



Not a moment to lose when our shared future is at stake

“The SDGs are not just 17 lofty goals. They represent real lives with real needs. They represent women and children, young and old, you and me, and a chance to fulfill our potential,” said UN DESA’s Under-Secretary-General Li Junhua. His comment came as the department is supporting preparations for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July and the SDG Summit in September.

“There is an urgent need for all of us to rally behind our Sustainable Development Goals,” Mr. Li stressed, while sharing that we have been losing ground in our efforts to achieve the goals. “We need to refocus our efforts and work together to get them back on track,” he said. “This is where the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development comes in.”

From 10 to 19 July, governments, businesses, civil society, young people, and other international actors will come together at UN Headquarters in New York for the [High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#). This time, 39 countries and the European Union will present their plans for advancing the SDGs, and goals 6 on clean water and

sanitation, 7 on affordable and clean energy, 9 on decent work and economic growth, 11 on sustainable cities and communities and 17 on partnerships, will be in focus.

“The Forum will set the stage for the SDG Summit in September when world leaders will gather to re-commit to SDG action,” Mr. Li explained. “This is our chance to make a meaningful breakthrough and to deliver on our promise,” he said.

In the lead up to the Forum, UN DESA will invite the global audience to join two Global Policy Dialogue events this month. The first Dialogue on 20 June will focus on “Accelerating Clean Water and Energy for All: Exploring SDGs 6 and 7”, and the 22 June Dialogue on “Innovations for Sustainable Cities and Communities: Exploring SDGs 9 and 11”. Check out [UN DESA’s website](#) for updates and to [register](#) to join these virtual events.

As in previous years, the Forum is expected to be buzzing with its official sessions, side events, exhibits and special events, including on SDG learning, higher education, business and parliamentary forums, as well as climate action and SDG synergies, to mention a few.

“This is our chance to make a meaningful breakthrough and to deliver on our promise,” Mr. Li said. “To build a life of dignity and prosperity for every human being, on a healthy planet. Ultimately, they [the goals] represent our shared future.”

Stay updated on the High-level Political Forum on 10-19 July by browsing the [main event page](#). To learn more about the SDG Summit taking place on 18-19 September, check out [the SDG Summit website](#) and [sign up](#) for e-mail updates [here](#).



EXPERT VOICES



We need to do better for 1.3 billion people around the world

“In almost all aspects, persons with disabilities are in a worse situation than those without disabilities,” said UN DESA’s Masumi Ono. “We need to be doing better,” she stressed as we spoke about the upcoming Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of

Persons with Disabilities taking place on 13-15 June 2023.

1. What can you tell us about the situation for persons with disabilities around the world?

“The situation is unacceptable for the 1.3 billion people in the world. We need to be doing better.

In the past few years, the whole world was set back due to COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, climate change related disasters and economic hardships. The entrenched inequalities and injustices only exacerbated the situation of persons with disabilities. They were often excluded from the response to the COVID-19 pandemic; only 44% of countries that

announced COVID-19 social protection relief measures included provisions for persons with disabilities.

In almost all aspects, persons with disabilities are in worse situation than those without disabilities – in terms of multidimensional poverty, food insecurity, unemployment, health and education. They are disproportionately affected by climate change and natural disasters, pandemic and health crises, humanitarian situations, conflict and post-conflict. They suffer from lack of social protection, access to infrastructure, information, social and financial services. And they continue to be subjected to discrimination and exclusion.

More findings will be available in our update of the Disability Development Report (DDR). Our team in UN DESA, working closely with UN partners and other experts, have been able to show some trends using the baseline data from the 2018 DDR as well as additional information gathered from multiple sources. Although some areas show progress, for the most part, the numbers paint a dire picture of areas desperately needing improvements.

The DDR also makes it clear that we still need more disaggregated and comparable data to inform policies and decision making – if we are to truly leave no one behind.

2. In 2008 the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) came into force. How are nations fairing when it comes to realizing this treaty?

“The CRPD has given a foundation upon which we can build a fair, inclusive and resilient world and make a difference in the lives of persons with disabilities. 186 countries have ratified the Convention.

The Convention shifted the notion of disability as the human experience, not an intrinsic characteristic, and recognizes that disability results from “the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

This rights-based approach has propelled institutional and policy changes, with many countries enacting legislations and putting regulatory systems in place.

In education for example, 75% of countries had laws guaranteeing the integration of students with disabilities in mainstream schools by 2018. This is a major step to eliminate the exclusion that students with disabilities experienced in the past, and schools have become more accessible to all. From 2013 to 2021, the percentage of countries with school materials inclusive of students with disabilities almost tripled, from 17% to 47%. In labour regulations, by 2021, 79% of countries had prohibited discrimination against persons with disabilities in job hiring, up from 74% in 2016.

