



## “No one is safe, until everyone is”

Amid a global health crisis and widely varying government responses, the UN High-level Advisory Board (HLAB) on Economic and Social Affairs – a group of 16 former heads of states, ministers, eminent economists, and social scientists – offers a set of new solutions for governments to build back better, greener and fairer after COVID-19. The Board members launched a new volume of essays, “Recover Better: Economic and Social Challenges and Opportunities,” during an online dialogue on 22 July 2020.

The event explored different pathways for rebuilding economies and the role of international cooperation.

The seven essays in the compilation explore the implications of digital technological advances and promote regulatory practices that ensure that these generate more job opportunities, particularly for lower-wage workers. In their essays, the Board members also urge methods of economic rebuilding that reduce inequalities, manage the environment sustainably and promote multilateral cooperation.

“The topics could not be more timely and relevant for a post-COVID-19 world, which is certain to be much more digital than before,” said Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.

Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission of Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), also contributed an essay to the volume and participated in the event. As the market is not going to equalize society, she said, we need state intervention and a new social and political compact altogether.

Several Board members suggested innovative ways for the UN system to provide additional support in the COVID-19 recovery. Former President of Chile, Ricardo Lagos, proposed an internationally binding agreement on pandemics, similar to the climate COP, under the auspices of the WHO, to improve multilateralism and avoid the worst

effects of future pandemics. President Lagos also suggested that UN DESA could work together with the UN's regional economic commissions to develop regional-specific, integrated COVID-19 recovery policies in line with the SDGs.

Merit E. Janow, Dean of the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, said that the World Bank and IMF remain critical institutions and should be utilized where they work best, for instance, with providing emerging markets access to capital. Expanding digital access is one of the best hopes for extending financial support, delivering government services and supporting education, she added.

Overall, Nobel Laureate Joseph E. Stiglitz of Columbia University said that we should use this moment to “create a new world that, when we emerge from the pandemic, is a world that is more in accord with our views of what our society should be like .... [with] a greener economy, an economy marked by greater equality, social justice, racial justice, a more knowledge-based economy.”

Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed shared a similar sentiment in her video message, saying that we need to “rebuild our economies sustainably and inclusively.” “Remember, we are in this together,” she said. “No one will ever be truly safe until everyone is safe.”

The new essay volume, “Recover Better,” is available online now. You can watch the online discussion with the Board members on [UN DESA's Facebook page](#).

## HIGHLIGHTS



### A day to recognize the resilience of indigenous peoples

Indigenous peoples have been heavily impacted by COVID-19. Nevertheless, their response to the global pandemic has shown their resilience in overcoming challenges. Indigenous peoples continue to use unique solutions to tackle the pandemic – as they have for centuries. They are taking action, drawing on their traditional knowledge and practices, such as voluntary isolation, and sealing off their territories.

For example, the Karen people of Thailand have revived their ancient ritual of “Kroh Yee” (village closure) in efforts to fight the spread of COVID-19. In Honduras, several Lenca and Maya Chortí communities have put in place ‘sanitary cordons’ to enclose their villages and to prevent outsiders from entering their territories.

Indigenous peoples are also implementing preventive and protective measures – providing key messages and launching media campaigns in indigenous languages to ensure greater awareness and outreach. These and many other practices are vital to preserve indigenous peoples’ and their communities and cultures, as they continue to be disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

Indigenous youth in many communities are playing a key role in supporting community decisions, by enforcing restrictions and lockdowns, distributing essentials and health equipment, as well as gathering information on the impact of the pandemic. Elders, who are the guardians of history, traditions, languages and cultures of indigenous peoples are particularly vulnerable, and deserve special attention to prevent an immense bio-cultural loss.

Indigenous women, who are responsible for the health, nutrition and care of their families and communities, are bearing a huge toll in this pandemic. Their main source of income from handicrafts, vegetables and other products, is currently curtailed, as they struggle to provide for their families. Indigenous children – especially those located in remote areas who do not have access to essential distance learning tools such as Internet access and are experiencing a digital divide, will most likely be placed even further behind. Special measures are needed to address the challenges faced by indigenous peoples in different parts of the world, in particular indigenous women and children.

