

VOICE

— UN DESA —

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER, VOL. 27 – MAY 2023



Leveraging innovations to secure our shared future

The international community finds itself at the halfway mark of the global race towards achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Yet, the goals are still far off track in many areas and UN Secretary-General António Guterres recently warned, “unless we act now, the [2030 Agenda](#) will become an epitaph for a world that might have been.”

But with the help of science, technology and innovation, there is hope that efforts towards the goals can be accelerated. Science also suggests that it is still possible to achieve the SDGs, provided that urgent actions to accelerate the pace of change is taking place at all levels. Innovations are needed at the global, national, and grassroots levels to change behaviours, restructure incentives, and replace “business-as-usual” with new and sustainable practices.

This is where the UN Multistakeholder Forum on Science, Technology, and Innovation comes in. Taking place from 3 to 4 May 2023, the Forum will showcase several innovators who are taking action to accelerate the pace of sustainability transformation both locally and globally. These innovators are expected to share data, research and outcomes that span the fields of biodiversity, climate, energy, food systems, health, education, inclusion, emerging and frontier technologies.

Ms. Freda Korarome in Papua New Guinea is one such innovator. As the Coordinator of Ecoforestry in the Division of Natural Resources, Eastern Highlands, Provincial Administration, she is promoting the Chinese mushroom-breeding technology, Juncao, to advance sustainable agriculture while supporting marginalized populations. Ms. Freda leads workshops with local women, people with disabilities, and youth to train them on planting and cooking mushrooms, as well as how to market and sell the product. Her efforts have helped provide economic opportunities, as well as improve nutrition among the local communities.

The India-based Aquaconnect is another example. This network has developed an AI-powered mobile app to guide fish and shrimp farmers to help improve their productivity and prevent diseases. The app uses deep learning algorithms to provide context-specific farming suggestions that help advance sustainable aquaculture, overcome value-chain inefficiencies, and improve profits for local farmers, thus improving livelihoods.

Yet another example can be found in addressing biodiversity. Conservation X Labs has discovered solutions for sourcing, developing, and scaling up critical solutions to address the underlying drivers of species extinction. The company runs global competitions to harness ideas and then designs new solutions and leverages international partnerships to scale them up.

In connection with the STI Forum, an STI in Africa Day will be held on 2 May at the UN Headquarters in New York, focusing on STI4SDGs: Priority Areas, Levers and Actionable Steps for Africa. A Global Solutions Summit is another special event to be held on the margins of the STI Forum on 5 May in New York. The event will be organized in partnership with the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO) and its Affiliate Member, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE).

To learn more about STI Forum and its special and side events, please visit bit.ly/STIForum2023.





“Middle-income countries face a set of global challenges that require joint action”

Around the world, 107 nations rank as middle-income countries. They generate a per capita income from about \$1,000 to more than \$12,000 per year and together, they are home to three quarters of the

world population. Ahead of the UN General Assembly High-level Meeting on Middle-income Countries on 11 May, UN DESA’s Cornelia Kaldewei explains the issues that middle-income countries face today.

1. What are the biggest challenges facing middle-income countries today?

“Middle-income countries are a large and heterogenous group. They differ widely in their development needs and challenges, and in their capacity to mobilise domestic and external resources. For example, the national poverty headcount ratio measured at \$3.65 a day (in 2017 PPP) ranges from less than one per cent to over 75 per cent. If we divide the group into lower middle-income countries and upper-middle income countries, according to the World Bank methodology, we find average poverty levels of 34 per cent in the former and 10 per cent in the latter. However, the highest poverty rate in the upper-middle income group is 40 per cent – above the average in the lower-middle income group. This is just one example of the great variability of living conditions. The picture is similar when it comes to economic indicators such as investment ratios, export concentration or research and development.

Despite their many differences, middle-income countries face a set of global challenges that require joint action. Multiple and overlapping current crises – including the global cost-of-living crisis, food insecurity, growing sovereign debt burdens, high geopolitical tensions, and the worsening climate crisis – have amplified challenges and constrained countries’ resources to address them. At the same time, their economies are still deeply scarred from the COVID-19 pandemic, and many face difficulties in accessing concessional finance.

Middle-income countries must design and implement coherent and consistent policy measures that address urgent needs in the short-term and strengthen sustainable development trajectories in the long term. This includes difficult transitions towards a growth model that is driven by innovation and productivity growth, and that facilitates an inclusive green transition.”

2. How can the international community support middle-income countries in overcoming challenges to sustainable development?

“In today’s highly globalized and interconnected world, national development efforts depend more than ever on an enabling international economic environment. This includes coherent and mutually supporting world trade, monetary and financial systems, as well as appropriate mechanisms for the global transfer of knowledge and technologies. There is an urgent need to build on ongoing multilateral efforts to address the growing problem of sovereign indebtedness, including for middle-income countries.

Support for middle-income countries must be tailored to their specific needs and vulnerabilities, in line with national development priorities. While concessional finance will

remain an important tool, especially to address urgent humanitarian and social needs, a broader range of financial instruments can help countries with necessary structural transformations. Knowledge transfer, capacity building and policy support are equally important to overcome development constraints, and to achieve the environmental dimension of development, together with the economic and social dimensions.

The UN development system is engaged in all these areas at the country, regional and global levels. This includes work by UN DESA on the topic of 'beyond GDP', which the Secretary-General has highlighted in Our Common Agenda, and in support of discussions of a Multi-Dimensional Vulnerability Index for SIDs."