However, many challenges remain in fully realizing the rights set out by the Convention. Barriers persist in the form of discrimination, prejudice and stigma. Women and girls are particularly at greater risk of exploitation, maltreatment, violence and abuse.”

3. What does this year's Conference of States Parties to CRPD hope to achieve?

“Over 15 years have passed since the Convention entered into force. In this critical implementation phase, the Conference will take stock of achievements and challenges in harmonizing national policies and strategies with the CRPD. And for the first time in its history, the Conference will tackle issues concerning sexual and reproductive health services for person with disabilities. Digital accessibility for persons with disabilities will be addressed, including the gaps and opportunities to advance inclusion and rights of persons with disabilities. The Conference will also focus on the under-represented groups, highlighting the importance of recognizing the diverse needs and contributions of persons with disabilities.

The Conference offers an inclusive space to share lived experiences to mobilize action, drawing 1,500 delegates and observers from over 180 countries with around 40 ministerial level participation, joined by parliamentarians, UN entities, National Human Rights

Institutions and nearly 100 NGOs including many organizations of persons with disabilities.

Under the leadership of the Presidency (Tunisia) and the Bureau of the Conference, we hope all participants will take away from the Conference a sense of solidarity, inclusion and partnership and reaffirm the importance of multilateralism and international cooperation in the implementation of CRPD.”

4. Looking towards the SDG Summit, what can be done to engage persons with disabilities as contributors and agents of change in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

“The SDG Summit marks a key milestone halfway through towards 2030. Despite all the setback, we cannot afford to give up on the SDGs.

The Convention emphasizes the importance of mainstreaming disability issues as an integral part of strategies for sustainable development. The SDGs will not be achieved without mainstreaming disability inclusion and recognizing the contributions of persons with disabilities to sustainable development.

Targeted efforts would be needed to achieve the disability related SDG Goals and Targets. Seven targets explicitly refer to persons with disabilities; six targets refer to persons in vulnerable situations; and several targets are universal targets which include persons with disabilities.

The principle of “Nothing about us without us” should be operationalized. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society of persons with disabilities should guide every planning and programming processes. Greater support is needed to facilitate persons with disabilities and their organizations, including especially from developing countries, to participate in the relevant national, regional and global processes for SDG implementation.

The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy has been instrumental in mainstreaming disability inclusion in the work of the United Nations, guiding the UN efforts towards an inclusive and accessible world that leaves no one behind.

Harnessing the contribution of persons with disabilities needs to be built-in throughout various areas of our work. To do so, we need to seriously invest in strengthening capacities, resources and innovation.”

For more information: [The Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)





5 things you need to know about the global economy in 2023

Prospects for a robust global economic recovery remain dim. Stubborn inflation, rising interest rates and heightened uncertainties are creating obstacles for sustainable growth. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the climate crisis and rapidly shifting

macroeconomic conditions, are clouding the economic outlook and challenging efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Here are 5 things you need to know about the global economy:

1. The slowdown in global growth in 2023 is likely to be less severe than previously expected. Global growth is now projected to slow from 3.1 per cent in 2022 to 2.3 per cent in 2023, an upward revision of 0.4 percentage points from the [January forecast](#), which is mainly due to resilient household spending in developed countries and recovery of China's economy. However, GDP per capita is projected to grow only slightly in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, reinforcing a long-term trend of weak economic performance.

2. The world economy faces the risk of a prolonged period of subpar growth.

Medium-term prospects for global growth are clouded by scarring from the pandemic, the ever-worsening impact of climate change, and structural macroeconomic challenges, such as weak investment and mounting debt vulnerabilities. Slow income growth threatens to further undermine progress towards poverty eradication (SDG 1), ending hunger (SDG 2), promoting decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) and building resilient infrastructure and fostering innovation (SDG 9).

3. Inflation remains stubbornly high in many countries. While upward price pressures are expected to slowly ease, inflation in many countries will remain well above the comfort zone of central banks. Amid local supply disruptions, high import costs and market imperfections, food inflation is still high in most developing countries, disproportionately affecting women, children and the poor and exacerbating food insecurity.

4. Labour markets in many developed economies have continued to show resilience, with low unemployment rates and recurrent worker shortages. Employment rates are at record high levels in many developed economies and gender gaps have recently narrowed, in part due to increased use of telework and flexible work arrangements.

5. Global monetary tightening has exacerbated fiscal and debt vulnerabilities in developing countries. Rising borrowing costs and a strong dollar have increased debt-servicing burdens and debt default risks. Financing constraints will limit the ability of governments to invest in education, health, sustainable infrastructure, and energy transition to accelerate progress towards sustainable development.

