

VOICE

— UN DESA —

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Gender equality can't wait – we must achieve it now for current and future generations

It will take 286 years to close gender gaps in legal protection and remove discriminatory laws against women, 140 years for equal representation in positions of power and at least 40 years to achieve gender parity in national parliaments. These numbers are truly alarming and calls for the world's urgent action.

The latest report from UN DESA and UN Women, [Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2022](#), is a wake-up call. It shows that at the current rate of progress, the achievement of all gender equality and women's empowerment targets may take decades – even centuries – to materialize.

"I cannot accept a world that tells my granddaughters that gender equality must wait for their granddaughters' granddaughters. We must insist on gender equality, everywhere, now," [tweeted](#) UN Secretary-General António Guterres when the latest numbers were revealed last month.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, numerous conflicts and crises around the world, and the encroachment on women's sexual and reproductive health and rights have derailed the path to gender equality.

Globally, women are estimated to have lost \$800 billion in income in 2020 due to the pandemic, and despite a rebound, their participation in labour markets is projected to be lower in 2022 than it was pre-pandemic. The number of women and girls living in fragile and conflict-affected countries in 2022 reached 511 million, almost doubling the number in 2019. Moreover, the ongoing war in Ukraine has aggravated food insecurity and hunger, especially among women and children.

In other areas, including progress in poverty reduction, women and girls are facing acute challenges. By the end of 2022, around 383 million women and girls will live in extreme poverty compared to 368 million men and boys.

In reproductive health, over 1.2 billion women and girls of reproductive age (15-49) currently live in countries and areas with some restriction on access to safe abortion.

Gender inequality has been allowed to flourish for generations. In order to counter this disturbing trend, governments must invest in the education of women and girls. While not enough by itself, achieving universal girls' education has been proven to improve gender equality significantly. Each additional year of schooling can boost a girl's earnings as an adult by up to 20 per cent with further impacts on poverty reduction, better maternal health, lower child mortality, greater HIV prevention and reduced violence against women.

Renewed international cooperation, partnerships and investments in the gender equality agenda, including through increased global and national funding, are essential to correct the course and place gender equality back on track.

"Gender equality is a foundation for achieving all SDGs and it should be at the heart of building back better," said Maria-Francesca Spatolisano, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs of UN DESA.



EXPERT VOICES



"The SDGs must become the DNA of business strategy and management"

How can governments and businesses step up efforts to finance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? What are the hopes for the new SDG Stimulus and what role does the Global Investors for Sustainable Development (GISD) Alliance play? The questions on how to secure funding

for the SDGs are many and we turn to Navid Hanif, UN DESA's Assistant-Secretary-General for Economic Development, for answers.

What are the biggest challenges in securing funding for the SDGs, and what are the actions governments, and the private sector can take to overcome them?

“First, the global financial system is simply not set up to adequately finance the SDGs in its current form. The structures are not in place to incentivize and provide enough affordable long-term finance for developing countries and regions to invest in the SDGs. Instead, we have a system that perpetuates unsustainable activities and generates systemic risks.

A major challenge in mobilizing funding for the SDGs is short-sightedness. When confronting the array of economic shocks, the typical response from governments and the private sector has been to pivot to short-term solutions that are often not aligned with the SDGs. This ultimately exacerbates long-term challenges.

Second, lack of capacity in countries for developing projects and programmes that are SDG-aligned. Alignment should be followed by rigorous data collection and reporting to demonstrate impact.

To address these challenges, we need to take short and medium-term measures.

Governments will need to be supported with capacity-building, public-private collaboration and innovative instruments – such as blended finance. The focus should be on building a pipeline of bankable projects that have a significant contribution to the SDGs. It would be necessary to scale up development assistance to help developing countries in these areas.

Governments need to mobilize and attract financing for productive investments, including in resilient infrastructure, sustainable agriculture, and climate adaptation. To support this, the UN Secretary-General has called for an SDG Stimulus comprised of a massive (2 per cent of global GDP) increase in public sector commitments towards development, humanitarian, and climate action, amounting to slightly less than \$2 trillion annually.

The private sector also needs to step up. The resources are certainly there. From 2020 to 2021, during the height of the pandemic, global wealth grew by approximately 10% and stood at nearly USD 464 trillion. A small fraction of these assets can be mobilized to finance sustainable development and set us back on track to achieve the global goals.

Businesses and investors should focus on aligning their investments with sustainable development. Though ESG (environmental, social and governance) investing will continue to increase – by some projections ESG assets will balloon to 50 trillion by 2025 – the private sector must demonstrate authenticity and transparency by aligning with the SDGs and delivering net positive impact for the people and planet.

