on Goal 4, education systems must be reimagined, and education financing must become a priority national investment.

- **Target 4.1:** Between 2015 and 2021, the school completion rate increased from 85 to 87 per cent at the primary level, from 74 to 77 per cent at the lower secondary level and from 53 per cent to 58 per cent at the upper secondary level. Even before the onset of COVID-19, those rates had slowed down relative to the progress achieved in the period 2010–2015. Looking closely at reading levels at the end of primary school, for which trend data cover 34 per cent of the world’s children, the analysis shows that global learning levels showed no progress between 2015 and 2019. Furthermore, learning losses due to COVID-19-related school closures have been documented in 4 out of 5 of the 104 countries that have carried out such studies.
- **Target 4.2:** The participation rate in organized learning one year before the official primary entry age has stagnated at around 75 per cent since 2015, still far from the target of ensuring that all girls and boys have access to quality pre-primary education by 2030.
- **Target 4.3:** Among 131 countries with data from 2017 onwards, on average approximately one in six young people and adults aged 15 to 64 recently participated in formal or non-formal education and training. Participation is substantially higher among young people aged 15 to 24 (40 to 50 per cent), compared with those aged 25 to 55 (less than 5 per cent for most regions).
- **Target 4.a:** Basic school infrastructure is far from universal. In 2020, approximately one quarter of primary schools globally did not have access to basic services, such as electricity, drinking water and basic sanitation facilities. For other facilities, such as computer facilities and the provision of disability-adapted infrastructure, the figures were substantially lower, with only around 50 per cent of primary schools having access.
- **Target 4.c:** Globally, in 2020, over 14 per cent of teachers were still not qualified according to national norms, with little improvement since 2015.



### Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

33. The world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030. At the global level, none of the 14 indicators “met or almost met” the targets, and only one is “close to target”. At the current rate of progress, it is estimated that it will take up to 286 years to close the gaps in legal protection and remove discriminatory laws, 140 years for women to be represented equally in positions of power and leadership in the workplace, and 47 years to achieve equal representation in national parliaments. Cascading global crises have highlighted and exacerbated existing gender inequalities, such as unequal access to health care, education and economic opportunities. Political leadership and a comprehensive set of policy reforms are needed to dismantle systemic barriers to the achievement of Goal 5.

- **Target 5.1:** On the basis of data collected in 2022 in 119 countries, 55 per cent of the countries lacked laws that prohibit direct and indirect discrimination against women; half of the countries continued to lack quotas for women in the national parliament; 60 per cent of the countries failed to have laws defining rape based on the principle of consent; 45 per cent of countries did not mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value; over one third of countries failed to provide maternity leave in accordance with International Labour Organization (ILO) standards; almost one quarter of countries did not grant women equal rights to men to enter into marriage and initiate divorce; and close to three quarters of countries failed to stipulate 18 years as the minimum age of marriage for women and men, with no exceptions.

- **Target 5.3:** One in five young women worldwide (19 per cent) were married in childhood in 2022. Globally, the prevalence of child marriage has declined from 21 per cent in 2016. However, the profound effects of COVID-19 are threatening that progress, with up to 10 million additional girls at risk of child marriage over the course of a decade from the onset of the pandemic.
- **Target 5.5:** As at 1 January 2023, women held 26.5 per cent of seats in lower or single chambers of national parliaments, up from 22.3 per cent in 2015. At the local level, women held 35.5 per cent of seats in deliberative bodies, up from 33.9 per cent in 2020. At that pace, parity in such bodies cannot be achieved by 2030. Also, gender parity in political institutions continues to be rare: only six countries had 50 per cent or more women in their lower or single chambers of national parliaments; and three countries had 50 per cent in local legislatures. Globally, women held only 28.2 per cent of management positions in 2021 (up just 1 per cent since 2015), although they accounted for almost 40 per cent of total employment.
- **Target 5.6:** On the basis of data from 68 countries for the period 2007–2022, only 56 per cent of married or in-union women aged 15 to 49 years make their own decisions regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights, ranging from an average of 37 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa to over 80 per cent in some countries in Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. Among the 115 countries with data in 2022, countries have in place, on average, 76 per cent of the laws and regulations needed to guarantee full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- **Target 5.a:** Available data from 46 countries for the period 2009–2020 show that many women and men involved in agricultural production lack ownership and/or secure tenure rights over agricultural land. In one third of the countries, less than 50 per cent of women and men have ownership or secure rights over agricultural land. The share of men having ownership is at least twice that of women in almost half of the countries. Of the 68 countries that reported on women’s rights to land ownership and/or control in legal frameworks, by 2022, about 31 per cent protected women’s land rights considerably (a score of at least 5 out of 6), while 47 per cent poorly protected women’s land rights (a score of 3 out of 6 or below).
- **Target 5.b:** Globally, 73 per cent of the population aged 10 and over owned a mobile phone in 2022, up from 67 per cent in 2019. Women were about 12 per cent less likely to own mobile phones than men – the gap virtually unchanged from 2019.
- **Target 5.c:** According to data reported by 105 countries and areas for the period 2018–2021, 26 per cent of countries globally have comprehensive systems in place to track and make public allocations for gender equality, 59 per cent have some features of a system in place, and 15 per cent do not have minimum elements of these systems.



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

34. Billions of people still lack access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, despite improvements in the provision of those basic services. Water scarcity is a growing problem in many parts of the world, and conflicts and climate change are exacerbating the issue. In addition, water pollution is a significant challenge that affects both human health and the environment in many countries. Achieving universal coverage by 2030 will require a six-fold increase in current global rates of progress on drinking water, a five-fold increase for sanitation and a three-fold increase for hygiene. Boosting infrastructure investment,

improving cross-sectoral coordination and addressing climate change are essential to getting Goal 6 back on track.

- **Targets 6.1 and 6.2:** Despite the progress made, 2.2 billion people still lacked safely managed drinking water services, 3.5 billion lacked safely managed sanitation services, and 2.0 billion lacked basic hygiene services in 2022. While the majority live in rural areas, the unserved population is decreasing in rural areas and stagnating or increasing in urban areas. Achieving universal coverage by 2030 will require an increase of 5 to 8 times the current rate.
- **Target 6.3:** An estimated 58 per cent of wastewater generated by households was safely treated in 2022, on the basis of data from 140 countries and territories. Trends for domestic wastewater suggest that little, if any, progress is being made towards the target of halving the proportion of unsafe discharges by 2030.
- **Target 6.4:** Water use efficiency rose from \$17.4/m<sup>3</sup> in 2015 to \$18.9/m<sup>3</sup> worldwide in 2020, which represents a 9 per cent efficiency increase. Around 57 per cent of countries presented a water use efficiency equivalent to \$20/m<sup>3</sup> or less in 2020, compared with 58 per cent in 2015.
- **Target 6.4:** At the global level, water stress remains at a safe level of 18.2 per cent in 2020, but that figure masks vast regional variations and indicates a 1.2 per cent increase from 2015 to 2020. In 2020, water stress levels ranged from high in Central and Southern Asia to critical in Northern Africa. The situation in Northern Africa and Western Asia is particularly concerning since it registered an 18 per cent increase in water stress levels from 2015 to 2020.
- **Target 6.5:** One in two countries still lacks effective frameworks for sustainable water management. A lack of cross-sector coordination over water use, between agriculture, industry, energy production and household supply, threatens the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals, including those on food, energy and life on land. While progress has been made globally since 2015 – from 49/100 in 2017 to 54/100 in 2020 – the rate of implementation needs to double to achieve the target.
- **Target 6.5:** Data from 2017 and 2020 show that only 32 out of 153 countries that share transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers have 90 per cent or more of those waters covered by operational arrangements.
- **Target 6.6:** The extent of surface water bodies, including lakes, rivers and reservoirs, is rapidly changing across the entire planet, with one in five river basins experiencing high (i.e. above natural) fluctuations in surface water during the past five years.
- **Target 6.a:** Disbursements of official development assistance (ODA) to the water sector experienced a 15 per cent decrease between 2015 and 2021, from \$9.6 billion to \$8.1 billion. Total ODA commitments to the water sector also reduced by 12 per cent, from \$11.2 billion in 2015 to \$9.8 billion in 2021. Commitments peaked at \$13.5 billion in 2017 and have decreased every year since.
- **Target 6.b:** Since 2016, the percentage of countries having procedures for local community participation defined in law or policy has remained high (over 70 per cent) for both rural drinking water and for water resources management. However, the percentage of countries with high levels of participation remains consistently low (under 40 per cent).



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

35. Access to electricity and clean cooking fuels has improved in many parts of the world, but 675 million people are still not connected to those grids, and 2.3 billion still cook with unsafe and polluting fuels. The war in Ukraine and global economic uncertainty continue to cause significant volatility in energy prices, leading some countries to raise investments in renewables and others to increase reliance on coal, putting the green transition at risk. If the current pace continues, about 660 million people will still lack access to electricity and close to 2 billion people will continue to rely on polluting fuels and technologies for cooking by 2030. To ensure access to energy for all by 2030, we must accelerate electrification, increase investments in renewable energy sources and invest in improving electricity grids.

- **Target 7.1:** The global population with access to electricity increased from 87 per cent in 2015 to 91 per cent in 2021. The pace of electrification rebounded between 2019 and 2021. However, the annual access growth of 0.6 percentage points in the recent period is lower than the 0.8 percentage points in the period 2015–2019. As a result, 675 million people, most located in the least developed countries and sub-Saharan Africa, still lacked access in 2021.
- **Target 7.1:** In 2021, 71 per cent of the global population had access to clean cooking fuels and technologies, up from 64 per cent in 2015. In 7 (all located in sub-Saharan Africa) of the 20 countries with the largest deficits, fewer than 10 per cent of the population had access to clean fuels and technologies. The growing access deficit in sub-Saharan Africa, if not reversed, could dampen or undermine increasing trends in global access.
- **Target 7.2:** The share of renewable sources in total final energy consumption amounted to 19.1 per cent globally in 2020, or 2.4 percentage points higher than in 2015. Part of that progression was due to lower final energy demand in 2020, as the pandemic disrupted social and economic activities worldwide. The electricity sector shows the largest share of renewables in total final energy consumption (28.2 per cent in 2020) and has driven most of the growth in renewable energy use, while the heat and transport sectors have seen limited progress over the past decade.
- **Target 7.3:** The rate of improvement in primary energy intensity, which had already slowed in recent years, dropped to 0.6 per cent in 2020. This makes it the worst year for energy intensity improvement since the global financial crisis. Annual improvement through 2030 must now average 3.4 per cent to meet the target of Goal 7.3. This slowdown was influenced by a shift in the economic structure during COVID-19 towards more energy-intensive industrial production, combined with only modest rates of technical efficiency improvements, in the context of low energy prices.
- **Target 7.a:** International public financial flows in support of clean energy in developing countries have seen a decreasing trend that started before the COVID-19 pandemic and continued through 2021. In 2021, such flows amounted to \$10.8 billion – an 11 per cent drop from 2020. This was 35 per cent less than the decade-long average from 2010 to 2019, and less than half the 2017 peak of \$26.4 billion.
- **Target 7.b:** In 2021, there was a record-breaking installation of 268 watts per capita of renewable capacity in developing countries, representing a year-on-year growth rate of 9.8 per cent. However, even with this positive and accelerating growth, developing countries are not on track to meet Goal 7 by

2030. Moreover, the positive global and regional trends hide the fact that the countries that are most in need of support are being left behind, even among developing countries.



