



The new normal is digital

With half of the global population under lockdown and with 90 per cent of students out of school at one point in 2020, the Internet has become our classroom, our workplace, our meeting space and even our dancefloor. The [2020 Annual Meeting of the Internet Governance Forum](#) is gathering this month to ensure that the Internet continues to connect us and not drive us apart.

Held under the theme of “Internet for human resilience and solidarity,” the Internet Governance Forum meeting will be hosted online by UN DESA on behalf of the Secretary-General between 2 and 17 November.

“The post-COVID-19 era will bring forward a new normal – one that will accelerate digital transformation in many areas,” said Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General and Head of UN DESA. “These include digital economy, digital finance, digital government, digital health, and digital education.”

“Indeed, many governments and businesses have already turned to digital platforms and digital solutions. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed harsh fragilities and digital divides that have been allowed to develop for far too long,” he added.

Featuring more than 150 sessions that focus on four main thematic tracks: Data, Environment, Inclusion, and Trust, the Forum “represents the extraordinary role that the Internet has been playing during the pandemic,” according to Anriette Esterhuysen, Chair of the Forum’s Multistakeholder Advisory Group.

It will “approach network resilience specifically from a people-centered perspective, exploring how it has supported the human resilience and solidarity needed to respond to the many challenges posed by the pandemic,” she added.

The Forum highlights include:

High-Level Leaders Track:

Leaders from governments, intergovernmental and international organizations, academic and research communities as well as businesses will participate in the high-level track, with discussions centered around Internet Governance in the Age of Uncertainty. Dedicated sessions will be held on issues related to health, the economy, security, social development and the environment.

Parliamentary Roundtable:

The Parliamentary Roundtable session with the theme “Building trust in a time of COVID-19 response and post-COVID-19 recovery” aims to fast-track the translation of the Forum’s recommendations into national laws, by bringing its outcomes to national legislative bodies for follow up and concrete action.

Youth Summit

It is the young minds that are truly shaping our shared digital space today. Their voices and perspectives will take centre stage at the Internet Governance Forum 2020 global Youth Summit, on 5 November.

See the Internet Governance Forum schedule [here](#).

Subscribe to the Internet Governance Forum monthly newsletter [here](#).

HIGHLIGHTS



The place we call home matters when we grow old

Our world is rapidly growing older. As we age, where and how we live and what support we are given, matter greatly for our health and wellbeing. Living arrangements and family support for older persons have become increasingly important for policymakers, especially in countries at advanced stages of population ageing. Understanding these links also matters for the world’s pledge to leave no one behind.

The world’s population is ageing due to increasing life expectancy and falling levels of fertility. According to the latest estimates from UN DESA’s *Population Division*, the share of population aged 65 years or over is expected to increase globally from 9.3 per cent in 2020 to around 16 per cent in 2050. Since women on average live longer than men, they comprise the majority of older persons, especially at advanced ages.

The living arrangements of older people determine their economic well-being as well as their physical and psychosocial health and life satisfaction. Older persons living alone or

in institutions have higher overall mortality risks than those living with a spouse or other family members.

Where and how older persons reside also has important economic, social and environmental implications. In particular, the number of independent households affects the demand for housing, social services, energy, water and other resources.

As the world is facing the threat of COVID-19, older persons are at much higher risk of dying from the virus than younger persons. Advanced age and the presence of underlying health conditions affecting the cardiovascular, respiratory and immune systems are associated with an increased risk of severe illness or death.

Mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on the older population will require continued efforts to curb the spread of the virus and to put in place measures to protect the most vulnerable segments of the population — for example, older persons with pre-existing conditions and those who reside in institutions — from exposure to the disease.

Keeping the promise to leave no one behind means that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must be achieved for all segments of society and at all ages, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable, including older persons.

Get the latest trends on ageing from UN DESA's [World Population Ageing 2020 Highlights](#).

Photo: UN DESA/Karoline Schmid

HIGHLIGHTS



Everyone included – championing social inclusion

“People want social and economic systems that work for everyone,” UN Secretary-General António Guterres said earlier this summer. “The response to the pandemic, and to the widespread discontent that preceded it, must be based on a New Social Contract and a New Global Deal that create equal opportunities for all and respect the rights and freedoms of all.”