COVID-19 is by far not the only threat to the health and survival of indigenous peoples, who face numerous challenges, including poor access to sanitation, lack of clean water, inadequate medical services, widespread stigma and discrimination in healthcare settings, and land grabbing and encroachment on their lands. Nevertheless, indigenous peoples maintain practices that can serve as inspiration in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic globally, and their collective traditions and strong support systems in their communities can serve as an inspiration to all communities.

The commemoration of the 2020 International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples will offer a glimpse of the challenges and responses faced by indigenous peoples during this pandemic, as well as good practices that can be shared around the world.

For more information: [International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples](#)

## HIGHLIGHTS



### Young people take action for global change

The UN has been engaging with young people to solve some of the world's most pressing challenges since 1999. Yet 2020 might be the year their contribution is needed most, as the world is reeling from the disruption caused by COVID-19. Under the banner "Youth Engagement for Global Action", this year's International Youth Day will celebrate the positive action young people offer.

In 1999, the UN General Assembly decided that 12 August shall be celebrated every year as International Youth Day. Since then, this day has engaged hundreds of thousands of young people in addressing some of our world's most pressing problems.

"Engaging youth globally is essential for the well-being of the entire world. We need your insights and partnership as we work for a better future for all," said UN Secretary-General António Guterres when addressing youth representatives at the ECOSOC Youth Forum last year. His message holds true today.

## Youth engagement for global action

As the United Nations turns 75, and only 10 years remain to make the 2030 Agenda a reality for all, trust in public institutions is eroding. Meanwhile, young people remain underrepresented in institutional political processes with a third of countries not allowing persons under 25 to run for parliament. Further enabling the engagement of youth in political mechanisms can increase the effectiveness and sustainability of policies and can also contribute to the restoration of mutual trust.

Therefore, meaningfully engaging young people in their diversity will be a necessity to effectively address our current and future global challenges, such as COVID-19 and the climate crisis.

The aim of this year's theme is to highlight the ways in which the engagement of young people is enriching institutions and processes, as well as draw lessons on how their representation and engagement in politics can be enhanced.

## How to celebrate International Youth Day

The official commemoration of International Youth Day is hosted by UN DESA's Division for Inclusive Social Development. The commemoration will take the form of a podcast, hosted by youth and for youth. The podcast will showcase how young people can enrich politics and enact change at all levels. This year's Toolkit is full of ideas on how you can get involved.

For more information about International Youth Day, please visit this website and follow @UNDESA, @UNDESASocial and @UN4Youth on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Join the discussion by using #YouthDay

## GET INVOLVED



## Join International Youth Day celebrations!

As the world is facing and responding to the COVID-19 crisis, many of us are confined to stay at home. But this is no reason not to engage virtually! Looking for ideas on how to get involved and take part in International Youth Day celebrations this year? We've got you covered! There are plenty of ways to engage and make your voice heard. Check out how to take action for positive change!

**Organize an event!** Event formats could range from themed online seminars, lectures, and peer-to-peer debates, all the way through to virtual exhibitions and live streams. Take advantage of social media and virtual platforms available to you and organise some online events.

**During your events, be sure to engage and advocate!** Engage community leaders and activists and host or organise an online meeting to discuss this year's theme. You could for example organize a speaking role for a senior politician to share their insights

about the importance of youth action. Whatever you decide, be sure to invite youth from a wide range of backgrounds to generate an inclusive conversation. You might even choose to focus on youth action in relation to key issues such as climate change, peacebuilding, inequalities, or COVID-19.

**Spread the word!** Getting involved with International Youth day can also include raising awareness about the importance of youth engagement. You could begin with those closest to you and engage in discussions about the importance of a youth perspective. On social media, use #YouthDay, #Youth4GlobalAction, and #SDG16 to help spread the word and strike up a conversation surrounding youth engagement for global action.

Make your voice heard, and take part in the UN75 survey where you can inform global priorities moving forward: <https://un75.online/>

You can share your event on our World Map of events. Head over to <https://www.unmgy.org/international-youth-day-2020> to get mapping!

Learn more about the International Youth Day on 12 August [here](#).

## EXPERT VOICES



### Changing the culture of care in Bogotá

Over 120 new and innovative SDG Acceleration Actions were submitted by governments and other actors in connection with this year's High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Many seek to build back better, greener and fairer from COVID-19, at all levels. At the local level, the City of Bogotá is taking novel steps to transform the culture of care in the city. To find out how, UN DESA spoke with the Mayor of Bogotá, Ms. Claudia López Hernández.