Learn more in the mid-year update of the World Economic Situation and Prospects [here](#).

Photo credit: Chhor Sokunthea/World Bank.





SDG BLOG



António Guterres, Secretary-General
United Nations



If we can rescue banks, we can rescue the hopes of developing countries

By António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

The meltdown of several major banks in recent months made headlines around the world. More than \$250 billion was mobilized during the course of just one weekend to protect banks in the United States and Switzerland.

But there has been no such rescue attempt for scores of developing countries struggling to deal with a cascade of crises, from climate-related shocks to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian war in Ukraine. They are treated as though failure is an acceptable option.

The pandemic and the unequal recovery hit developing countries hard. Developed countries adopted expansionary fiscal and monetary policies that enabled them to invest in recovery; they have now largely returned to pre-pandemic growth paths. But developing countries, faced with high borrowing costs and limited fiscal space, were unable to do so. Turning to the financial markets, they may be charged interest rates up to 8 times higher than developed countries – a debt trap.

The climate crisis continues unabated, with a disproportionate impact on least developed countries and small island developing States. While developed countries can afford to pay for adaptation and resilience, developing countries cannot. Meanwhile, Russia's war in Ukraine has amplified and accelerated a global cost-of-living crisis, pushing tens of millions more people into extreme poverty and hunger.

Sixty per cent of low-income countries are currently at high risk of or in debt distress – double the number in 2015. Since 2020, African countries have spent more on debt service payments than on healthcare.

While each country has its own unique context, the challenges are systemic, perpetuated by a dysfunctional global financial system that focuses on short-term returns and delivers too little, too late.

The world is fast running out of time to rescue the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – our universally agreed plan for peace and prosperity on a healthy planet. The prospect of a world in which everyone can benefit from healthcare, education, decent work, clean air and water and a healthy environment is slipping out of reach.

As inequalities between rich and poor, men and women, developing and developed countries widen, a two-track world of haves and have-nots holds clear and obvious dangers for everyone. Without urgent, ambitious action, this gap will translate into not only a catastrophic development deficit in many countries – but an explosive trust deficit around the world.

This is why I am calling on the G20 to approve an SDG Stimulus – to scale up affordable long-term financing for countries in need, by at least \$500 billion a year.

The SDG Stimulus aims to boost long term investments in sustainable development, particularly where transformation is most urgent: renewable energy, sustainable food systems, and the digital revolution. Developing countries need financing and technology to go through these transitions with minimal social disruptions.

This requires action in three areas.

First, we must tackle the high cost of debt and the rising risks of debt distress. We need a new initiative to address debt relief and restructuring for all countries at risk – from least developed countries to vulnerable middle-income countries.

Debt instruments should incorporate disaster and pandemic clauses that halt payments in times of crisis. The SDG Stimulus also calls for innovative tools to replace debt with SDG investments. We need a new debt architecture to deal effectively with the new debt landscape.

Second, we must scale up long-term concessional financing for all countries in need.

Long-term productive investments in sustainability can combat the climate crisis, create decent jobs, stimulate growth, and build resilience.

Multilateral development banks must play a constructive role in such investment. To boost their lending capacity, they should use existing capital more efficiently, building on the G20's review of capital adequacy, along with new capital infusions. The SDGs should be incorporated into all stages of the lending process.

Multilateral Development Banks should transform their business models and accept a new approach to risk. This includes massively leveraging their funds to attract greater flows of private finance into developing countries.

Third, we must expand contingency and emergency financing to countries in need. Last year the International Monetary Fund allocated \$650 billion in Special Drawing Rights – the main global mechanism to boost liquidity during crises. Based on current quotas,

developed countries received 26 times more than Least Developed Countries, and 13 times more than all the countries of Africa combined.

Emergency financing should automatically go to the neediest countries. Instead, it is widening inequalities. The SDG Stimulus calls for a meaningful reallocation of unused SDRs to the countries that need them. We should also rethink the role of SDRs, especially in facilitating sustainable investment.

All these proposals are being discussed by the G20, the governing bodies of international financial institutions, and in innovative processes including the Bridgetown Initiative led by Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley, as well as at the United Nations. The SDG Stimulus brings these separate discussions together – and calls for greater ambition and immediate action.

It is our shared responsibility to secure a prosperous, sustainable future for all.

The SDGs are the pathway to securing that future – and the SDG Stimulus is the vehicle to get us there.

The world must get on board now. The Sustainable Development Goals are simply too big to fail.



SDG 14 IN NUMBERS



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