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

36. Progress towards achieving Goal 8 has been challenging, and the world is far from reaching most of the targets. The lingering effects of COVID-19, cost-of-living crises, trade tensions, uncertain monetary policy paths, rising debts in developing countries and the war in Ukraine can each significantly set back global economic growth. Combined, these crises are placing the global economy under a serious threat. Growth in global real GDP per capita is forecast to slow down in 2023, putting at risk not just employment and income but also advances in equitable pay for women and decent work for young people. Achieving Goal 8 will require a wholesale reform of our morally bankrupt financial system in order to tackle rising debts, economic uncertainties and trade tensions, while promoting equitable pay and decent work for young people.

- **Target 8.1:** Following a sharp decline of 4.1 per cent in 2020, global real GDP per capita increased by 5.2 per cent in 2021. However, growth in global real GDP per capita is forecast to slow down to 2.2 per cent in 2022 and further to 1.4 per cent in 2023, before recovering somewhat to a growth rate of 1.6 per cent in 2024. In the least developed countries, growth in real GDP slowed from 5 per cent in 2019 to just 0.2 per cent in 2020, before recovering to 2.8 per cent in 2021. It is expected that real GDP growth in the least developed countries would strengthen to 4.3 per cent in 2022 and to 4.1 per cent and 5.2 per cent in 2023 and 2024, respectively.
- **Target 8.2:** After a sharp decline in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, labour productivity rebounded in 2021 by 2.4 per cent. Productivity growth slowed in 2022, increasing by only 0.5 per cent. However, even before the onset of the pandemic, productivity growth had been slowing around the world. The latest estimates extend the downward growth trend, from an average annual rate of 1.8 per cent between 2000 and 2014 to 1.4 per cent between 2015 and 2022.
- **Target 8.3:** Globally, 58.0 per cent of those employed were in informal employment in 2022, amounting to around 2 billion workers in precarious jobs, most lacking any form of social protection. Prior to the onset of the pandemic, the incidence of informal employment had been slowly declining and stood at 57.8 per cent in 2019. The pandemic resulted in a disproportionate job loss for informal workers, particularly for women, in 2020. The subsequent recovery from COVID-19 has been driven by informal employment, which has caused a slight increase in the incidence of informality.
- **Target 8.5:** Equal treatment in employment, including fair and equitable earnings, is fundamental for achieving decent work for all. The median gender pay gap across 102 countries is approximately 14 per cent. However, this calculation is only based on average hourly earnings and therefore does not account for characteristics such as sector or occupation, educational level or amount of work experience.
- **Target 8.5:** The global unemployment rate declined significantly in 2022, falling to 5.8 per cent from a peak of 6.9 per cent in 2020 as economies began to recover from the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite an uncertain global economic outlook, unemployment is projected to increase only moderately, as a large part of the shock is being absorbed by falling real wages in an environment of accelerating inflation. Global unemployment is projected

to increase slightly in 2023, by around 3 million, to reach 208 million, corresponding to an unemployment rate of 5.8 per cent.

- **Target 8.6:** Globally, nearly one in four (23.5 per cent) young people were not in education, employment, or training in 2022. Although this is a slight decrease from 2020, when the rate of children not in education, employment or training was at an all-time high, it remains above the 2015 baseline of 22.2 per cent and a long way from the 2030 target.
- **Target 8.7:** The latest estimates indicate that the number of children in child labour rose to 160 million worldwide at the beginning of 2020 – an increase of 8.4 million children in the previous four years. This translates to almost 1 in 10 of all children in child labour worldwide.
- **Target 8.9:** The share of tourism in global GDP nearly halved in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 data shows a very modest 6 per cent upturn, indicating that tourism’s economic contribution is on the path to recovery.
- **Target 8.10:** Accelerated adoption of digital solutions is transforming access to finance. Globally, in 2021, 76 per cent of adults had an account at a bank or regulated institution, such as a credit union, microfinance institution or a mobile money service provider, an increase from 62 per cent in 2014.



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

37. The manufacturing industry’s recovery from COVID-19 remains incomplete and uneven: some high-income regions achieved record-high manufacturing value added per capita in 2022 but levels in the least developed countries were not much higher than the 2015 baseline. In the aftermath of the pandemic, data show that higher-technology industries recovered faster and proved to be more resilient, pointing to the need to promote innovation and technology transfer in a way that benefits all countries. To achieve Goal 9 by 2030 it is essential to support the least developed countries, invest in advanced technologies, lower carbon emissions, and increase global mobile broadband access.

- **Target 9.2:** Global manufacturing value added per capita increased from \$1,646 (constant 2015 prices) in 2015 to \$1,875 in 2022. While Europe and North America reached an all-time high of \$5,052 in 2022, manufacturing value added per capita in the least developed countries reached only \$159, far from the target of doubling their value of \$126 in 2015. Although the share of manufacturing in the least developed countries increased from 12.1 per cent in 2015 to 14.0 per cent in 2022, this pace is not sufficient to achieve the target of doubling the share by 2030. While Asian least developed countries have made considerable progress and are on track, African least developed countries will need to significantly accelerate progress for the goal to remain attainable by 2030.
- **Target 9.2:** After a plunge in 2020, global manufacturing employment returned to the pre-pandemic level in 2021. However, the share of manufacturing employment in total employment continued to decline, falling from 14.3 per cent in 2015 to 13.6 per cent in 2021 worldwide.
- **Target 9.4:** Global carbon dioxide emissions from energy combustion and industrial processes grew by 0.9 per cent in 2022 to a new all-time high of 36.8 billion tonnes. Emissions shrank by more than 5 per cent in 2020, but rebounded past pre-pandemic levels in 2021, growing more than 6 per cent in tandem with economic stimulus and a surge in coal demand even as renewables



capacity additions scaled record heights. The increase in carbon dioxide in 2022 was well below GDP growth of 3.2 per cent.

- **Target 9.b:** In 2022, the medium-high and high-technology industries experienced solid growth, mainly due to the recovery in the automotive sector and consistently strong production in sectors such as computers, electronics and optical products, and electrical equipment. However, the production of basic pharmaceuticals declined due to the COVID-19 situation and shortages of essential inputs. In 2020, sub-Saharan Africa and the least developed countries had low shares of medium-high and high-technology manufacturing, at 21.7 per cent and 10.6 per cent respectively, compared with 47.7 per cent in Europe and North America and 47.1 per cent in Eastern Asia.
- **Target 9.c:** Mobile broadband (3G or above) access is available to 95 per cent of the world's population, while 4G coverage has doubled to 88 per cent between 2015 and 2022. However, growth is slowing down, and connecting the remaining 5 per cent is proving difficult. In sub-Saharan Africa, the gap is 18 per cent, predominantly affecting the population of Central and Western Africa. The coverage gap is almost the same in the least developed countries and landlocked developing countries.



### Goal 10: reduce inequality within and among countries

38. Before the pandemic, the incomes of the bottom 40 per cent of the population grew faster than the national average in a majority of countries. The impacts of the pandemic and uneven recoveries in different regions of the world threaten to reverse that trend and further worsen global inequality. Record numbers are being forced to flee conflicts and economic hardship. By mid-2022, 1 in 251 people worldwide was a refugee, the highest proportion ever documented. Achieving Goal 10 requires concerted efforts to address the root causes of wage disparities and unequal access to resources both within and between countries.

- **Target 10.1:** In 119 countries with data available prior to the pandemic, more than half have achieved income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average. Sparse data from the pandemic suggest that two thirds of 50 countries have experienced shared prosperity post-2019, driven by North America and Europe, where in many countries transfers have mitigated the economic impacts of the pandemic on the bottom of distributions.
- **Target 10.2:** For the 53 countries with 2015 and 2020 data available, the proportion of people living below half the median income has on average declined by 1 percentage point, from 13.4 to 12.5 per cent. This trend continued during COVID-19, in large part because of generous social assistance programmes implemented in several countries. Yet the proportion living below half the median remains worryingly high in many countries. In 17 countries, this accounts for more than 20 per cent of the population.
- **Target 10.4:** The share of economic output earned by workers has experienced a sizeable decline over 15 years, from 54.1 per cent in 2004 to 52.6 per cent in 2019. This decline represents \$590 (purchasing power parity) per worker on average. As earnings from work are particularly important for the less well-off and vulnerable, and as lower-income workers have been disproportionately affected by the crisis, the observed decline is disconcerting.
- **Target 10.7:** The International Organization for Migration Missing Migrants Project has recorded 54,127 deaths on migratory routes worldwide since 2015,

of which 6,878 were recorded in 2022. However, the real number of lives lost is certainly higher:

- The number of people displaced from their countries owing to war, conflict, persecution, human rights violations or public disorder has increased annually for over a decade. By mid-2022, there were 32.5 million refugees worldwide, among 103 million forcibly displaced persons. By the same time, the ratio of refugees to every 100,000 people has risen to 398, an 87 per cent increase from 2015, as forced displacement continues to rise;
  - Globally, in 2021, 62.3 per cent of 138 countries with data reported having a wide range of policies to facilitate the orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, defined as having policy measures for 80 per cent or more of the 30 subcategories under the six domains of the indicator.
- **Target 10.c:** The global average cost of sending \$200 in remittances decreased from 9.3 per cent in 2011, to 7.42 per cent in 2016 and 6.3 per cent in 2021, which remains more than twice the Goal 10.c target of 3 per cent.



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

39. The pandemic has caused major shifts in migration patterns, including huge movements of people in and out of urban areas. Furthermore, climate change and conflicts tend to have disproportionate impacts on cities. These factors mean that the world is far from achieving the goal of sustainable cities. In many developing countries, slum populations have been growing, putting at risk the target of adequate housing for all by 2030. Since 2015, the number of countries with national disaster risk reduction strategies has more than doubled. To achieve Goal 11, efforts must focus on strengthening capacities for planning urban development, improving access to public transportation and enhancing waste management.

- **Target 11.1:** As of 2020, nearly 1.1 billion people lived in slums or slum-like conditions in urban areas, with an additional 2 billion expected to live in slums or slum-like conditions over the next 30 years. The growing slum population is a manifestation of the housing crisis, a situation in many instances that has now been exacerbated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Target 11.2:** According to 2020 data from 1,507 cities in 126 countries, only 51.6 per cent of the world's urban population has convenient access to public transport, with considerable variations across regions.
- **Target 11.3:** According to data compiled from 681 cities for the period 1990–2020, the physical expansion of cities globally was faster than the rates of population growth. For the period 2000–2010, the average annual land consumption rate was 2.0 per cent, while the population growth rate averaged 1.6 per cent. These rates declined to 1.5 per cent and 1.2 per cent, respectively, for the period 2010–2020.
- **Target 11.6:** In 2020, the global average municipal solid waste collection rate in cities was estimated at 84 per cent, and the average municipal solid waste managed in controlled facilities in cities was 61 per cent. The municipal solid waste collection rates in sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) are less than 60 per cent. Uncollected waste is the source of plastic pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and sources of incubation for infections.