There is also a need to change the global financial architecture so that it supports long term investments in people, planet and prosperity.”

With only 8 years left to achieve the goals, the sense of urgency is palpable. How can the business community help rescue the SDGs?

“Governments on their own cannot achieve the goals. The private sector needs to play its part in financing sustainable development. To do this, all private financial flows must be aligned with the SDGs.

The needs are huge. This year, up to 95 million additional people will live in extreme poverty compared to pre-pandemic projections. The current generation of children could lose a combined total of \$17 trillion in lifetime earnings due to learning disruptions caused by the pandemic. The world is on track for a global temperature rise of 2.7°C by the end of the century.

To help align and scale up private finance to achieve the SDGs, the UN Secretary-General established the Global Investors for Sustainable Development (GISD) Alliance with global business leaders from across the world, for catalyzing finance and investment for achieving the SDGs.

GISD has produced a standardized definition for the wider business community to better align investments to the SDGs and mitigate the risk of SDG-washing. GISD has also produced SDG-aligned sector-specific metrics to enable credible, consistent, and comparable reporting by corporates and investors. It is important that these are utilized by the wider universe of businesses.

Moreover, businesses should inculcate 'long-termism' and sustainability considerations in decision-making. The SDGs must become the DNA of business strategy and management and should be integrated into relevant business sector metrics, indices, benchmarks, and remuneration frameworks.

The business community should also collaborate with the public sector, including multilateral development banks, to develop tools and instruments that facilitate financing and investment into critical SDG sectors such as infrastructure and renewable energy."

The Global Investors for Sustainable Development (GISD) Alliance will hold its annual meeting on 12 October. What commitments and investments can we expect from the members of this Alliance?

"Since the GISD Alliance was established three years ago, it has been championing the mainstreaming of sustainable development investing amidst major upheavals in our global economy. The Alliance has laid a strong foundation and continues to ramp up efforts to mobilize financing for the SDGs.

At the fourth Annual Meeting, members will present to the UN Secretary-General what the Alliance has achieved so far, and the lessons learnt in this journey. They will focus on innovative instruments and platforms that can scale up investments for the SDGs. The Annual Meeting is an opportunity to explore strategic partnerships that can catalyze critical shift in the finance and investment ecosystem towards sustainable development.

Furthermore, the GISD Alliance will also have a session with UN Member States to discuss their achievements and goals and ways to strengthen public-private partnerships and channel financing to the SDGs, especially in developing countries. "





4 facts you didn't know about international collaboration on tax matters

Did you know that there is a United Nations Committee that guides UN Member States on domestic and international tax matters? From 18 to 21 October 2022, its 25 members will meet to discuss topics ranging from bilateral tax treaties, indirect and health taxes, to environmental taxation. Here are four facts you didn't know about the UN Tax Committee and its vital work.

1. 25 members from different parts of the world lead the work

The United Nations Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters is comprised of [twenty-five members](#) that are nominated by Governments, drawn from Ministries of Finance and Tax Administration from all over the world. Acting in their personal capacity, the members are appointed by the UN Secretary-General for a term of four years. The current membership, which has been in place since 1 July 2021, reflects an adequate equitable geographical representation, with over half of members coming from developing countries.

2. Prevents double taxation, non-taxation and tax evasion

The Committee generates practical guidance for governments, tax administrations and taxpayers to help formulate, implement, and administer tax laws dealing with a variety of issues to mobilize financing for sustainable development. The Committee aims to prevent “double (or multiple) taxation” and “non-taxation” and assists countries to broaden their tax base and to strengthen their tax administrations. The Committee also fosters cooperation between countries to prevent internationally-active companies from avoiding or evading taxes.

3. Promotes public revenue for sustainable development

To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), countries need affordable financing to invest in reducing poverty and making a better world for all people. Collecting taxes is a fundamental way for countries to generate public revenues for sustainable development. Taxation not only pays for public goods and services, it is also a key ingredient in the social contract between citizens and their government and an important policy lever for incentivizing sustainable development.

4. Follow the work of the Committee in person or online

Observers can attend the upcoming [25th Session of the UN Tax Committee in Geneva from 18 to 21 October 2022](#) in-person or virtually by registering for the session. They can also keep track of the latest issues, workshops and events at the UN Tax Cooperation website: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/financing/topics/tax-cooperation>





“From the Internet Governance Forum to Our Common Agenda”

By Krzysztof Szubert, High Representative of the Prime Minister for European Digital Policy, Member of the UN IGF Leadership Panel, Republic of Poland

Last December, Poland was the proud host of the United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF). The global, multi-stakeholder platform that we all know, was this time held under quite unusual circumstances, as we all had to face the COVID pandemic rules and restrictions. At the same time, we wanted the IGF annual meeting to be available and accessible to everyone who would like to join the global discussion. And we did it!

