

VOICE

— UN DESA —

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8 billion strong – infinite possibilities for people and planet

Our world is approaching a landmark moment in human history. On 15 November 2022, the global population is projected to reach 8 billion people. Thanks to science, technology, and groundbreaking innovations, we now live longer and healthier. It took the human family 125 years to get from 1 billion to 2 billion. But only 12 years to grow from 7 to 8 billion.

Even though the growth rate has fallen in the past few decades, the global population is projected to surpass 9 billion around 2037 and 10 billion around 2058, according to the latest [World Population Prospects 2022 report](#) released by UN DESA earlier this year.

Countries with high levels of fertility tend to be those with relatively low incomes per capita. Between now and 2050, almost all of the global increase in numbers of children and youth and of adults under age 65 will occur in low-income and lower-middle-income countries.

For high-income and upper-middle-income countries on the other hand, projections indicate that the number aged under 65 years will decline and that future growth will occur entirely among the population aged 65 years or over.

Rapid population growth poses various challenges in efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example, when it comes to schooling, public health, housing, water and sanitation and the environment. However, even though population growth impacts the environment, rising per capita incomes are the main driver of unsustainable patterns of production and consumption.

This means that wealthier countries should take the lead in moving rapidly to achieve net-zero emissions and in implementing strategies to decouple human economic activity from environmental degradation. They can also help support low-income and lower-middle-income countries in making a transition towards sustainable economic growth.

In the lead up to the Day of 8 Billion, UN DESA and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) will be organizing a series of events to discuss the implications of living in a world of 8 billion people. UN DESA's [Global Policy Dialogue on "Preparing for 8 Billion People"](#) on 20 October, kicked off the countdown. In an intergenerational dialogue, experts debated how best to act now to ensure that we are on a path to a sustainable future.

"Reaching a global population of eight billion is a numerical landmark, but our focus must always be on people," said UN Secretary-General António Guterres. "In the world we strive to build, 8 billion people means 8 billion opportunities to live dignified and fulfilled lives. When we act on our shared values, we contribute to our common future."

Learn more and follow the countdown here: <https://www.un.org/dayof8billion>



EXPERT VOICES



Staying connected in a rapidly changing world

Browsing for work, school or to access government or health care services; for many, Internet access may be easily available in our daily lives. Yet, more than 2.9 billion people around the world still lack this connection. Ahead of the [Internet Governance Forum](#) later this month, we

speak with UN DESA's Wai Min Kwok about this Forum and how it plays a critical role in efforts to leave no one offline.

1. Sustainable access to the Internet for all people, everywhere, is a top priority for the IGF. Yet billions of people remain unconnected. How is the IGF bridging this digital divide?

“The Internet is changing dramatically the way we live, learn, work and participate in the economy and society, but is itself also changing in a changing world. The convergence of the Internet and digital technologies – artificial intelligence, blockchain, and the Internet of Things, along with big data and the dark sides of technology – is driving megatrends and digital transformation in an unprecedented global scale.

Yet more than 2.9 billion people are still offline. They are effectively placed at an even greater societal disadvantage and are being left further behind. Meaningful online access, affordability and ability, collectively the 3As, are now the primary determinants of digital divides or “digital poverty”. The divides and fragmentations between the digitally connected and digitally disconnected continue to widen, with increased complexity. The pandemic has deepened socioeconomic and digital disparities, reinforcing the vicious cycle of inequality, including intergenerational inequity.

It is in this context that the [Internet Governance Forum](#) delivers as convener and connector. The IGF brings together stakeholders from different groups, such as governments, the private sector, the technical community, civil society, and international organizations, and across different regions, sectors and disciplines. The open, inclusive, bottom-up dialogue at the IGF is recognized as the way forward to advance the complex global Internet governance issues; to create level-playing fields for sharing policy solutions, best practices and experiences; to identify emerging issues and bring them to the attention of the relevant bodies and the public; and to contribute to capacity building at all levels.”

2. An open and free Internet also comes with risks of it being misused. What are the tools currently in place to ensure online safety, security and accountability?

“UN Secretary-General António Guterres has been outspoken and unequivocal about the ‘dark side of the digital world’ which includes the spread of hate speech, misinformation and fake news, cybercrimes, and job displacement provoked by automation. The vision of an open, free and secure digital future that is accessible to all underpins the crucial role of the IGF in shaping the global conversation and sharing policy options, tools and approaches.