- **Target 11.7:** Data for 2020 from 1,072 cities in 120 countries indicate that, in more than three quarters of those cities, less than 20 per cent of their area is dedicated to open public spaces and streets, about half of the proportion recommended. On average, open public spaces account for a meagre 3.2 per cent of urban land, about four times less than the share of land devoted to streets.
- **Target 11.a:** According to a 2021 assessment on compliance with the 58 national urban policies, 55 (95 per cent) fulfilled the first criterion on “responding to population dynamics”, 54 (93 per cent) fulfilled the second criterion on “ensuring balanced territorial development” and only 26 (45 per cent) met the third criterion on making considerations for “increased local fiscal space”, which calls for setting up more financing mechanisms for local implementation of sustainable urban development.
- **Target 11.b:** By the end of 2022, 102 countries reported having local governments with disaster risk reduction strategies, up from 51 countries in 2015.



### Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

40. The world is seriously off track in its effort to halve per-capita food waste and losses by 2030. The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impacts on consumption and production patterns, with disruptions to global supply chains and changes in consumer behaviour. Responsible consumption and production must be an integral part of the recovery from the pandemic. However, the global economy also needs to speed up the decoupling of economic growth from resource use by maximizing the socioeconomic benefits of resources while minimizing their negative impacts. Reporting on corporate sustainability has tripled since the beginning of the Sustainable Development Goals period, but the private sector will need to significantly improve reporting on activities that contribute to the Goals. To deliver Goal 12, it is crucial to implement policies that support the shift to sustainable practices and decouple economic growth from resource use.

- **Target 12.1:** Between 2019 and 2022, 485 policy instruments supporting the shift to sustainable consumption and production were reported by 62 countries and the European Union, with increasing linkages with global environmental commitments on climate, biodiversity, pollution and waste, as well as a particular attention to high-impact sectors. Yet, reporting has been decreasing by 30 per cent on average every year since 2019 and continues to reflect great regional imbalances, with more than 50 per cent of policy instruments reported from Europe and Central Asia.
- **Target 12.2:** In 2019, the total material footprint was 95.9 billion tonnes, close to the world’s domestic material consumption of 95.1 billion tonnes. In Europe and North America, the material footprint was about 14 per cent higher than domestic material consumption, while in Latin America and the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa, the material footprint was lower than domestic material consumption by 17 per cent and 32 per cent, respectively.
- **Target 12.3:** The percentage of food lost globally after harvest at the farm, transport, storage, wholesale and processing levels, usually attributed to structural inadequacies in the countries, is estimated at 13.2 per cent in 2021, unchanged from 2016 and far from the target of halving post-harvest food losses by 2030.
- **Target 12.6:** A preliminary analysis shows that around 70 per cent of monitored companies published sustainability reports in 2022, triple the number in 2016.

The sustainability indicators that are most widely disclosed by companies include policies on water and energy and carbon dioxide emissions, occupational health and safety, as well as board diversity. Companies continue to address their activities in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals; however, only 10 per cent report on all 17 Goals.

- **Target 12.7:** In 2022, 67 national Governments reported to the United Nations Environment Programme on the implementation of sustainable public procurement policies and action plans, up 50 per cent from 2020.
- **Target 12.c:** Global data showed a rise in fossil fuel subsidies in 2021, after a brief fall in 2020 that was largely caused by a drop in energy prices. In 2021, Governments spent an estimated \$732 billion on subsidies to coal, oil and gas, against \$375 billion in 2020. This brings the subsidies back to pre-2015 levels. High oil and gas prices in 2022 will likely bring a new increase, as subsidies are often linked to the price of energy.



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

41. The world is on the brink of a climate catastrophe, and current actions and plans to address the crisis are insufficient. Without transformative action starting now and within the current decade to reduce greenhouse gas emissions deeply and rapidly in all sectors, the 1.5°C target will be at risk and with it the lives of more than 3 billion people. Failure to act leads to intensifying heatwaves, droughts, flooding, wildfires, sea-level rise and famines. Emissions should already be decreasing now and will need to be cut by almost half by 2030 – a mere seven years from now. To combat climate change and its impacts by 2030, urgent and transformative action is needed to meet the commitments under the Paris Agreement across mitigation and adaptation efforts.

- **Target 13.1:** The number of deaths and missing persons due to disasters per 100,000 population has steadily decreased from 1.64 during the 2005–2015 period to 0.86 from 2012 to 2021. The average disaster mortality stood at 47,337 in absolute terms from 2015 to 2021. However, the number of persons affected by disasters per 100,000 people rose from 1,198 between 2005 and 2015 to 2,113 between 2012 and 2021. The number of countries with national strategies for disaster risk reduction has increased from 55 in 2015 to 126 by the end of 2021. On that basis, a total of 118 countries have reported having some level of policy coherence with other global frameworks, such as the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.
- **Target 13.2:** The increase in global temperatures has already reached 1.1°C, due to increasing global greenhouse gas emissions, which reached record highs in 2021. Real-time data from 2022 show emissions continuing an upward trajectory. Instead of decreasing emissions, as required by the target to limit warming, carbon dioxide levels increased from 2020 to 2021 at a rate higher than the average annual growth rate over the past decade and are already 149 per cent higher than pre-industrial levels. Projected cumulative future carbon dioxide emissions over the lifetime of existing and currently planned fossil fuel infrastructure exceed the total cumulative net carbon dioxide emissions in pathways that limit warming to 1.5°C (>50 per cent) with no or limited overshoot.
- **Target 13.3:** An analysis of 100 national curriculum frameworks reveals that nearly half (47 per cent) do not mention climate change. In 2021, despite 95 per cent of teachers recognizing the importance of teaching about climate change severity, only one third are capable of effectively explaining its effects in their

region. In addition, 70 per cent of young people can only describe the broad principles of climate change in 2022.

- **Target 13.a:** According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), total climate finance provided and mobilized by developed countries for developing countries amounted to \$83.3 billion in 2020, a 4 per cent increase from 2019, but still short of the \$100 billion target. Climate finance remains primarily targeted to mitigation, however, and adaptation finance continues to lag, with international finance flows to developing countries standing at 5 to 10 times below estimated needs.



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

42. Destructive trends in ocean health have not abated. The ocean, the world's largest ecosystem, continues to be endangered by rising acidification, eutrophication, declining fish stocks and mounting plastic pollution. While there has been some progress in expanding marine protected areas and combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing over the years, more concerted efforts and acceleration are urgently needed. Urgent and coordinated global action is needed to continue to advance towards Goal 14.

- **Target 14.1:** The global trend of elevated coastal eutrophication continued in 2022 above the 2000–2004 baseline conditions, although different in magnitude from recent years. The highest rates are in the Arabian Sea.
- **Target 14.3:** Ocean acidification is increasing and will continue to do so if carbon dioxide emissions do not stop rising, threatening marine ecosystems and the services they provide. Today, the ocean's average pH level is 8.1. This means that the ocean today is about 30 per cent more acidic than in pre-industrial times.
- **Target 14.4:** Fishery resources continue to be threatened by overfishing, pollution, poor management and other factors, including illegal fishing. More than one third (35.4 per cent) of global stocks were overfished in 2019, an increase of 1.2 per cent since 2017. Despite ongoing deterioration, the rate of decline has decelerated in recent years. However, the trend continues to deteriorate from the 2020 target to restore fish stocks to biologically sustainable levels.
- **Target 14.6:** By the end of 2022, the number of States parties to the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reached 74, including the European Union, or effectively 100 States. In the period 2018–2022, there has been some progress at the global level in implementing instruments to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. The new WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, adopted in June 2022, marks a major step forward towards ocean sustainability.
- **Target 14.a:** Despite the fact that the ocean covers more than 70 per cent of the surface of our planet and contributes to 2.5 per cent of the world's gross value added, only 1.1 per cent of national research budgets were allocated for ocean science on average between 2013 and 2021.
- **Target 14.b:** Globally, the degree of application of frameworks that recognize and protect access rights for small-scale fisheries was at the highest level in 2022 on the basis of available data, reaching a maximum score of five out of five. However, what that score does not reveal is that a reduced number of countries contributed to the reporting.



**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**

43. The world is facing a triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. The trend in forest loss, land degradation and the extinction of species is becoming worse, posing a severe threat to the health of the planet and people. Goal 15 will not be met without a dramatic shift in our relationship with our natural environment.

- **Target 15.2:** The world's forest area continues to decline, from 31.9 per cent in 2000 to 31.2 per cent in 2020, representing a net loss of 100 million hectares. Agricultural expansion is the direct driver of almost 90 per cent of global deforestation. However, globally, there has been progress in sustainable forest management, with both certified forest area and the proportion of forests under management plans and within protected areas increasing.
- **Targets 14.5, 15.1 and 15.4:** In recent years, global coverage of marine, terrestrial, freshwater and mountain key biodiversity areas has continued to increase to nearly half of each site covered in 2022, on average. However, growth in coverage has slowed, and coverage is uneven regionally, threatening progress towards the restoration and conservation of these ecosystems.
- **Target 15.3:** Each year between 2015 and 2019, the world lost at least 100 million hectares of healthy and productive land, affecting food and water security globally. Human activities, intensified by climate change, are the main drivers of land degradation, directly affecting 1.3 billion people. If land degradation continues at a similar rate, it would result in an additional 1.5 billion hectares of degraded land by 2030. In order to reach the target of ensuring a land degradation-neutral world by 2030, it is necessary to avoid new land degradation and restore at least one billion degraded hectares of land.
- **Target 15.5:** Species extinction is irreversible and thus perhaps the most fundamental human impact on nature. Globally, the Red List Index – established on the basis of repeat assessments of every species across groups of mammals, birds, amphibians, corals and cycads – deteriorated by about 4 per cent from 2015 to 2023. However, over the past three decades since 1993, the Index has deteriorated about 11 per cent, with each decade showing a faster deterioration rate than the previous. In 2022, in comprehensive assessments, 21 per cent of reptile species were found to be threatened with extinction. All indications point to a deterioration in trends towards the target to halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species.
- **Target 15.6:** At the end of 2022, 68 countries had at least one legislative, administrative or policy measure in place to ensure the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, in accordance with the Nagoya Protocol, representing an increase of 62 countries since 2016. Furthermore, 88 countries reported to have measures in place to implement the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, an increase of 76 countries since 2015.
- **Target 15.8:** Nearly all countries have now adopted national legislation relevant to the prevention or control of invasive alien species, mainly embedded within laws regarding cross-cutting sectors such as animal health, plant health, fisheries and aquaculture, and 87 per cent of countries have aligned themselves to global targets. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about an increased focus on the prevention, control and management of biological invasions of pathogenic agents, particularly zoonotic pathogens, in order to mitigate their negative impacts on biodiversity and human health.