3. Describe the ways in which middle-income countries are collaborating to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

"Middle-income countries are major drivers of the global economy. They can be important regional growth poles, including through trade and investment linkages and workers' remittances, and by cooperating across borders on regional and global issues such as food and water security, transport, energy and climate. Middle-income countries have contributed little to climate change in the past, but several of them have recently become significant emitters of greenhouse gases. Some have made ambitious climate commitments, and their green transition will be key for achieving the Paris Agreement target of limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Middle-income countries have expertise and knowledge that can help other developing countries, and a growing number is dedicating resources through their own assistance programmes. South-South cooperation can build on development experiences to support countries facing similar challenges and facilitate joint efforts to address regional and global issues. Triangular cooperation, which can include donor countries and/or international organizations, can help mobilise additional resources."

For more information: [UN General Assembly High-level Meeting on Middle-income Countries](#)



THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW



5 things you should know about how forests benefit people and planet

This month, the sustainable management of the world's forests will take centre stage at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Officials from UN Member States, the UN system, international and regional organizations, will gather to discuss this critical planetary resource at the UN Forum on Forests on 8-12 May 2023. Here are 5 things you need to know:

1. Forests are essential to life on Earth.

Forests cover 31 per cent of the Earth's land area, contain over 80 per cent of the world's terrestrial biodiversity, and store more carbon than the atmosphere.

2. They support our well-being and livelihood.

More than 1.6 billion people depend on forests for subsistence, livelihood, employment and income. Some 2 billion people, roughly 1/3 of the world's population and 2/3 of households in Africa, still depend on wood fuel for cooking and heating.

3. Healthy forests support healthy people.

Forests and trees provide clean air and water and sustain us regardless of where we live. Zoonotic diseases account for 75 per cent of all emerging infectious diseases, and they usually occur when natural landscapes, such as forests, are cleared. Restoring forests and planting trees are an essential part of an integrated one health approach for people, species and the planet.

4. Forests continue to be at risk.

Every year, we continue to lose 10 million hectares of forests, an area roughly the size of the Republic of Korea. The world's forests are at risk from illegal or unsustainable logging, forest fires, pollution, disease, pests, fragmentation and the impacts of climate change, including severe storms and other weather events.

5. Restoring forests holds the key to a sustainable future.

It is estimated that two billion hectares of degraded land worldwide have the potential to be restored. Revitalizing degraded forest is critical for meeting the UN target of increasing global forest area by 3 per cent by 2030. Doing so would also help countries to create new jobs, prevent soil erosion, protect watersheds, mitigate climate change, and safeguard biodiversity.

For more information: [UN Forum on Forests](#)





Photos (from left): UN Photo/Manuel Elias; Permanent Mission of the UK to the UN

How science, technology and innovation can be leveraged to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and achieve the 2030 Agenda

By Ambassador Mathu Joyini and Ambassador Tom Woodroffe, Co-Chairs of the 8th Annual Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology, and Innovation for the SDGs

In September this year, world leaders, Member States, civil society, academics, and experts will meet at the United Nations headquarters for the commencement of the 78th Session of the General Assembly. An important highlight of this high-level event will be the SDG Summit, which will take stock of the world's collective efforts in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) since their adoption in 2015. It will also offer a diagnosis of our trajectory towards Agenda 2030 and accelerate progress to achieving it.

The global response to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of science-based policymaking, partnership and cooperation. The 8th Annual Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology, and Innovation for the SDGs (STI Forum) will again highlight the vital role of science, technology, and innovation for addressing our greatest challenges. It will be a multi-stakeholder event, and convene scientists, innovators, entrepreneurs, high-level policymakers and representatives from civil society and international organizations. Its aim is to bring the global community one step closer to utilizing the opportunities offered by the nexus of science, technology and innovation in a manner that is inclusive, and solutions focused. The theme will echo that of the High-Level Political Forum in July: *Science, Technology, and Innovation for Accelerating the Recovery from the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and the Full Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at All Levels*. A STI Forum co-chairs summary will inform further deliberations.

We are thrilled that this year will mark the inaugural STI in Africa Day – a day dedicated to considering the possibilities of science, technology, and innovation in achieving the 2063 Agenda. It is the first in the eight-year history of the STI Forum. Convened under the theme, *STI4SDGs: Levers, Priority Areas and Actionable Steps for Africa*, the STI in Africa Day will shine a spotlight on mobilizing and engaging the African Diaspora, numbering close to 170 million people, to serve as a bridge between local communities and the broader regional and global innovation ecosystems. It will also discuss efforts aimed at developing technical and entrepreneurial skills in youth so that they can become a major driver of innovation and entrepreneurship and a force for sustained development. Lastly, the STI in Africa Day will endeavour to capture the socio-economic development opportunities emerging from the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which has created a

market of 1.3 billion people with a GDP of USD3.2 trillion and household spending of approximately USD1.9 trillion.

The other notable special event is the Global Solutions Summit. It will complement the STI in Africa Day by exploring how Africa can use the four levers (youth, African diaspora, the AfCFTA, and value-added service) to accelerate sustainable, inclusive regional and local technology development and deployment to achieve the SDGs and develop value-added activities in Africa's manufacturing, agriculture, and service sectors. Building appropriate STI capacity will be the key to meeting Africa's 21st century challenges while simultaneously unleashing Africa's socio-economic dynamism.

We look forward to a lively and interesting discussion, which will explore concrete and pragmatic science-based solutions to some of our greatest global challenges. It will take us a step closer to the SDG Summit later this year and achieving the 2030 Agenda.

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



SDG 15 IN NUMBERS



MORE FROM UN DESA

- **How standardizing geographical names can make an impact on sustainable development**
- **Mid-year update on the global economic situation foresees more uncertainty as policymakers are facing a complex economic context**
- **Peace, justice and strong institutions: a beacon of hope amid today's multiple global challenges**
- **Engage with UN DESA on LinkedIn**

COMING UP



[MORE EVENTS](#)

FIND US ALSO ON:



© United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
[Unsubscribe](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Copyright](#)