In person as it was, the 16th IGF provided a fully hybrid format for over 300 sessions that were held. We had a record number of almost 10,400 registered participants from 175 countries in all continents of the world. It was our honour to host over 2,700 participants onsite in the City of Katowice. We were joined by nearly 200 ministers, parliamentarians and other high-level leaders from the private sector, civil society, the technical community, and others.

Looking back now, I am proud that we made it possible for numerous policymakers, entrepreneurs, representatives of academia and non-governmental organisations, youth, and thousands of people from all over the world to meet and to debate the opportunities and challenges posed by the Internet, as well as ways to fully exploit the Internet's potential. We encouraged organising stakeholders to do their best and to try to refer in their sessions to the most pressing global issues mentioned in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially Sustainable Development Goal number 9, expressing the need for building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and fostering innovation. We all need to raise awareness and to provide people living in least developed countries with universal and affordable access to the Internet which accelerates progress, reduces the digital divide and helps societies to develop.

A positive vision for the future of digital services and the Internet itself must combine fundamental values such as human rights, access and openness, as well as economic considerations – this is just one of the conclusions included in the [Katowice IGF Messages](#) – a final document issued after the Forum. It is a toolbox of guidelines and approaches to Internet governance and digital policy issues.

Only by improving connectivity and bringing stakeholders together around this issue will we be able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and reduce barriers towards equality. Ensuring that all people have meaningful access to the Internet is a global priority. I am a big supporter of this message.

Katowice IGF Messages emphasize the human rights-based and multi-stakeholder approach to cybersecurity which leads to better results, and the key to the success is transparency and inclusion. Responsible use of artificial intelligence algorithms will ensure the protection of human rights. Therefore, policies should be developed to counter inappropriate applications.

Being a big advocate of the open Internet and the worldwide digital dialogue, I engage in activities that promote multilateralism and a multi-stakeholder approach. I also use every occasion to bring the Katowice IGF Messages to the attention of the decision-makers at international fora, as the IGF outcomes and decisions are essential within other global initiatives like the United Nations Secretary General's Our Common Agenda, Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development or the Digital Strategy 2022-2025. All these are to support countries and communities to use digital technology to drive down inequality, help inclusivity, tackle climate change, and open-up economic opportunities. **To support these efforts, we need to create strong partnerships between existing agencies and organisations with a global or regional reach.**

To make the world digitally better we need to foster collaborative relationships and boost partnerships between entities that have been created and supported in pursuit of common goals. Governments should take the lead and encourage national stakeholders and external partners (including international development agencies) to design, implement and monitor joint development strategies.

It is crucial that we look for a common ground and focus on strategic and vertical activities like building a complementary matrix of actions based on issue areas related to **strategic and vertical directions** like **infrastructure and connectivity, e-services and open goods, skills, competencies and inclusion, cybersecurity and digital trust, international cooperation and investment and funds.**

The latest [UN E-Government Survey 2022 – The Future of Digital Government](#) also provides vital data, analysis and recommendations to inform our work, ensuring that no one is left offline.

I also see an important role to be played by the [IGF Leadership Panel](#) recently appointed by the UN Secretary-General. It shall not only provide strategic inputs, support high-level and stakeholder engagement but also raise funds, exchange IGF outputs with other relevant fora and facilitate the input of these fora to the IGF's agenda. Having received the honour of being a member of the Panel, I will do every effort to bring messages from the IGF to relevant decision-makers.

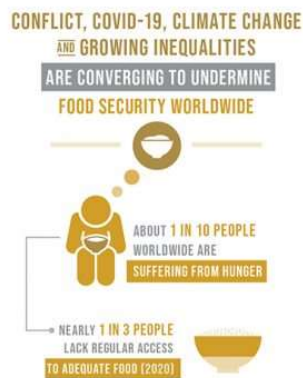
The Secretary-General will certainly engage the Panel and underline its importance to the global digital dialogue, as it consists of key individuals representing all stakeholder groups as well as the Technology Envoy, Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) Chair and annual IGF Host Countries.

Should you wish to contact me to discuss some issues further please use these links <https://www.linkedin.com/in/krzysztofzubert/> or <https://twitter.com/KrzysiekSzubert>.

** The views expressed in this blog are the author's and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of UN DESA.*



SDG 2 IN NUMBERS



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