Cybersecurity is a top priority for many countries, with Governments focused not only on domestic threats but also on international risks, given the cross-boundary architecture of the Internet. An increased awareness of cybersecurity issues and threats, clear incident reporting frameworks, and ongoing training are necessary for effective response to data breaches and cyberattacks. The [Best Practice Forum on Cybersecurity](#) set up by the Internet Governance Forum serves as a platform for focused multistakeholder and multidisciplinary discussion on cybersecurity policy challenges, with the discourse intended to inform Internet governance policy debates.

Likewise, the [Policy Network on Internet Fragmentation](#) offers a systematic and comprehensive framework to define Internet fragmentation, to analyze case studies and to establish shared principles, recommendations or codes of conduct that prevent fragmentation and preserve the open, interconnected and inter-operable nature of the Internet. In addition to campaigns and awareness building, the use of policy and artificial intelligence (AI) tools against hate speech and fake news are also emerging.

Digital policies should always be well-defined, centred on peoples’ needs and clearly articulate public benefits.

Individuals also have an obligation to contribute to the mitigation of online risks, such as protecting their personal data online. However, they can only be expected to act responsibly if they understand what is at stake, are aware of the risks, know their rights, and have learned what to do. Developing capacities and broader digital literacy should enable users, including vulnerable groups and minorities, to become more secure online,

to demand data security and safety protections, and to defend themselves against threats.”

3. How can we harness advanced and frontier technologies, such as AI, to become a seamless part of our sustainable future?

“Digital technology increasingly shapes the new economy and the hybrid digital society. Artificial intelligence (AI) systems are used in “smart” devices and apps for automated decision-making. Robotics and Internet of Things applications are deployed in areas as diverse as manufacturing, healthcare, and agriculture.

While digital tech is morally and politically neutral, its applications and uses have value implications. For instance, algorithmic decision-making often results in gender bias, discrimination against minorities, and other harmful stereotypes that result in wider social inequality. AI-based systems can pose risks to human safety and human rights; and Internet of Things devices come with privacy and cybersecurity challenges. Augmented and virtual reality raises issues of public safety, data protection, and consumer protection.

Harnessing technology for good is easier said than done. There are often opposing, polarized views and heated debates, for instance on the regulation of AI algorithms and systems, the extent of governmental regulation versus free market self-regulation, and the nuanced debates of AI ethics versus AI norms, values and principles.

In reclaiming the global digital commons for the common good, a new [global digital compact](#) is needed with a full consultation with different groups of stakeholders. The overall approach should be principles-based rather than rules-based and should be inclusive and people-centered. Indeed, the IGF is stepping into this critical role through its globally recognized platform, under the legitimacy and convening role of the United Nations and the Secretary-General. Multistakeholder dialogue, cooperation, and partnerships – among governments, intergovernmental organizations, tech companies, and civil society – are required to ensure that AI and other technologies are developed and deployed in a human-centric and human rights-based manner.”

The 17th meeting of the IGF will be held in Addis Ababa from 28 November to 2 December 2022, hosted by the Government of Ethiopia, and supported by UN DESA in collaboration with UN ECA. To learn more about the event, visit the following website: <https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/igf-2022>





4 things you should know about UN DESA's SDG Pavilion at COP27

Our world is on fire; drying up and flooding – all at the very same time. The climate crisis is a reality and the need for action is more urgent than ever. To navigate our way out of this dangerous predicament,

the global community has the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the SDG Pavilion at COP27, UN DESA will showcase how the goals can make all the difference. Here are 4 things you should know.

1. Climate and SDG action go hand in hand

The many links between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change show that integrated implementation of both is critical for accelerating progress towards a zero-carbon future.

To strengthen the synergies between these two frameworks, share best practices and ensure that work towards both avoids duplication, UN DESA is hosting the [SDG Pavilion at COP27](#)—the UN Climate Change Conference—this month in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

2. More ambitious than ever with over 100 events

This year, the SDG Pavilion is more ambitious than ever.