- **Target 15.9:** There has been a steady upward trend in the number of countries incorporating biodiversity values into national accounting and reporting systems. By December 2022, 90 per cent of countries had established national targets in relation to Aichi Biodiversity Target 2. However, only about one third of countries are reporting that they are on track to reach or exceed their national targets. In addition, 92 countries indicated that they had implemented the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting in 2022, a number that is expected to grow over the next few years owing to the role of the System in the global biodiversity framework.



**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**

44. Ongoing and new violent conflicts around the world are derailing a global path to peace and the achievement of Goal 16. One quarter of humanity lives in conflict-affected areas and, as of mid-2022, more than 100 million people had been forcibly displaced worldwide – more than double the number a decade ago. Citizens also face challenges gaining access to justice, basic services and legal guarantees, and are generally underrepresented owing to ineffective institutions. Moreover, structural injustices, inequalities and emerging human rights challenges are putting peaceful and inclusive societies further out of reach. To meet Goal 16 by 2030, action is needed to restore trust and to strengthen the capacity of institutions to secure justice for all and facilitate transitions to drive sustainable development.

- **Target 16.1:** Globally, about 458,000 people were victims of homicide in 2021 – the highest number of victims in the past 20 years. The noticeable spike in killings in 2021 can be partly attributed to the economic repercussions of COVID-19-related restrictions, as well as an escalation of gang-related and sociopolitical violence in several countries. The homicide rate was 5.8 per 100,000 people, marginally lower than in 2015 (at 5.9 per 100,000). Men and boys represent about 80 per cent of victims and 90 per cent of suspects.
  - In 2022, the United Nations recorded 16,988 killings of civilians in armed conflicts, a 53 per cent increase compared with 2021 and the first increase since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. In total, 4 out of 10 deaths occurred in Ukraine. One in five was a woman. The proportion of deaths by heavy weapons and explosive munitions increased significantly, from 13 per cent in 2021 to 39 per cent in 2022, in contrast to the steady decline over the previous five years;<sup>2</sup>
  - On the basis of survey data from 114 countries, on average, approximately 69 per cent of the population reported feeling safe or very safe walking alone after dark around the area in which they live, a figure that has remained stable over the period 2016–2021. Women continued to feel significantly less safe than men.
- **Target 16.2:** In 75 countries – mostly low- and middle-income countries – with available data from 2014 to 2022, 8 out of 10 children aged 1 to 14 years had been subjected to some form of psychological aggression and/or physical punishment at home in the previous month. In 70 of those countries, at least half of all children experienced violent discipline on a regular basis.

<sup>2</sup> This figure includes only documented and verified civilian deaths caused directly by war operations in the armed conflicts in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Israel, Libya, Mali, the State of Palestine, Somalia, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen.

- In 2020, the number of trafficking victims detected worldwide fell for the first time in 20 years, as COVID-19-related preventive measures changed the dynamics of exploitation while compromising anti-trafficking responses. As more victims are likely to remain undetected, greater efforts are needed to tailor responses to the real prevalence of the crime;
- For the period 2014–2021, only 55 countries – mostly low- and middle-income countries – have internationally comparable data on sexual violence in childhood against girls, and only 12 have produced such data for boys. Across regions with representative estimates, the prevalence of sexual violence in childhood (by age 18) among young women aged 18 to 29 years ranges from 1 per cent in Central and Southern Asia to 7 per cent in Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand.
- **Target 16.3:** In 2021, the global prison population was 11.2 million, remaining relatively stable since 2015, except for a temporary decline between 2019 and 2020. Some 3.4 million of all prisoners are unsentenced detainees, and their share among all prisoners has remained at around 30 per cent between 2015 and 2021 and far from the target of equal access to justice for all.
- **Target 16.4:** While tracing is a key measure in the process of investigating and disclosing the origins of illicit firearms, its systematic implementation remains a global challenge. On average, Member States with available data successfully traced one third of seized weapons that were potentially traceable between 2016 and 2021.
- **Target 16.5:** Globally, approximately 1 in 7 businesses (15 per cent) face requests for bribe payments by public officials, based on establishment-level data from 154 countries surveyed during the period 2006–2023.
- **Target 16.6:** Multiple crises undermine budget credibility across all regions. The average budget deviation compared with the approved budget decreased from 5–10 per cent in 2015 to the target of less than 5 per cent in 2019. However, budget credibility deteriorated and reached a deviation of almost 10 per cent for some regions in the period 2020–2021.
- **Target 16.7:** In every region of the world except Europe, people under the age of 45 are significantly underrepresented in parliament relative to their share of the national populations.
- **Target 16.9:** By providing all children with proof of legal identity from day one, their rights can be protected and universal access to justice and social services can be enabled. In 2022, the births of around one in four children under 5 years of age worldwide were never officially recorded. Only half of the children under 5 years of age in sub-Saharan Africa have had their births registered.
- **Target 16.10:** Access to information laws provide legal guarantees of the right to information and were adopted by 136 countries in 2022, up from 105 in 2015.



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

45. Progress towards achieving Goal 17 has been mixed. On the one hand, there have been some advances in areas such as development aid, remittances flows and access to technology. However, funding for development remains a major challenge, in particular in low-income countries. In addition, geopolitical tensions and the rise of nationalism in some parts of the world have made it more difficult to achieve international cooperation and coordination. Many developing countries are battling record inflation, rising interest rates and



looming debt burdens, competing priorities, and limited fiscal space. A major surge in concerted action is needed to ensure developing countries have access to the financing and technologies needed to accelerate implementation of the Goals.

### Finance

- **Target 17.1:** On the basis of 2021 data from approximately 130 economies, government revenue accounted for approximately 33 per cent of GDP on average. In addition, the average overall tax burden or revenue in the form of taxes was 26 per cent of GDP among advanced economies and 17 per cent of GDP among emerging market and developing economies. The proportion of government expenditure funded by taxes has been stable within each region and worldwide has tended to converge. The overall average in 2019 was about 66 per cent among advanced economies and 60 per cent among emerging market and developing economies, but declined sharply to about 52 per cent in 2020 before rebounding to about 58 per cent in 2021 for both groups of economies.
- **Target 17.2:** Net ODA flows amounted to \$206 billion (current price) in 2022, an increase of 15.3 per cent in real terms compared with 2021. This is the highest growth rate on record, mainly due to domestic spending on refugees and aid for Ukraine. However, total ODA as a percentage of gross national income continues to remain below the 0.7 per cent target, reaching 0.36 per cent in 2022, compared with 0.31 per cent in 2021. Moreover, net bilateral ODA flows to countries in Africa totalled \$34 billion in 2022, representing a drop of 7.4 per cent in real terms compared with 2021.
- **Target 17.3:** The COVID-19 pandemic reshaped development spending, driving significant increases in financial resources mobilized for developing countries from multiple sources. Official sustainable development grants passed the \$100 billion mark in 2020 and reached \$118 billion in 2021. Official concessional loans amounted to \$55 billion and official non-concessional loans totalled \$107 billion in 2021, increases of 37 per cent and 51 per cent, respectively, compared with 2019. But that is still a long way from the estimated \$3.9 trillion that developing countries need between now and 2030 in order to invest in the transitions needed to achieve the Goals.
- **Target 17.4:** Debt levels of advanced and low- and middle-income countries reached record highs during the pandemic, increasing the likelihood of adverse consequences on economic growth. The total external debt of low- and middle-income countries increased by 5.6 per cent in 2021 to \$9 trillion, driven primarily by an increase in short-term debt. As of November 2022, 37 out of 69 of the world's poorest countries were either at high risk of or already in debt distress, while one in four middle-income countries, which account for the majority of the extreme poor, were at high risk of fiscal crisis.

### Information and communications technology

- **Target 17.8:** In 2022, an estimated 66 per cent of the world's population (5.3 billion) used the Internet, compared with 40 per cent (3 billion) in 2015. Globally, 259 million more men than women used the Internet in 2022. There has been slower growth in the number of Internet users compared with at the height of the pandemic, meaning that without increased investment in infrastructure and digital skills, the aim of connecting everyone by 2030 will remain elusive.
- **Target 17.6:** Fixed-broadband subscriptions continue to grow steadily, at an average annual growth rate of 6.7 per cent over the past 10 years, reaching 18 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in 2022 globally, up from 11 subscriptions in 2015. While fixed connections are common among households in upper-middle-

income and high-income countries, they are nearly non-existent in low-income countries owing to high prices and a lack of infrastructure.

- **Target 17.7:** The total trade of tracked environmentally sound technologies in 2020 was \$2,364 billion, an increase of 5 per cent since 2015.

### Trade

- **Targets 17.10, 17.12:** The worldwide weighted tariff average was about 2 per cent in 2020 – unchanged since 2017, but down from 2.6 per cent in 2015. The latest figures from 2020 indicate that agriculture and clothing products continue to face the highest tariff rates at about 6 per cent, followed by textiles at 4 per cent and industrial products at 1.4 per cent. The special tariff treatment that developed countries offer to developing countries, small island developing States and the least developed countries remains unchanged.
- **Target 17.11:** In 2021, the share of the least developed countries' exports in global merchandise trade amounted to 1.05 per cent and has remained almost constant for the past three years. The target of doubling the share of the least developed countries' exports by 2020, from its value of 1.03 per cent in 2011, has therefore not been met. The share of all developing countries' exports in global merchandise trade reached 44.4 per cent in 2021, a share 3.1 percentage points larger than in 2016. It has increased almost continuously over the past five years.

### Data, monitoring and accountability

- **Target 17.18:** In 2022, 147 countries and territories reported having national statistical legislation compliant with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. In 2022, 156 countries and territories reported implementing a national statistical plan, with 100 of those plans fully funded, compared with 81 countries implementing a national statistical plan with 17 fully funded in 2016. However, owing to the long-lasting impacts of the pandemic and limited human and financial capacity in strategic planning, many national statistical offices are implementing expired strategic plans for their statistical activities, which may not fully cover their evolving development objectives and emerging demands for data.
- **Target 17.19:** International funding for data and statistics amounted to \$542 million in 2020, down from over \$100 million and \$155 million from funding levels in 2019 and 2018, respectively. That rate is also a decline of 16 per cent since 2015. While the decrease could be partially attributed to pandemic-induced funding and policy shifts, it could reflect the long-standing challenges in mainstreaming data activities, the limited pool of donors and the low strategic priority of statistics.

## III. Breaking through to a better future for all

46. The sobering picture of the Sustainable Development Goals being in reverse halfway to our 2030 deadline is a clarion call to the world to redouble our efforts to eliminate poverty and hunger, advance gender equality and overcome the triple planetary crisis. Failure to heed that call will fuel greater political instability and displacement, further erode trust in public institutions, upend economies and lead to irreversible existential changes to our natural environment. Above all, it will cause immense suffering for current and future generations – especially among the world's poorest and most vulnerable people and countries.

47. But we can turn things around. Although the overall picture is deeply concerning, the data also offers a glimpse of the possible. It shows progress in a number of key areas from energy to Internet access and more. There is also ample evidence that the transformation demanded by the Goals is one of immense opportunity, and in the years since 2015, we have seen Governments, business, the private sector and the general public embracing the Sustainable Development Goals.