Please tell us about “District Care System”. How does it work exactly?

“It is a set of services, regulations and institutional actions seeking to recognize, redistribute and reduce care work in the city, perceiving it as an essential social function.

It will include having ‘blocks of care’ where residents can access care services easily – without walking a long distance, together with mobile services for those who live far away.”

What you mean by “care”?

“We perceive “care” in two ways – caring for dependent ones, including children, elderly, persons with disabilities, as well as housekeeping work.

We also include a strategy to provide for caregivers, including offering rest/recreation facilities and formal training.”

What are you looking forward to in the coming years? How will you measure the progress?

“The programme budget (over USD 830 million) and a four-year strategy has been approved. By 2020, we will complete the programme design; create an Inter-sectoral Commission with relevant entities; and operationalize at least two mobile care units.

One of the indicators to measure its cultural impact is “decreased percentage of those perceiving women to be better at domestic work” from 52.2 per cent to 47.2 per cent among women and from 53.8 per cent to 48.8 per cent among men.”

A final note: What is your message to other mayors across the world?

“I know you are facing enormous challenges in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic – building hospitals, testing people, etc.

Let us tackle them with hope and by strengthening financial and technical cooperation. Let us work together to push forward a caring and sustainable development agenda for our citizens.”

Be inspired by the initiative in Bogotá and by other SDG Actions by browsing [this site](#).

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



## COVID-19 cannot defeat the 2030 Agenda

“We have a responsibility to respond to the anxieties, fears and hopes of the people we serve,” stressed United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, as the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and the High-level Segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) drew to a close on 17 July.

Member States asserted that support for the bold 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development needs to be strengthened in light of current global challenges and the COVID-19 crisis.

Participants highlighted that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should be the guidepost to “build back better”. “The 2030 Agenda remains our shared roadmap to achieve the future we want. And, to recover better”, said ECOSOC President, Mona Juul.

“As we move forward, let us think critically and creatively about the actions we can take to make positive changes in the world”, stressed Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Liu Zhenmin.

The more than one thousand registered participants reaffirmed the importance of working together in response to the impacts of the pandemic through inclusive and effective multilateralism.

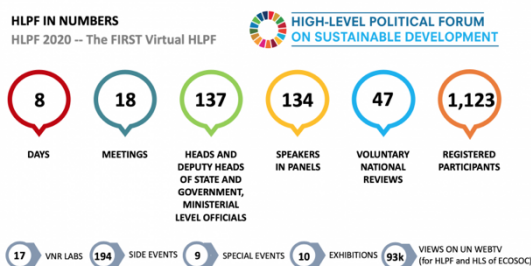
“  
The pandemic has underscored the need for a strengthened and renewed multilateralism.  
”

 António Guterres  
United Nations Secretary-General  
17 July 2020

In the two months leading up to the 2020 High-level Political Forum, submissions to the **SDG Acceleration**

**Actions** increased by 35 per cent. This resulted in a total of 200 bold commitments to advance the goals.

47 countries, including 26 first-timers, presented their **Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)**, sharing their national experiences including successes, challenges and lessons learnt in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Since the first meeting in 2016, approximately 158 VNRs have been presented at the annual HLPF.



During the two-week virtual gathering, the HLPF brought together 137 High-level Officials of Governments, including 134 speakers who participated in the various panels. In addition, nine special events provided platforms for different communities to engage around the 2030 Agenda, attracting over 6,000 participants

across 10 virtual exhibitions, 194 side-events and 17 Voluntary National Review Labs. The SDG Media Zone brought together influencers, experts on the SDGs and eminent personalities to further amplify the topics discussed at the HLPF.

Despite the virtual nature of the HLPF and ECOSOC High-level Segment this year, the meetings and events connected and inspired many participants: “This is the moment for the international community to heed the current wake-up call and move ahead with a collective response in unity and solidarity,” said UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

For more information:

[High-level Political Forum \(HLPF\) on Sustainable Development](#)

[High-level Segment of the Economic and Social Council \(ECOSOC\)](#)

## We need to kick our resource habit before it ruins us

SDG BLOG



Izabella Teixeira  
Co-Chair, International Resource Panel



*By Izabella Teixeira, Co-Chair of the International Resource Panel and Member of the UN High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs*

It's the year 2060. In classrooms around the world, children learn about the apocalyptic climate catastrophe that had been threatening their planet just decades earlier and whose worst effects had been averted. They learn of historic, 90 per cent cuts of emissions and of the millions of hectares of forests saved from the axe. All of this achieved in four short decades, with a booming global economy and reduced inequalities. Impossible? Not according to the latest science.