From 8 to 18 November, the Pavilion will host over one hundred events, including report launches, interviews with experts and panel discussions that spotlight the intersection of climate change and energy, gender equality, forests, the ocean and more. Many events will be held as hybrid virtual and in-person conversations or streamed on UN DESA's [main Facebook page](#) and the [SustDev Facebook page](#).

3. Platform brings actors together for people and planet

COP27 marks the fourth time UN DESA has organized the Pavilion. This year's Pavilion will build on the outcomes of the 3rd Global Climate-SDG Synergies Conference – co-convened by UN DESA and UNFCCC in July 2022. It will feature two event spaces – a mainstage with seating for 45 people, and a more intimate social media stage for one-on-one conversations. The aim of the SDG Pavilion is to provide a platform for practitioners and experts across all sectors and levels to share experiences, lessons learned, best practices, and ideas for better policies to advance implementation of SDG 13 on Climate Action and the rest of the Sustainable Development Goals.

4. UN Secretary-General to inaugurate the SDG Pavilion on 8 November

UN DESA chief Under-Secretary-General Li Junhua, attending COP for the first time in his new role, will participate in several discussions in the SDG Pavilion and around the conference. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is set to inaugurate the SDG Pavilion with Mr. Li on 8 November, with UNFCCC Executive Secretary Simon Stiell, in one highlight on the schedule.

Find out more about the SDG Pavilion here: <https://www.un.org/cop27/sdgpavilion>



8 billion people, 8 billion opportunities

By Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

On November 15th, the world's population will hit 8 billion.

As the Executive Director of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, I believe the international community should view this day as a success story. After all, we have gotten to this point because people are living longer, fewer women are dying giving birth, childhood mortality has declined, and healthcare systems are getting better. While many have used this milestone in population growth—and every other before it—to focus on the climate crisis and other challenges the world faces, let us instead focus on the opportunities.

No demographic trend is solely bad or good, and with the right investments, sound policies, and advance planning, governments can empower every person in their population to achieve a good quality of life. At UNFPA, we help countries unlock this potential by helping them understand their changing demographics, project their future population, and devise policies that build healthy and inclusive societies, with a focus on ensuring rights and choices for all.

Let us address the topic most fundamental to our growing population—reproductive health and rights. Nearly half of all pregnancies are unintended and more than 250 million women do not want to become pregnant, but are not using modern contraception. Yet, in our research and programmes we see firsthand that providing every person with access to safe, voluntary family planning is one of the best investments a country can make. Access to contraceptives not only prevents unintended pregnancies and lowers maternal death rates, it also reduces poverty and helps people complete their education. These benefits pay dividends to the development of countries' economies and social structures. In fact, some estimate that the long-term socioeconomic benefits of achieving universal access to quality sexual and reproductive health services, including contraception, would yield [returns of \\$120 for every dollar invested](#).

When we invest in family planning, we're investing in girls' futures. Teaching adolescents about their reproductive health and options improves their long-term health outcomes and lowers their chance of pregnancy and childbirth complications—the leading cause of death among adolescent girls. Together, knowledge and access to reproductive health services benefit all areas of girls' lives, from their education to their level of autonomy in the household.

Let's plan for a future in which all 8 billion of us can fulfil our potential. By prioritizing the issues that impact the most vulnerable, we can support those bearing the brunt of the world's most pressing challenges. In our increasingly unequal world, we need to invest in people and the promise they hold – irrespective of their gender, race, nationality or creed. When we do, a future in which all 8 billion of us can thrive will be within our grasp.

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



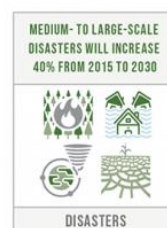
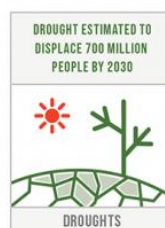
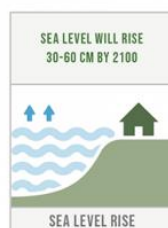
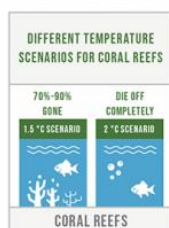
SDG 13 IN NUMBERS



CLIMATE CHANGE

IS HUMANITY'S "CODE RED" WARNING

OUR WINDOW TO AVOID CLIMATE CATASTROPHE IS CLOSING RAPIDLY





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