48. The Goals remain a truly inspiring and unifying compass, and transformative progress can be made even in the face of adversity. Furthermore, this generation is equipped with knowledge, technologies and resources unprecedented in history and can draw on a wide range of normative frameworks. Breaking through to a better future for all demands that we put this advantage to use to lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, advance gender equality, put our world on low-emissions pathways by 2030 and secure human rights for all.

49. The 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report provides a synopsis of evidence showing that we can guide transformation toward sustainable and equitable outcomes. The sections below complement its findings and provide Member States with analysis and recommendations to unlock the rapid and deep transitions needed to deliver the Goals by 2030. The United Nations system will seek to mobilize support for a number of these, through a set of high impact initiatives in the lead-up to and following the Sustainable Development Goals Summit.

50. I urge world leaders to come together at the Sustainable Development Goals Summit to deliver a rescue plan for people and planet centred around the following three major breakthroughs:

- Equipping governance and institutions for sustainable and inclusive transformation
- Prioritizing policies and investments that have multiplier effects across the goals
- Securing a surge in Sustainable Development Goals financing and an enabling global environment for developing countries

## **A. Equipping governance and institutions for sustainable and inclusive transformation**

51. Delivering change at the speed and scale required by the Sustainable Development Goals demands more than ever before from public institutions and political leaders. It requires bold decisions, the transfer of resources from one sector to another, the creation of a new regulatory environment, the appropriate deployment of new technologies, the advancement of longer-term holistic perspectives, the mobilizing of a wide range of actors and the capacity to advance disruptive change while strengthening trust and social cohesion.<sup>3</sup> Each of those dimensions presents challenges for political leadership and public governance systems. Together, they constitute a set of demands for which contemporary governance systems were not built. It is essential therefore to take action to equip governance systems for transformation.

52. Since 2015, Governments have responded to the Sustainable Development Goals in a variety of ways. Yet voluntary national reviews and research studies demonstrate that nationalization of the Goals has not yet had the necessary “normative and institutional impact, from legislative action to changing resource allocation”.<sup>4</sup> The Goals must become more than a means to communicate change. They must become a guiding star that shapes national policies, budgets, institutions and long-

<sup>3</sup> See [www.idlo.int/system/files/event-documents/2021\\_sdg16\\_conference\\_report\\_05072021.pdf](http://www.idlo.int/system/files/event-documents/2021_sdg16_conference_report_05072021.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> See [www.nature.com/articles/s41893-022-00909-5](http://www.nature.com/articles/s41893-022-00909-5).

term national development planning. They must become the core business of presidents and prime ministers, parliaments and the private sector.

53. Incentivizing, steering and advancing transformation is complex and can often result in unintended consequences or trade-offs. Public institutions and public servants need to have capacities and strategies to continually revisit and adjust policy implementation in order to maximize benefits and capitalize on synergies while understanding trade-offs or identifying feedback loops, including by leveraging international human rights and labour standards. They also need to be able to work across sectors and contribute, including with budget alignment, to a whole-of-government approach to the Goals. The ability of institutions to steer and leverage digital technologies, in an inclusive and equitable manner, is also essential, as is a capacity to work in unison with the private sector and others to advance the public interest.

54. Localization, anchored on the principle of multilevel governance and multistakeholder collaboration, is recognized as a key approach to collectively propel us toward greater inclusion and sustainability. Local and regional governments have a key role to play in this process as the 65 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goals targets are linked to their work and mandates. Being the sphere of government closest to local communities, they are essential for responding to the erosion of the social contract and protecting our societies amid intersecting global crises. Since 2018, the voluntary local review global movement has provided an unprecedented push towards localization. The more than 200 voluntary local reviews carried out to date have shed light on and raised the profile of local action vis-à-vis national action and international processes. In addition, voluntary local reviews have contributed to advances in all dimensions of localization of the Goals – from data innovation to planning and policy coherence to project development and financing. Nevertheless, the resources of local and regional governments – financial, human and technical – across the globe remain limited, hindering their capacities to deliver basic services and drive development at the local level.

55. The Private sector is a critical driver of productivity, employment and growth. Business leaders are increasingly acknowledging the necessity and urgency of taking sustainability factors into account to achieve long-term success. Businesses are making sustainability and climate-related commitments daily. They must be held accountable for those commitments, and they must deliver. Corporate governance models, incentive structures and operating practices must be adjusted to align with the objectives of sustainable development. Policies and regulations must facilitate long-term decision-making, include the pricing of externalities and the phasing-out of harmful subsidies, and we must see an improvement in the transparency and credibility of sustainability labels and ratings, ensuring all efforts are made to eliminate rampant green-washing and Goals-washing.

56. Culture is a global public good and a critical enabler and driver of progress towards the Goals. Culture serves as a source of knowledge, values and communication, as a contributor to environmental sustainability and as a generator of economic activity and jobs. Respect for cultural diversity and the diversity of religions and beliefs, as well as intercultural dialogue and understanding, are also crucial to strengthening social cohesion and sustaining peace. Culture and respect for cultural diversity, however, remain undervalued and underutilized in the push for Goals-related progress. Greater consideration of culture's role in supporting the achievement of the Goals – including within relevant indicators – would generate an important boost for implementation of the Goals between now and 2030.

57. Access to timely and high-quality disaggregated data is essential. It can multiply the efficiency and effectiveness of domestic and development spending, generating a “data dividend” for implementation of the Goals. Yet many countries lack the resources

and capacities necessary to respond to data demands and, as highlighted in section II above, there remain significant gaps in the geographic coverage, timeliness and disaggregation of Goals indicators. Domestic spending on data and statistics is low, and some 40 per cent of national statistics offices saw a drop in funding during the pandemic. There is little transparency around donor support in this area, and one study estimated that development cooperation spending on data had dropped by over 20 per cent between 2018 and 2020. Greater use of new data sources and innovative approaches – including geospatial information, remote sensing, artificial intelligence and machine learning, crowd sourcing, qualitative methods, citizen-generated data and private sector data – represent new opportunities, although they are not without their own risks and challenges. Strong data governance, data literacy and data protection policies are essential, but today only about half of the least developed countries have such laws.<sup>5</sup> Support from the United Nations and other international partners must also become more cohesive and effective. Much more can be done to strengthen data ecosystems.

58. Effective engagement with the global public and effective follow-up to Sustainable Development Goals commitments and implementation efforts are essential to understanding progress, boosting public ownership and identifying major objectives. By July 2023, 188 countries will have conducted voluntary national reviews – the central instrument for Goals-related follow-up and review at the global and national levels. Overall, countries have improved the preparation of their reviews, engaging stakeholders more systematically and combining multiple tools of analysis. Voluntary national reviews have also had a spill-over effect at the subnational level, with the growth of voluntary local reviews as a key example. With the Goals so far off track, and building on the lessons learned since 2015, it is time to take Goals-related follow-up to the next level. It is essential for our attention to shift from reporting national action to an international audience to strengthening national accountability for progress and transformation. This calls for a systematic inclusion of Goals-related implementation efforts in national oversight systems, for more independent evaluations of national implementation, for the greater involvement of scientists in monitoring and review, and for a fundamental rethink of the voluntary national review process.

**Priority actions:**

- Call upon all countries to deliver a national commitment to transformation of the Goals at the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, including by setting national benchmarks for reducing poverty and inequality, making achievement of the Goals a central focus in national planning and oversight mechanisms, and aligning national and subnational budgets with the Goals.
- Invest in public sector capacity and infrastructure to identify trade-offs and drive large-scale change, enable complex decision-making, leverage digital technologies and boost implementation partnerships.
- Recognize the central role of local and subnational governments in implementing the Goals, including by designing national enabling frameworks to allow subnational governments to meet their devolved responsibilities and by strengthening their capacities and resources to advance the Goals, while contributing to crisis mitigation, adaptation, preparedness and recovery, anchored on the principles of multilevel governance, and multistakeholder and multisectoral collaboration.
- Encourage the development of effective policies and a suitable regulatory framework to support the alignment of private sector governance models, operating practices and disclosure requirements with sustainable development objectives.

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<sup>5</sup> See <https://unctad.org/page/data-protection-and-privacy-legislation-worldwide>.

- Give due consideration to the contribution of culture to the achievement of sustainable development in the formulation of national, regional and international development policies and international cooperation instruments.
- Take action to reap the data dividend, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups, by working towards securing data for at least 90 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goals targets in each country by 2027, increasing domestic financing for data and statistics by 50 per cent from current levels by 2030, embracing new data sources and innovative approaches, and adopting data governance and protection policies. Donors should also commit to increasing the share of ODA for data to at least 0.7 per cent by 2030, for the full implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data.
- Take monitoring, follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals to the next level by boosting independent evaluations of implementation, strengthening engagement with parliament and civil society, centring voluntary national reviews on national commitments to transformation of the Goals, establishing official registration systems of voluntary local reviews and supporting the further development of Goals indicators with disaggregated data.

## **B. Prioritizing policies and investments that will drive just transitions and unlock progress across the goals**

59. In 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals were agreed as an integrated and indivisible set of Goals and they cannot be achieved one at a time or in siloes. In the 2019 and 2023 editions of the Global Sustainable Development Report, the evidence-based case is made that transformation towards sustainable development will only be possible if actions address systems of goals and targets. Policy actions are needed to drive key transitions and to serve as multipliers that advance progress across the Goals. National priorities and contexts will determine the precise mix of policies and interventions, but combining actions and actors geared towards leave no one behind with those that balance human well-being and the stewardship of nature can help build a holistic approach.

### **1. Close divides to leave no one behind**

60. Recent crises have exposed unequal coping mechanisms and deepened divides across various dimensions of well-being. As shown in section II of the present report, above, the decades-long trend of narrowing global income inequality has now reversed, more people are fleeing conflict than at any time on record, and the slum population is growing. The impacts of those reversals are felt most by women and girls and by vulnerable and marginalized populations, including persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons and Indigenous Peoples.

61. The world must act to close gaps and improve the well-being of the people farthest behind and thus contribute to stability and resilience globally. Action taken in the areas below can also have multiplier impacts across the Sustainable Development Goals.

#### **Provide shock-responsive, adaptive and universal social protection, and strengthen action to generate jobs for a just transition**

62. Social protection and jobs creation and retention is the only refuge for the large segments of society with no financial buffers and is a crucial tool for reducing and preventing poverty, in particular when crises hit. During the pandemic, many Governments rapidly expanded social protection coverage or benefits, often with

digital tools, but many were one-time payments or short-term solutions.<sup>6</sup> Most of those additional social protection and job retention measures were implemented in advanced economies with the resources to do so, while in developing countries, many Governments now face the prospect of having to roll back those measures in response to compounding fiscal pressures.

63. In addition, social protection coverage often excludes those who need it the most, such as informal workers, in particular women.<sup>7</sup> For instance, only 28 per cent of persons with significant disabilities have access to disability benefits globally, and only 1 per cent in low-income countries.<sup>8</sup> The current global economic slowdown is also likely to force more workers to accept lower quality, poorly paid jobs that lack job security and social protection. The need for universal social protection and decent job opportunities will also only grow as the transitions to green and digital economic systems accelerate and as demographic transitions unfold.