The “miracle” that could make this vision a reality is still within our reach. It is called decoupling. In the very simplest of terms it means improving humanity's well-being and growing the world economy without a corresponding increase in the resources we use and the damage that we do to our planet. The latest body of research by the International Resource Panel, which I co-chair, confirms that it is possible to grow our economies much faster than our environmental impact.

Over the centuries, humans have become accustomed to the notion of a free-of-charge, nearly infinite clean air, pure water, abundant fish stocks and fertile soil. Building on that assumption, we developed technologies that allowed us to extract and consume extravagant quantities of resources, sparing little thought to what happens when we drain them dry. Today, our planet is handing us the bill for our insatiable habits.

In 2017 alone, humanity extracted and consumed 92.1 billion tons of materials, compared to 27 billion in 1970. This is a staggering tripling of consumption rates in less than half a century in a world dominated by the linear pattern of “buy, use, and throw”. If we continue at this pace, by 2060, we will be using 190 billion tons of materials, way beyond the planet's capacity to renew.

We are slowly waking up to our excessive resource use problem, but we have yet to implement the solutions of decoupling strategies. These readily applicable, holistic and science-based strategies aim to change our consumption and production patterns in a



way that allows for simultaneously economic growth and a reduction of the resources we use.

In order to avoid dangerous trade-offs, a well-designed decoupling strategy should include three policy packages—resource-efficiency policies, climate mitigation policies and land and life-on-earth policies—accompanied by a shift in the way we behave as a society.

First of all, the resource efficiency policies should incentivize innovation and sustainable technologies, including through changing regulations, technical standards and public procurement policies, coupled with investments in research and development.

Secondly, climate packages should introduce measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This could be achieved through a levy on carbon covering all countries and emission sources. The revenue created could be shared equally among households and Governments. These efforts should be coupled with further decarbonization, carbon neutrality and reduction of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere.

The third policy package would ensure that climate and energy policies are consistent with the global goals on land use and food systems. For example, the carbon levy should be administered over emissions produced by land clearing to prevent deforestation and forest degradation. And payments for biosequestration of carbon, for example through tree-planting, should be restricted only to those activities that enrich biodiversity, and refused to big, monocultural plantations.

Finally, for decoupling to happen, we will need to shift to healthier diets and reduce food waste along the entire supply chain. Both interventions would have the added benefit of improving health and well-being and increasing food security.

Decoupling policies will also need to consider the very different situations of countries. For example, with the outsourcing of manufacturing, high-income countries show lower rates of resource use overall. But the per capita footprint of consumption paints quite a different picture. In 2017 alone, a statistical inhabitant of richer countries used approximately 27 tons of resources, 13 times more than a person in one of the low-income economies.

The growing resource use among developing economies, which is inevitable if they are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, could be offset by reduced use in high-income countries. There are also huge opportunities for developing economies to “get it right” from the start by adopting sustainable practices to avoid becoming locked in outdated technologies that many high-income countries are today seeking to replace.

With well-designed policies and practices in place, by the year 2060, we could reduce the annual extraction of materials to around 143 billion tons instead of the 190 billion tons under a business-as-usual scenario, while the global GDP could be 8 per cent higher than indicated by historical trends.

We can clearly see the impacts of past practices and most current ones. Now, we need to tell new stories and create new visions based on the future, not on the past.

*For more information, read “Recover Better: Economic and Social Challenges and Opportunities,” a new volume by the UN High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs.*

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

# SDG 12 in numbers

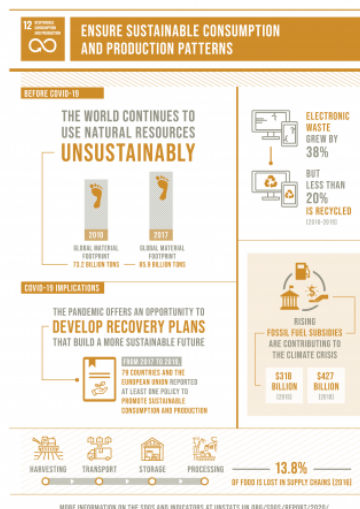


Global growth in manufacturing had already steadily declined even before the COVID-19 outbreak. The pandemic is hitting manufacturing industries hard and causing disruptions in global value chains and the supply of products. Consumption and production drive the global economy, but also wreak havoc on planetary health through the unsustainable use of natural resources. The global material footprint is increasing faster than population growth and economic output.