But we still have a long way to go. Even before COVID-19 started ravaging nations across the globe, the [World Social Report 2020](#) confirmed that inequality has increased in most developed countries and remains very high in developing countries.

The coronavirus pandemic has now turned into a multi-faceted crisis, affecting people across regions. The virus has exposed the weakness of national health systems due to many years of under-investment, inadequacy of social protection systems and the acute vulnerability of marginalized communities and people living in poverty. It has reaffirmed the need of putting people at the center of development to address existing inequality in

opportunity and access to health care, quality education, food, sustainable energy, clean drinking water and sanitation, adequate housing, digital technologies, and employment.

Aspirations to 'place people at the centre of development, ensuring full participation by all' are not new. They were shaped 25 years ago when the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and its Programme of Action were adopted at the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) in Copenhagen. Guiding multilateral action on social development ever since, the Declaration represented a unique consensus on three key objectives: eradicating poverty, promoting full and productive employment, and fostering social inclusion.

As this year marks the 25th anniversary of this landmark event, the international community has an opportunity to reset inclusive social policies and to help countries recover better and with greater resilience to meet future challenges.

UN DESA will celebrate the anniversary on 1 December 2020 with a high-level General Assembly event, which will enable actors to renew their commitments to social development in support of the global goals and the world's pledge to leave no one behind.

Learn more about the event and anniversary [here](#) and join us on social media using the hashtag **#EveryoneIncluded**.

GET INVOLVED



Taking action to tackle the global sanitation crisis

Every 19 November, the world comes together for World Toilet Day, to celebrate toilets and raise awareness about the fact that 4.2 billion people live without access to safely managed sanitation. The day is all about taking action to tackle the global sanitation crisis and achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6: water and sanitation for all by 2030. See how you

can be part of online efforts this year, using [#WorldToiletDay](#).

World Toilet Day 2020 theme: Sustainable sanitation and climate change

Climate change is getting worse. Flood, drought and rising sea levels are threatening sanitation systems – from toilets to septic tanks to treatment plants.

Everyone must have sustainable sanitation, alongside clean water and handwashing facilities, to help protect and maintain our health security and stop the spread of deadly infectious diseases such as COVID-19, cholera and typhoid.

Sustainable sanitation systems also reuse waste to safely boost agriculture and reduce and capture emissions for greener energy.

Sustainable sanitation begins with a toilet that effectively captures human waste in a safe, accessible and dignified setting. The next stage is treatment and safe disposal. Safe reuse of human waste helps save water, reduces and captures greenhouse gas emissions for energy production, and can provide agriculture with a reliable source of water and nutrients.

Learn, share and act!

Due to COVID-19, our way of connecting with family, friends and colleagues has changed. Although it may be difficult to participate in a physical event, you can still explore this year's theme and see how others are taking action by using online tools. Contribute by raising awareness within your networks using #WorldToiletDay, and then, act, do something in real life or online. Whether big or small, every action count!

Learn more about this year's theme, online events and how to engage in the World Toilet Day 2020 campaign here: <http://www.worldtoiletday.org>

EXPERT VOICES



Can we measure the value of nature?

Can a boggy peatland really be more valuable than delicious cheese? As UN DESA Statistics Division launches four new publications on the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), we talk to Alessandra Alfieri, Chief of the Environmental Economic Accounts Section, who explains that the world is not all about dollars and cents, but political decisions often are.

For decades, countries have looked to GDP as a measure of their success. Can they be convinced that measuring their natural capital is just as important, if not more?

“Yes, absolutely! The System of National Accounts and GDP were born out of the ashes of World War II, when countries were focused on economic growth. But we have evolved, and times have changed. Now, the sustainable agenda is at the center of the global and national discourse. When it comes to a recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, countries are looking for a green recovery and a chance to recover better.

The statistical community has developed a framework to help people understand the interactions between the environment and economy, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA). It is the international statistical standard for natural capital accounting (NCA) and implementation of the SEEA has grown tremendously in recent years because more and more countries are understanding the need to incorporate natural capital into decision making.”

Do we really need to measure nature in dollars and cents to realize how valuable it is to us?

“In many cases, monetary values are the most effective way to ensure that natural capital is made visible and considered in our policies and decision making. If policymakers speak in dollars and cents but we only speak in hectares and cubic metres, decisions will continue to be made based on a narrow definition of capital.