64. Despite the devastating impact of today's cascading crises on social protection and livelihood opportunities, these shocks have also highlighted the opportunities for driving progress. Right now, there is a window of opportunity to cement some of the gains and learn from positive experiences, with impacts that can cut across the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>9</sup> Social protection that is dynamic in terms of both coverage and the means of distribution can bolster capabilities to weather crises. There is also a strong investment case for expanding social protection and supporting job creation: investing in the care economy, for example, could generate 280 million jobs globally, while investing in the green and circular economy could create 100 million jobs, both by 2030. The revenue from this job creation could fuel a virtuous cycle that can accelerate just transitions and create more resilient, inclusive and equitable societies for all. Despite high up-front costs in some cases, investing in these areas will yield long-term results that far outweigh immediate costs. Despite high interest rates, inflation and fragile debt situations, long-term, affordable financing to support social protection and decent job creation opportunities can and must be found. The United Nations Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, launched in September 2021, is supporting the design and implementation of inclusive and integrated policies and investment strategies for decent jobs with social protection, to support just transitions for all. It also aims to establish national financing frameworks and mobilize public and private domestic and international resources, with the aim of expanding social protection to 4 billion people and creating 400 million new, decent jobs by 2030.

#### Priority actions:

- Expand investments in social protection floors as a percentage of GDP in national budgets and make institutional changes to promote an integrated approach to achieving adaptive, shock-responsive and universal social protection and creating new, decent job opportunities in the care, digital and green economies.

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<sup>6</sup> Maya Hammad, Fabianna Bacil and Fábio Veras Soares, *Next Practices – Innovations in the COVID-19 social protection responses and beyond* (UNDP, 2021), available from <https://socialprotection.org/discover/publications/next-practices-innovations-covid-19-social-protection-responses-and-beyond>.

<sup>7</sup> See [www.wiego.org/resources/long-economic-covid-worlds-working-class-infographic](http://www.wiego.org/resources/long-economic-covid-worlds-working-class-infographic).

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, "Policy brief: a disability-inclusive response to COVID-19" (May 2020), available at <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Policy-Brief-A-Disability-Inclusive-Response-to-COVID-19.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *UN collaboration on social protection: Reaching consensus on how to accelerate social protection systems-building* (Geneva, 2022), available from <https://socialprotection.org/discover/publications/un-collaboration-social-protection-reaching-consensus-how-accelerate-social>.

- Mobilize political efforts through the United Nations Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions to channel funds from international, national, public and private sources, including from the international financial institutions, towards this aim.
- Create active labour market policies to help workers upskill and re-skill in order to keep or change their job, adapt to the green and digital transitions and find ways out of poverty.
- Fully leverage digital technology to expand the foundations – including registries, digital IDs and financial inclusion – on which more comprehensive, dynamic and adaptive social protection systems can be built.

### **Invest in women and girls**

65. Current rates of progress toward gender equality are set to leave half of the world's population and the world's workforce behind. Gender parity for labour-force participation had been slowing since 2009 – and it reversed in 2020.<sup>10</sup> Women make about half as much as men do and carry a disproportionate share of care work, both paid and unpaid, which increased during the pandemic.<sup>11</sup> Rates of violence against women were reported to have increased considerably during the pandemic. By one measure, GDP per capita would be almost 20 per cent higher if all gender employment gaps were closed.<sup>12</sup> This demands a dismantling of discriminatory laws, a shake-up in the existing social structures and norms, and the use of special measures and quotas for the targeted investment in women.

66. The world's population is also drastically changing. According to a recent United Nations study, greater parity in the labour force would do more to sustain economies in ageing, low-fertility societies than setting targets for women to have more children. Yet it is estimated that, globally, the number of unintended pregnancies every year is a staggering 121 million, or an average of 331,000 per day. Safeguarding access to quality sexual and reproductive health for all and instituting policies that are family-friendly are the best ways to ensure people can achieve their individual reproductive goals and optimize their contribution to society.

### **Priority actions:**

- Leverage special measures and quotas to promote gender parity across all levels of decision-making in political and economic life; and accelerate women's economic inclusion by closing the digital divide, investing in women-owned businesses and reducing the unpaid care and domestic burden for women and girls.
- Dismantle all discriminatory laws and practices, take action to shape social norms that promote gender equality and ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.
- Pass laws and put in place emergency response plans that prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls, both online and offline, by 2025.

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<sup>10</sup> World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2022 (Geneva, 2022), available from [www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/](http://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/).

<sup>11</sup> OECD, "Caregiving in Crisis: Gender inequality in paid and unpaid work during COVID-19" (2021), available at [www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/caregiving-in-crisis-gender-inequality-in-paid-and-unpaid-work-during-covid-19-3555d164/](http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/caregiving-in-crisis-gender-inequality-in-paid-and-unpaid-work-during-covid-19-3555d164/).

<sup>12</sup> See <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/37062>.



**Make the digital transformation work for everyone**

67. Persistent digital divides among and within countries stand in the way of widespread Goals-related progress through digital technologies and hamper the use of new data sources. These gaps should be tackled holistically, i.e. not just on a whole-of-government level but also on a whole-of-system level, supported by the global development community.

68. Navigating the double-edged sword of digital transformation, managing digital risks and digital harms and leveraging the potential of technologies, requires investing in inclusive and accessible digital infrastructure to ensure meaningful connectivity for all. The large gaps in access to technologies, connectivity and infrastructure, as well as the poor accessibility of technologies themselves for groups such as persons with disabilities, have significant human rights and development implications. For instance, only 1 in 10 people in the world have access to assistive technology products and services.<sup>13</sup> The proliferation of robotics, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, the Internet of things and cloud and mobile computing, can support human well-being and the Sustainable Development Goals. Enhancing digital literacy and data literacy in and outside the public sector is another crucial step and should focus on self-reliance and lifelong learning. Effective digital partnerships with the private sector and other stakeholders can produce applications to advance progress towards the Goals. The development by Member States of a global digital compact is under way and would be a substantial step in the direction of making digital technologies work for the public good.

**Priority actions:**

- Invest in foundational inclusive and accessible digital infrastructures to ensure meaningful connectivity for all and build digital literacy and data literacy in and outside the public sector.
- Incentivize digital partnerships with the private sector and other stakeholders to produce applications that further Goals-related progress.

**Adopt a life-course approach to essential services and urgently tackle the global crisis in education**

69. Early and consistent investments in access to essential social services and social inclusion can improve the prospects for work and well-being later in life and are fundamental to a strong social contract. Interventions during early childhood and adolescence can prevent subsequent limitations and support socioeconomic mobility, while interventions in adulthood or older age can help individuals recover from past deprivations. However, systems today continue to take a fragmented approach. The limited focus on a life-course and intergenerational approach and inadequate access to training opportunities for older persons hamper their ability to continue working or find new employment.

70. Quality inclusive education is key to preparing today's young people for high-skill jobs and is a major contributor to health and well-being, gender equality and climate mitigation.<sup>14</sup> However, against the backdrop of pandemic-related lost learning, education today is in deep crisis. In low- and middle-income countries, the share of children living in "learning poverty" – unable to read and understand a simple

<sup>13</sup> See [www.who.int/health-topics/assistive-technology#tab=tab\\_2](http://www.who.int/health-topics/assistive-technology#tab=tab_2).

<sup>14</sup> E.C. Cordero, D. Centeno and A.M. Todd, *The role of climate change education on individual lifetime carbon emissions* (Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada, 2020). See <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0206266>.

statement about everyday life at age 10 – could possibly reach 70 per cent,<sup>15</sup> with children with disabilities and other marginalized groups suffering disproportionately. As highlighted at the 2022 Transforming Education Summit, ending the current crisis and making education fit to tackle the world’s most pressing issues demands a sea-change in how Governments and the international community approach and invest in education. Recent analysis shows that almost \$100 billion per year is needed to allow countries to meet their national benchmarks for achieving Goal 4. A forthcoming policy brief on transforming education will elaborate on this challenge as an input to the preparations for the Summit of the Future. The crisis in education, however, is a ticking time bomb. Urgent and focused action now will reap benefits for generations to come.

**Priority actions:**

- Expand access to early childhood education, nutrition and health care, and leverage the forthcoming high-level meeting on universal health coverage to strengthen national health systems.
- Equip social protection systems to address needs that arise naturally during the life cycle and during periods of low earning capacity, such as childhood, disability, childbearing and old age.
- Deliver on national statements of commitment to transform education, including by taking concrete steps to invest more, more equitably and more efficiently in education, taking corrective action and monitoring progress at all levels to improve basic literacy and numeracy and digital literacy proficiency, ensuring a future-oriented focus in education curricula and pedagogy and leveraging technologies for greater access and learning.

**Invest in peace**

71. The data in section II of the present report show that one quarter of humanity lives in a conflict-affected area. Development cannot wait in these areas. Investments in peace and sustainable development generate a virtuous cycle, with development gains addressing the drivers of conflict and inclusive peace enabling development priorities to expand.

72. Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals in conflict-affected regions and those with humanitarian needs will break cycles of dependency and address the underlying drivers of vulnerability. It is vital to ensure that persons affected by instability, conflict or violence have access to services and protection, including the more than 100 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, among which more than 32 million are refugees.<sup>16</sup> Countries that are affected by conflict or humanitarian disaster need their partners and supporters to act in a coherent manner. They need peacebuilders, development practitioners and humanitarians who can see the bigger picture. They need partners who do not work in isolation. The United Nations must lead by example. I expect all United Nations entities to work in a coherent fashion that simultaneously advances development priorities, meets humanitarian needs and builds peace.

73. The New Agenda for Peace, which is being prepared as part of preparations for the Summit of the Future, will seek to reduce strategic risks by strengthening

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<sup>15</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNICEF and World Bank, *The State of the Global Education Crisis: A Path to Recovery* (Washington, D.C., Paris and New York, 2021), available from <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/416991638768297704/pdf/The-State-of-the-Global-Education-Crisis-A-Path-to-Recovery.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> See [www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/](http://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/).

international foresight and capacities to identify and adapt to new risks and to focus on preventing conflict.<sup>17</sup>

**Priority actions:**

- Strengthen investment in development priorities in conflict-affected areas and areas with humanitarian needs to address the underlying drivers of vulnerability.
- Proactively integrate persons and communities affected by instability, conflict or violence, especially refugees and internally displaced persons, into national systems of health care, education and employment.

**2. Leverage environment-human well-being synergies**

74. Human well-being is integrally connected to the stewardship of nature and protection of the environment – the air, water, land and ecosystems that are foundations for life. Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement depends on safeguarding these resources for sustainability, equality and justice. If the current trajectory towards climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and the degradation of ecosystems goes unaddressed, any progress on the Sustainable Development Goals could unravel, exacerbating hunger, poverty, conflict, natural disasters and public health emergencies. However, acting now in the below areas could boost progress across the Goals and support the promise to leave no one behind.

**Accelerate access to energy for all and the shift to renewables**

75. Access to electricity in developing countries has increased, even during the current period of crisis, while the lack of access to clean cooking solutions remains stubbornly persistent. The pace of progress needs to accelerate, along with the reliability and affordability to reach everyone. This needs to happen while also ensuring the transition to renewable energy systems, supported by increased energy efficiency measures.