Improvements in resource efficiency in some countries are offset by increases in material intensity in others. Fossil fuel subsidies remain a serious concern. An unacceptably high proportion of food is lost along the supply chain. And waste, including additional medical waste generated during the pandemic, is mounting.

In response to the pandemic, it is important to develop recovery plans that will reverse current trends and shift our consumption and production patterns to a more sustainable course. A successful transition will mean improvements in resource efficiency, consideration of the entire life cycle of economic activities, and active engagement in multilateral environmental agreements.

Access more data and information on the indicators for SDG 12 in the [SDG Progress Report 2020](#).



## Pandemic poses long-term threat to labour markets in developed economies



The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting severe economic restrictions has had a profoundly destructive impact on labour markets in virtually every part of the world.

Developed economies, including the United States, the European Union and Japan, were no exception. In just two months, the aggregate unemployment rate for the OECD countries jumped from 5.2 per cent in February 2020 to 8.5 per cent in April. However, while the unemployment rate has soared into double digits in the US and in Canada in April, it remained virtually unchanged in Germany and Japan and even declined in a number of OECD countries, including Italy.

Several factors explain these OECD labour markets' divergent responses to the pandemic-induced recession. First, there are significant differences with respect to labour market regulations and the degree of employment protection. The US labour market is more flexible, and this is why unemployment in the US is more volatile compared with other countries.

Second, there are differences in relief policies adopted by the governments. The European countries had more explicit job retention strategies. Whilst the US has allocated significant resources to provide low-cost loans to businesses, the European countries directly subsidizes wages.

Looking forward as economies re-open, employment may recover in the near-term, but more serious challenges are emerging in the long run. The pandemic will drastically change the nature of labour demand. Many businesses and economic sectors may face downsizing or even collapse, when the stimulus support ends.

Leaving labour markets to adjust by themselves without pro-active government policies may lead to protracted high unemployment and a persistent skills mismatch, putting an additional burden on social welfare systems and dampening economic growth prospects. Therefore, active labour market policies addressing those challenges are needed.

Get more details in the [August Monthly Briefing on the World Economic Situation and Prospects](#) published on 3 August.

## Geospatial information helps us connect vital data with a geographic location



To achieve the ambitious targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, bold and urgent action is needed. As the world is facing the grim impacts from the COVID-19 crisis, it has further underscored the challenges that prevent countries from taking the extraordinary steps needed to attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Geospatial information exists in many forms and mediums and provides the 'glue' that enables the integration of all digital data with a location dimension. It can be as simple as a name on a map or as complicated as a dashboard that allows the modelling of COVID-19 hotspots which enables decision-making and allocation of resources by countries and sectors.

At the heart of decision making on geospatial information is the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM). In light of the continued and ongoing impact of COVID-19, the Tenth session of UN-GGIM will be held in a scaled-down virtual format, consisting of three two-hour meetings, on 26-27 August and on 4 September 2020.

Although with a revised format, the tenth session will address several emerging and critical issues and future trends related to the role and contribution of integrated geospatial information management within national, regional and global settings, considering several geospatial frameworks, principles and guides including:

- Implementation Guide of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, which translates high-level strategic geospatial information concepts into practical implementation guidance for action by countries;
- Future Trends in Geospatial Information Management, which illustrates how geospatial information and technology underpin national governments, documenting the increasing role that geospatial information will play as part of the 2030 Agenda; and
- Framework for Effective Land Administration, which translates globally agreed methods and approaches for practical implementation by governments to determine, record and disseminate information about the relationship between people and land for sustainable development.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

As a preventive measure amidst the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, some of the high-level meetings organized by UN DESA worldwide have been postponed, cancelled or are taking place virtually in a scaled down format. Others are still being reviewed. Find out the latest information about the affected events: [UN DESA Calendar](#): [UN DESA Calendar](#).

FIND US ALSO ON:



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