For example, monetary values from SEEA accounts recently helped inform policies in the Netherlands. Peatlands cover about 8 per cent of the land area of this country and are mainly used for dairy farming, including for the famous Dutch Gouda cheese. But the greenhouse gas emissions from draining peatlands are enormous. The SEEA carbon accounts helped show that the profits from farming were smaller than the monetized costs of CO₂ emissions and the resulting damages. In the end, management plans took this into account, and there has been an initial law proposed to incentivize farmers to stop farming in peatlands.

That said, monetary valuation is not the panacea. The SEEA also covers physical measurement, which provides valuable information on the contributions of the environment and ecosystems to humanity. In the end, the SEEA is a system that can help produce a dashboard of indicators—in physical and monetary terms—that speaks to the interaction between people, the economy, the environment and ecosystems.”

Your new publications provide guidance to policymakers to include nature in their decisions. Where should they start? What is the first step?

“With these publications, we wanted to explain the SEEA from the perspective of policymakers themselves, who may not be familiar with NCA. The publications start from the policy questions that decisionmakers are facing and then go to explain how the SEEA can provide the necessary information. Our hope is that this inspires greater collaboration and between national statistical offices (who are responsible for compiling the SEEA) and policy makers, so that decisions are made based on integrated and high-quality official statistics.”

For more information:

UN DESA's Statistics Division

System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA)



Women's job market participation stagnating at less than 50% for the past 25 years

Less than 50% of working-age women are in the labour market, a figure that has barely changed over the last quarter of a century, according to a new UN DESA report launched on 20 October. Unpaid domestic and care work falls disproportionately on women, restraining their economic potential

as the COVID-19 pandemic additionally affects women's jobs and livelihoods, the report warns.

The World's Women 2020: Trends and Statistics compiles 100 data stories that provide a snapshot of the state of gender equality worldwide. The report analyses gender equality in six critical areas: population and families; health; education; economic empowerment and asset ownership; power and decision-making; and violence against women and the girl child as well as the impact of COVID-19.

"Twenty-five years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, progress towards equal power and equal rights for women remains elusive. No country has achieved gender equality, and the COVID-19 crisis threatens to erode the limited gains that have been made," said UN Secretary-General António Guterres. "The Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals and efforts to recover better from the pandemic offer a chance to transform the lives of women and girls, today and tomorrow."

While unpaid domestic and care work has intensified for both men and women during the COVID-19 pandemic, women continue to do the lion's share. In terms of power and decision making, women held only 28% of managerial positions globally in 2019 – almost the same proportion as in 1995.

The world has made substantial progress in achieving universal primary education, with girls and boys participating equally in primary education in most regions. In tertiary education, women outnumber men, and enrolment is increasing faster for women than for men.

During COVID-19 lockdowns, many women and girls have been in unsafe environments where they are at heightened risk of experiencing intimate partner violence. Around one-third of women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner; and 18% have experienced such violence in the past 12 months. In the most extreme cases, violence is lethal. Globally, an estimated 137 women are killed by their intimate partner or a family member every day.

Reliable, timely and disaggregated data are critically needed to effectively measure progress in achieving gender equality.

“I call on all countries to accelerate efforts towards the empowerment of women and girls and towards improving the evidence base to monitor progress: data gaps in the coverage of key gender topics need to be filled,” said Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. “Timeliness and comparability of data over time and across countries need to be improved, and data disaggregation and dissemination by age, sex, location and other key variables need to become a priority in order to fully measure and address intersecting inequalities, respond to crises, and ensure gender equality by 2030.”

Access all data on this interactive panel [here](#).

MORE FROM UNDESA

Countries step up innovation efforts, using over 500 digital apps to fight COVID-19



From chatbots in Singapore to drones in Oman; from robotic medical assistants in Indonesia to virtual doctors in Brazil; while the COVID-19 pandemic is wreaking havoc across the world, governments have been working hard to implement digital solutions to minimize the adverse impact of the virus and to ensure business continuity.

“Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, digital technologies have enabled governments to connect with people and to continue to deliver services online,” said UN DESA’s Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin. “In many countries digital government has stepped up its central role as a necessary element of communication, leadership and collaboration between policy makers and society,” he said.