76. Immediate, deep, rapid and sustained reductions in the greenhouse gas emissions of the energy sector is imperative in order to preserve the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Agreement, since energy accounts for more than two thirds of global greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>18</sup> Accelerating the renewables revolution is our best hope of ensuring energy security, affordability, access and independence, while keeping the 1.5 C target alive. At the same time, the transition to renewables must be proactively managed so as to minimize social disruption and maximize the many socioeconomic benefits, including economic growth, poverty eradication and job creation during the transition. Using solar and wind power to replace coal resources could save \$23 billion a year.<sup>19</sup> The transition would create 24 million to 25 million new jobs, against the 6 million to 7 million jobs that will be lost.<sup>20</sup>

**Priority actions:**

- Take immediate action to advance the global transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, as proposed in my climate Acceleration Agenda:

<sup>17</sup> See <https://dppa.un.org/en/new-agenda-for-peace>.

<sup>18</sup> See [www.iea.org/data-and-statistics/data-tools/greenhouse-gas-emissions-from-energy-data-explorer](http://www.iea.org/data-and-statistics/data-tools/greenhouse-gas-emissions-from-energy-data-explorer).

<sup>19</sup> International Renewable Energy Agency, *Renewable Power Generation Costs in 2019* (Abu Dhabi, 2019), available from [www.irena.org/publications/2020/Jun/Renewable-Power-Costs-in-2019](http://www.irena.org/publications/2020/Jun/Renewable-Power-Costs-in-2019).

<sup>20</sup> ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook 2018: Greening with jobs* (Geneva, 2018), available from [www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_628654/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_628654/lang--en/index.htm).

- No new coal-fired power plants and their phase-out by 2030 in OECD countries by and 2040 in all other countries; end all international public and private funding of coal;
  - Ensure net zero electricity generation by 2035 for all developed economies and by 2040 for the rest of the world;
  - Cease all licensing or funding of new oil and gas reserves, consistent with the findings of the International Energy Agency; stop any expansion of existing oil and gas reserves;
  - Support the preparation of investment-ready energy transition plans consistent with these actions.
- Address critical bottlenecks to the deployment of renewables in developing countries by ensuring access to battery storage technology, resilient and diversified supply chains for critical raw materials, and by tackling the high cost of capital for renewables in the developing world.
  - Triple finance and investment for renewable energy and energy efficiency, including by shifting fossil fuels subsidies to renewables and reforming the international financial architecture.
  - Mobilizing financing to support the energy compacts; call upon multilateral development banks, development finance institutions and bilateral agencies to do their part in taking more risk; and develop/repurpose financial instruments to lower the cost of capital for renewable technologies – this can help expand cooperative models on renewable energy transition, such as the Just Energy Transition Partnerships.
  - Strengthen international cooperation and collaboration to ensure transparency, accountability and credibility surrounding the above-mentioned actions.

### **Secure food, water and sanitation systems**

77. Business-as-usual approaches are neither protecting the right to food and water for a growing population nor safeguarding the environment to sustain and secure the provision of these resources. Hunger and food security are falling behind, even as direct greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture are projected to increase by 6 per cent during the next decade.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, access to clean water and water management are at risk as climate disasters increase and several regions face severe water scarcity. Low access to sanitation and hygiene remains a major and urgent challenge with devastating impacts on health, human dignity and the situation of women and girls. Rapid urbanization intensifies these challenges but introduces opportunities to build cities in a more resilient, cost-efficient and inclusive manner. The nexus of food, water, sanitation and environment sustainability must factor into development pathways in a holistic and coherent manner, with adequate human, technological and financial resources.

78. Since the 2021 Food Systems Summit, 117 countries have developed national food system transformation pathways – some having already started to implement their pathways while others need technical and financial assistance to move forward. System complexities are being built into emerging initiatives using data from socioeconomic models and biophysical models. The United Nations Water Conference, held in March 2023, mobilized new commitments to solve the water and sanitation crisis, with the potential to generate dividends across the Sustainable

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<sup>21</sup> See [www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/f1b0b29c-en.pdf?expires=1678719176&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=D46813AB4B74489CA8839EE6843A7CF3](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/f1b0b29c-en.pdf?expires=1678719176&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=D46813AB4B74489CA8839EE6843A7CF3).

Development Goals. For every dollar invested in water and sanitation, there is a \$4.30 return in reduced health-care costs for individuals and society.<sup>22</sup>

**Priority actions:**

- Integrate decision-making in the water, energy, food and environment sectors to ensure good nutrition, strengthen food and water security and sanitation, support climate action and maintain biodiversity and forests.
- Advance national pathways in follow-up to the 2021 Food Systems Summit and the outcomes of the 2023 United Nations Water Conference, engaging all sectors and stakeholders.
- Enable a coordinated policy effort across countries to better meet nutritional needs while addressing climate change and inefficient water and land use.
- Invest in green infrastructure to upgrade ageing infrastructure for water management, so as to ensure water efficiencies, access and lower pollution.

**Protect biodiversity and natural resources**

79. The environmental resources that sustain life are under threat, with trends moving backward since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. Yet more than half of the world's GDP is moderately or highly dependent on nature.<sup>23</sup> Some 1.6 billion people's livelihoods depend on forests, where the highest levels of terrestrial biodiversity are found, making sustainable land management critical to human well-being and poverty reduction. Some 680 million people live in coastal megacities, and nearly half of the world's population depends on fish for protein, including the population reliant on aquaculture for their livelihoods. Striking a better balance with nature is also a health priority. Land degradation and habitat fragmentation drive humans and wildlife into closer contact, reducing biodiversity and increasing the risk of future pandemics through the spread of zoonotic disease.

80. Protecting nature is also crucial for climate action, as forests and oceans help mitigate climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide. Oceans absorb one third of carbon emissions released into the atmosphere, but increased absorption of carbon dioxide resulting from climate change in turn leads to ocean warming and acidification, ice-melting, sea-level rise and marine heatwaves, threatening the natural marine ecosystems and populations reliant on the oceans for their lives and livelihoods.

81. The recent adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework at the culmination of the 15th United Nations Biodiversity Conference represents a landmark agreement by Governments to guide actions and funding to safeguard nature, protect indigenous rights and sustainably manage other critical resources by 2030. The 2018 Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean can help facilitate implementation of global sustainable development agreements.

**Priority actions:**

- Strengthen links between the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and public health in sectoral policies.
- Raise government and stakeholder awareness, increase monitoring and predict the impacts of biodiversity loss on human well-being.

<sup>22</sup> See <https://news.un.org/en/story/2014/11/484032#:~:text=For%20every%20dollar%20invested%20in,United%20Nations%20World%20Health%20Organization>.

<sup>23</sup> Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, *Global assessment report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* (Bonn, Germany, 2019), available from [www.ipbes.net/global-assessment](http://www.ipbes.net/global-assessment).

- Follow up on the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; and close the \$700 billion biodiversity finance gap, with actions that increase the level of financing from all sources and eliminate and reform incentives harmful for biodiversity, by at least \$500 billion per year.

#### **Prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks**

82. COVID-19, conflict and climate disasters have shown just how vulnerable Goals-related progress can be to shocks. Systematically integrating risk considerations into planning for the 2030 Agenda can reduce the consequences of shocks, especially for the vulnerable, and the likelihood of crises. It is also important to acknowledge that actions in one system can create or reduce risks for another, as hazards cascade across systems.

83. Countries can shock-proof Goals-related progress by strengthening risk management governance and adopting a multi-hazard and multisectoral approach to dealing with pandemics or climate change that can disrupt societal and economic networks. The integration of disaster risk reduction with climate, sustainable development and humanitarian action is also needed, shifting the balance from responding to investing. The United Nations policy brief on an emergency platform to strengthen the international response to complex global shocks, an input into the preparations for the Summit of the Future, outlines how a more predictable and structured response can help mitigate the risks to the most vulnerable countries.

84. Strengthening disaster risk resilience requires leadership at the highest level of government, engagement from all sectors and multistakeholder participation. My initiative to ensure universal coverage of multi-hazard early warning systems can ensure minimal loss of lives and livelihoods when disasters strike. Collaborating to develop new tracking systems to record and analyse hazardous events and disaster losses and damages can also help. Greater investments in capacity-building and transformative action on investments to accelerate Goals-related progress pave the way for greater strategic foresight and the implementation of national disaster risk reduction financing.

#### **Priority actions:**

- Systematically integrate risk considerations into planning for the 2030 Agenda by fully implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.
- Ensure universal coverage of multi-hazard early warning systems by 2027.
- Ensure linkages between global data for public health emergencies and other disasters.

### **C. Securing a surge in Sustainable Development Goals financing and an enabling global environment for developing countries**

85. The COVID-19 pandemic, impacts of the war in Ukraine on rising food and energy prices, rising inflation and unsustainable debt burdens have significantly reduced countries' fiscal space, undermining their ability to invest in recovery efforts. Despite increased support from the international community to developing countries, these efforts have remained inadequate, exacerbated by an international financial system that is not fit for purpose and that remains plagued with systemic and historic inequities.

86. In addition, developing countries struggle to gain equitable access to the global trading system and to the benefits of new technologies and the fruits of science and

innovation – all of which continue to favour those countries that have benefitted historically from protectionism and global resource extraction.

87. To reverse course and boost the Sustainable Development Goals, it is essential for countries to have the resources they need at scale to invest in both their immediate recovery and in long-term sustainable development outcomes, including climate action. This requires a two-pronged approach that aims to secure a surge in Goals-related financing, while simultaneously reforming the international financial architecture to make it resilient, equitable and accessible for all. It is also critical that developing countries have better access to global trade, science, technology and innovation.

## **1. Deliver a Sustainable Development Goals stimulus and reform the international financial architecture**

88. To secure a surge in Goals-related financing in the short-term, I launched a Sustainable Development Goals stimulus plan that calls for an additional \$500 billion per year in financing for sustainable development, to be delivered through a combination of concessional and non-concessional finance in a mutually reinforcing way.

89. The Sustainable Development Goals stimulus puts forward three main areas for immediate action: (a) tackle the high cost of debt and rising risks of debt distress, including by converting short-term, high interest borrowing into long-term (more than 30-year) debt at lower interest rates; (b) massively scale-up affordable long-term financing for development, especially through multilateral development banks and by aligning all financing flows with the Goals; and (c) expand contingency financing to all countries in need. The Sustainable Development Goals stimulus also aims to ensure that resources are invested in the areas needed to secure the Goals and just transitions. At the national level, this calls for the alignment of all forms of finance with the Goals, including by utilizing tools such as Goals-aligned integrated national financing frameworks.

90. Urgent action is also needed to prevent tax evasion and avoidance and illicit financial flows, to boost international tax cooperation and to strengthen national fiscal capacities to strengthen domestic resource mobilization.<sup>24</sup> Globally agreed concepts and tested methods now exist and can be used by all countries to curb illicit finance. Increasing the efficiency of budget execution and achieving greater budget credibility are also critical.

91. While the Sustainable Development Goals stimulus can be achieved within the confines of the current financial architecture, adequate long-term financing requires the reform of the international financial architecture in order to overcome the major structural barriers that predominantly serve wealthy countries and individuals. As a starting point, this calls for delivering on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and other international frameworks. It also calls for ambitious efforts in order to: (a) go beyond GDP when determining access to concessional finance; (b) create new financing models for global public goods; (c) change the business models of multilateral development banks, aligning their mandates and operational models with the Goals; (d) strengthen the global financial safety net; (e) improve debt ratings; and (f) create an effective sovereign debt workout mechanism. A reformed international financial architecture also calls for the reform of global economic governance structures to make them more inclusive and representative. These and other areas will be elaborated in forthcoming policy briefs on reforming the international financial architecture and developing metrics beyond GDP, which will be part of a series of crucial inputs to Member States as part of preparations for the 2024 Summit of the Future. The holding of the next International Conference on Financing for

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<sup>24</sup> See [https://factipanel.org/docpdfs/FACTI\\_Report\\_ExecSum.pdf](https://factipanel.org/docpdfs/FACTI_Report_ExecSum.pdf).

Development in 2025 is also essential and will provide a clear pathway to secure progress on the full range of issues addressed in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

92. International and domestic private investment in emerging and developing economies must be scaled up. The Global Investors for Sustainable Development Alliance has put forward a definition of sustainable development investing to guide the private sector. It calls for sustainable development investing in ways that contribute to sustainable development, using the Sustainable Development Goals as a basis for measurement. Attracting such investment at scale requires strong institutions and a conducive regulatory and operating environment. De-risking mechanisms, guarantees and transparency around key risk markers must be scaled in order to secure greater levels of private investment in the Goals without saddling Governments with even more debt.

**Priority actions:**

- Urge all countries and financial institutions to take the actions necessary to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals stimulus aimed at massively scaling up financing for the Goals to at least \$500 billion per year.
- Call for the urgent reform of the international financial architecture, and encourage tangible progress on reform of the multilateral development banks, including by increasing their capitalization, supporting the re-channelling of special drawing rights through multilateral development banks, better leveraging their capital bases, securing increases to grants and concessional finance, increasing their risk appetites, providing de-risking mechanisms and guarantees to attract private finance, and reforming their business practices by explicitly linking their mandates to the Goals, including climate action.
- Encourage the development of fair and effective tax systems, aligned internationally, to support financing efforts at the national level, including through Goals-aligned integrated national financing frameworks.
- Decide to convene the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in 2025, building on the 2024 Summit of the Future and my proposed biennial summit, with the members of the Group of 20 and the members of the Economic and Social Council, as well as heads of international financial institutions.

**2. Harness trade to work for the Sustainable Development Goals**

93. Trade is a critical driver of economic growth, job creation and poverty reduction in developed and developing countries alike. However, in order to realize those benefits, countries – especially developing countries – must overcome various barriers and challenges that prevent their seamless integration in regional and global value chains and investment networks.

94. One major obstacle to trade is high transport costs, which can make goods uncompetitive in global markets. Developing countries also face price fluctuations for primary commodities, which can lead to volatile and unpredictable export earnings. Unpredictable supply chains can hinder the timely delivery of intermediary and final goods, a problem clearly illustrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Cumbersome customs processes and protectionist policies can further impede trade flows. Moreover, the shift towards knowledge-intensive services, such as professional services, government services, information technology services, and telecommunications, has highlighted the importance of digital infrastructure and literacy. Data flows, which have been growing at close to 50 per cent annually between 2010 and 2019, make digital infrastructure fundamental.



95. Despite those challenges, several recent developments have generated new momentum for leveraging trade for the Sustainable Development Goals. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted emergency policies to remove trade and financial roadblocks in order to accelerate the delivery of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics. The Initiative on the Safe Transportation of Grain and Foodstuffs from Ukrainian Ports has helped countries to withstand shocks to trade caused by the war in Ukraine. The African Trade Exchange Platform is helping to address food, fuel and fertilizer shortages in developing countries. After more than two decades of negotiations, WTO members reached the landmark and novel multilateral Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. The global system of trade preferences among developing countries is only one ratification away from entry into force – a move that would allow preferential tariff treatment, generating shared welfare gains of \$14 billion.

96. To maximize the role of trade in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, it is crucial to strengthen the multilateral trading system and align it with the Goals. This system should be universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable. At the same time, developing countries need support to build productive capacity and infrastructure to connect with regional and global production and supply chains, including by meeting environmental requirements and using digital trade infrastructures for e-commerce. Inclusion of micro-, small, and medium-sized enterprises and women-owned enterprises to engage in international trade should be embedded in approaches, and progress should be measured with sex-disaggregated trade and business statistics. Developing countries also need the policy space to implement coherent industrial, innovation, trade and investment policies in order to mainstream trade into national and sector strategies in support of the Goals. Collaboration at the multilateral level is also essential to address vulnerabilities in supply, transport, distribution chain infrastructure, and trade finance for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises to reduce disruptions from climate change, conflict and future pandemics.

**Priority actions:**

- Commit to strengthening a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system, and call for the alignment of trade regimes and national complementary policies with the Goals.
- Provide support to developing countries, including by scaling up aid for trade, to build productive capacity and connect with regional and global production and supply chains and to implement trade policies that encourage environmentally friendly production, trade in goods and services that contribute to the energy transition and decarbonization of supply chains.
- Ensure open, competitive, fair and contestable markets through competition and consumer policies, and collaborate at the multilateral level to address vulnerabilities in supply, transport and distribution chain infrastructure to increase resilience to climate change, conflict and future pandemics.

**3. Revolutionize science, technology and innovation capacities and exchanges**

97. The capacity for humanity to use science, technology and innovation to confront crises in transformative ways, and for science, technology and innovation to deliver for the public good, was clear during the pandemic. The potential for science, technology and innovation to be applied to the Sustainable Development Goals is vastly untapped, and institutional and other barriers that stand in the way of science, technology and innovation progress must be recognized and lowered.

98. Increasing funding for Goals-related research and innovation on underlying social issues, social policy and grass-roots innovations, in particular in low-income countries, would provide the data, evidence and analytical tools to better inform

actions for the Goals. Access to knowledge, technology and opportunities to contribute to science, technology and innovation development must be improved, including through strengthened technology transfer. Creative solutions for removing paywalls and sharing knowledge need to be scaled up, and public-private partnerships can boost digital infrastructure investments, but Governments need to ensure that regulatory frameworks are in place. Applying science to solve complex interlinked challenges calls for cross-disciplinary collaboration. A strong science-policy-society interface can build trust in science and evidence, as emphasized in the 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report. Trust in the science behind COVID-19 vaccines and climate change, for example, needs to be actively built through open and inclusive deliberations for individuals to use technology solutions or change behaviour.

**Priority actions:**

- Strengthen the science-policy interface to enable the application of science, technology and innovation for the achievement of the Goals by taking all steps necessary to strengthen the linkages between the scientific community and policymakers.
- Build trust in scientific knowledge by ensuring that information is broadcast with integrity, including by instituting regulatory mechanisms and codes of conduct that promote integrity in public information, as recommended by Our Common Agenda.
- Establish more efficient and effective technology transfer mechanisms and strengthen existing mechanisms such as the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, while exploring new avenues of open science and open-source data.
- Increase funding for Goals-related research and innovation on underlying social issues and build capacity in all regions to contribute to and benefit from this research.

**4. Maximizing the contribution of multilateralism and the United Nations development system to support acceleration of the Sustainable Development Goals**

99. The above sections of the present report have demonstrated the degree to which multilateralism can support national action to achieve the Goals. My report on Our Common Agenda includes a wide range of recommendations to that end, many of which are already under way.

100. The preparations for the Summit of the Future in 2024 provide a critical opportunity to leverage multilateralism's capacity to support acceleration of the Goals, to sustain Goals-related progress by planning for and tackling emerging challenges and to address gaps and weaknesses in the international architecture that have emerged since 2015 and that are undermining our efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Further action in a number of areas in the context of the Summit of the Future – including a global digital compact, progress on reforms of the international financing architecture, measuring progress by going beyond GDP, ensuring that governance systems protect the rights of future generations and facilitate the active engagement of young people in decision-making, and transforming education to better prepare learners of all ages for the future – will further support acceleration of the Goals.

101. The United Nations development system is the strongest representation to people across the world of the commitment of the United Nations to the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2018, the General Assembly, in its resolution [72/279](#), embraced my call for an ambitious reform of the United Nations development system aimed at ensuring that Member States had the transformative support required to advance their national Goals-related ambitions. At the midpoint of the Goals, the

United Nations development system is unquestionably better positioned to support Member States' action for delivery of the Goals. Our new generation of United Nations country teams and the reinvigorated resident coordinator system are better aligning with national priorities, shifting to higher-scale programmes and policy support. Resident Coordinators are convening in unprecedented ways to help Governments harness means of implementation, in particular financing. In my 2021 report on the review of the functioning of the resident coordinator system and in my yearly reporting to the Economic and Social Council at its operational activities for development segment, I documented in detail the progress achieved, the success attained and the areas that require further attention. We have come a long way but some foundational challenges remain, in particular the insufficient implementation of the funding compact, especially in relation to core and pooled funding; an underfunded and unsustainably funded resident coordinator system; continued challenges in mobilizing support on economic and financial issues; and still insufficient integration from the regional to national levels. If the United Nations system is to step up to the mark in the second half of the Goals, then targeted and determined action is needed in these areas.

**Priority actions:**

- Commit to an ambitious outcome at the Summit of the Future in 2024 to further revitalize the multilateral system, fill gaps in global governance and boost implementation of the Goals.
- Commit to fully supporting the United Nations development system to improve delivery in support of Member States' efforts to drive transformation of the Goals for inclusivity and sustainability, including through delivery against the funding compact, capitalizing the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund by at least \$1 billion by September 2024, putting in place an effective model to fully and sustainably resource the resident coordinator system in 2024 and, in the interim, taking urgent action to plug gaps in the funding of the system.

## **IV. Looking ahead: towards a rescue plan for people and planet**

102. The world has been rocked by a series of interlinked crises. Together, these have exposed fundamental shortcomings in the business-as-usual approaches to sustainability, including the vulnerability and fragility of progress, growing inequalities, the life-long impacts of adverse events, increasing threats of irreversible change, risks of ignoring interlinkages, and the geographically imbalanced distribution of global assets for achieving sustainable development.

103. Tepid responses will not suffice for the millions of people living in poverty and hunger, the women and girls with unequal opportunities, the communities facing climate disaster or the families fleeing conflict. We need a full-fledged rescue plan for people and planet.

104. There are no excuses not to be ambitious. Never before have we had such an abundance of knowledge, technology and resources to succeed in ending poverty and saving the planet. Never before have we carried such a responsibility to pivot to a bold set of actions.

105. At the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, we must match that abundance and responsibility with global, national and local commitments to deliver the finance, galvanize the leadership and restore the trust that together will put us on course to achieve the Goals by 2030.