In a quick call for inputs by UN DESA, government officials from around the world, shared more than 500 COVID-19 related digital applications that they have been using during the pandemic. These can now be found in the “Compendium of Digital Government Initiatives in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic,” launched on 6 October 2020 by UN DESA.

In the compendium, readers will learn how governments have been using campaigns and chatbots to provide reliable information about the virus and to combat fake news, disinformation and viral hoaxes.

Due to the lack of medical personnel and capacity in hospitals, health apps have provided people with tools to self-assess their health status and for doctors to remotely monitor the wellbeing of their patients. In Croatia, the digital assistant “Andrija” used artificial intelligence to process thousands of health requests via a government portal and social media.

Digital technologies have also been used for contact tracing, allowing both health authorities and people to be informed about cases and trace down contacts of infected people to test for the virus. To promote social distancing, some governments used robots, drones, self-help temperature scanners, and contactless infrared thermometers.

Qatar deployed security robots to perform patrols in both residential and public areas to educate people on the importance of preventing gatherings and limit the spread of the virus. In Singapore, an artificial powered thermal scanner SPOTON was developed to set up mass temperature screening systems. Kuwait Health Ministry has been using an app named “Shlonik” to follow up on the repatriated citizens from abroad who are in mandatory home quarantine. A mobile application served as a travelling permission platform for Malaysians wishing to travel across states during the curfew.

Peoples’ expectations of governments have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic and they will likely remain high in the post-pandemic era. As policy makers respond and use digital technologies to achieve their development goals, they should not forget addressing heightened concerns over data protection, privacy, misinformation and disinformation.

For more information:

“Compendium of Digital Government Initiatives in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic”

SDG 2 in numbers



Eradicating hunger and achieving food security remains a challenge, more so in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. At the global level, hunger and food insecurity have been on the rise, and malnutrition still affects millions of children.

The situation is likely to get worse owing to economic slowdowns and disruptions caused by a pandemic-triggered recession. In addition to COVID-19, the desert locust upsurge in six Eastern African countries and Yemen – where 35 million people are already experiencing acute food insecurity – remains alarming.

To mitigate the threats posed by the pandemic to vulnerable populations, countries need to take immediate action to keep trade flowing, to strengthen food supply chains and to increase agricultural production.

Access more data and information on the indicators for SDG 2 in the SDG Progress Report 2020.



Will European Central Bank’s unconventional policies cause hyperinflation?

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs **COVID-19 RESPONSE**

A flood of money but not inflation

Increased money supply in the euro area has not translated into increased economic activity

Find out more in the November Monthly Briefing on the World Economic Situation & Prospects

www.bit.ly/wespbrief

Photo by Nick Pampoukidis on Unsplash

Monetary policy has ventured even further into uncharted territory over the past years. Gone are the times when changes in interest rates were the sole policy variable that drew the attention of the public and financial markets. Today, central bank policy pronouncements are as much or even more about unconventional policy tools—such as asset purchase programmes—than they are about interest rates.

The European Central Bank (ECB) is no exception. Over the past years, it has purchased ever increasing amounts of bonds, prompting warnings of drastically high inflation. Some

critics believe that a flood of money entering the market is chasing far too few goods. This is reinforced by the run-up in the price of various assets, such as real estate and equities. As a consequence, even the spectre of looming hyperinflation is making the rounds among observers.

However, a closer look at the mechanics of monetary policy of the ECB reveals a somewhat unexpected picture. There has been a sharp increase in the monetary base, but this stemmed mainly from the interactions between commercial banks and the ECB as the central bank. On a broader scale, the supply of money has been growing much more slowly and is largely within the range needed to maintain price stability and avoid runaway inflation.

This will be reassuring to those fearing higher inflation from unconventional policies by the ECB. At the same time, it illustrates the very policy challenge at hand: the persistent inability of policymakers to reach their inflation target, to the point where deflation – that is falling prices – is the more imminent and serious challenge.

In addition, the behaviour of monetary aggregates indicates that while the ECB's asset purchases have so far not created inflation pressure, fragile balance sheets of the banking sector might require more forceful policy responses in the future.

Read the [November Monthly Briefing](#) for more details.

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](#)