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We need a new multilateralism to shift the world to sustainable tracks

In September, world leaders will gather at the UN Headquarters in New York to signal how they will boost action to protect the planet and ensure the well-being of people, everywhere. Discussions and outcomes will seek to address climate change, accelerate progress on sustainable development and deliver results for the people who are being left behind.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015 was without a doubt one of the greatest triumphs of multilateralism in modern history. In an unprecedented show of unity, all Member States of the United Nations agreed on a common, comprehensive blueprint for eliminating extreme poverty, reducing inequality, and protecting the planet in a rapidly globalizing world.

Four years into this ambitious agenda, there are clear signs that the world has embraced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Multiple Governments have placed them at the centre of their sustainable development plans and aligned their policies and institutions with the SDG targets.

"Globally speaking, there is good progress, but of course, there are still challenges, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and in the least developed countries (LDCs)," said UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Liu Zhenmin. "We need to speed up and we need to accelerate action to implement all 17 SDGs."

This September, the Member States of the United Nations will meet at the General Assembly in New York for a series of five summits and high-level meetings to boost action on climate change and accelerate progress on sustainable development, aimed at securing healthy, peaceful and prosperous lives for all.

The High-level Political Forum under the General Assembly auspices – also known as the SDG Summit – will be a critical opportunity to step up ambition for the Sustainable Development Goals. It will allow leaders from Governments and other sectors to identify how we can accelerate action to transform our societies and economies to ensure everyone, everywhere can achieve the SDGs by the 2030 deadline.

At the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development, leaders from Government, business and civil society will address risks to financing the SDGs, mobilize action at all levels and generate high-impact initiatives to unlock the resources that are urgently needed to advance the SDGs.

The High-Level Review of the ambitious SAMOA Pathway, which supports sustainable development in small island developing states, will discuss progress on combating the devastating impact of climate change, building economic and environmental resilience, and other challenges.

The Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit will demonstrate far-reaching solutions that countries are pursuing to reduce emissions, strengthen adaptation and build climate resilience. The Secretary-General has called on leaders to "come with a plan, not a speech" to rapidly accelerate action in line with the Paris Agreement.

The first-ever High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage will launch new efforts to provide access for all to affordable, inclusive and resilient health systems. The meeting will galvanize global commitments to ensure health for all, recognizing the strong links to climate action and the fact that health is a human right and a precondition, outcome and driver of sustainable development.

Achieving the SDGs, including their ambitious targets on climate action, universal healthcare and financing for development, will require stakeholders to work together at all levels in innovative partnerships and initiatives. Only through a new multilateralism, that brings together governments, the business sector, civil society and multilateral institutions can we shift the world towards a sustainable and resilient path to ensuring that no one is left behind.

HIGHLIGHTS



A day to celebrate indigenous languages of the world

"The health of our languages is connected to the health of the earth [...] We lose our connection and our ancient ways of knowing of the earth when our languages fall silent. [...] for the sake of future generations, we must ensure they too can speak the language of our ancestors."

On 1 February 2019, when the International Year of Indigenous

Languages officially launched at the UN Headquarters in New York, Kanen'tó:kon Hemlock, Bear Clan Chief of the Mohawk Nation, in a moving speech, explained why

indigenous languages matter. On 9 August, indigenous languages will once again hit the spotlight as the main theme of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

Of the approximately 7,000 languages spoken worldwide, 5,000 are estimated to be indigenous languages. With fewer and fewer speakers actively using them, around half of these languages are in danger of falling silent forever.

Indigenous languages are extensive and complex systems of knowledge, including knowledge of our environment. Protecting languages means protecting biodiversity, cultures and livelihoods. But despite their immeasurable value, many languages are disappearing at alarming rates due to forced relocation of indigenous communities, disadvantages in education, illiteracy, and poverty affecting indigenous peoples.

This year's International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples will showcase not only challenges, but also opportunities and innovative solutions for preserving and developing these unique tongues. It will highlight the fundamental importance of implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to save and strengthen indigenous languages, traditions, cultures and communities.

The main celebrations of the International Day will take place on Friday, 9 August from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm in the ECOSOC Chamber at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Indigenous experts and guest speakers will discuss the role of indigenous language and present creative initiatives for their promotion, preservation, and revitalization. The event will be broadcast live on UN Web TV.

Meanwhile, at the main lobby of the UN Headquarters, an innovation hub will open its doors to showcase some of the most innovative approaches that promote the knowledge and use of indigenous languages. The interactive exhibit will feature games, apps, interactive maps, videos and more 21st century tools for preserving centuries-old languages.



International Youth Day 2019 – Transforming Education

Exactly 20 years ago, the UN General Assembly decided that 12 August shall henceforth be celebrated every year as the International Youth Day. At a time when the world is increasingly looking to young people as leaders and as a moral compass on everything from climate action to peacebuilding, to education, celebrating their achievements and engagement is more important than ever.

Over the last 20 years, the International Youth Day has engaged hundreds of thousands of young people on solving some of the world's most pressing problems. It has also helped to highlight the challenges that prevent young people from realizing their potential. Previous International Youth Days shone the spotlight on such themes as "Safe Spaces for Youth," "Youth Building Peace" and "Mental Health Matters." This year, the focus is on "Transforming Education."

Transforming Education

Quality education that is inclusive and equitable is critical to preparing young people to be active, engaged citizens and learners throughout their lives. The International Youth Day will highlight the novel ways in which young people, youth-led organizations, governments and other partners are transforming education to achieve Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

On the surface, we are making remarkable progress towards ensuring quality education for all. In 2010, 63 per cent of children of adequate age were receiving early childhood or primary education. By 2016, that proportion grew to 70 per cent, meaning that millions more children were now going to school. But beneath these positive developments, a global learning crisis is lurking. According to the latest SDG Report compiled by UN DESA, 617 million children and adolescents – six out of every 10 – are not reaching minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics.

Access to education needs to be expanded to include youth in vulnerable situations, whether caused by conflicts, poverty, disability or other factors. Education must pursue equity by reflecting traditionally marginalized perspectives, including those of cultural diversity and gender equality.

We must also move beyond thinking of education through the narrow economic lens. It should serve a broader purpose of fostering intellectual curiosity and critical engagement with sustainable development challenges. The faster the world acts on these challenges, the better our shared future will be, as the impact of education will last for the entire lifetime of today's young people.

How to celebrate International Youth Day 2019

The official commemoration of International Youth Day 2019 is hosted by UN DESA's Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD), in collaboration with UNESCO. The event will hone in on inclusive education as part of the overall theme. Ensuring inclusive education means fully including young people from vulnerable groups or in vulnerable situations.

The event will feature an online discussion with UN representatives, members of academia and young experts. It will be open to everyone willing to discuss the ways of achieving inclusive education.

For more information about the International Youth Day, please visit: http://bit.ly/UN-IYD19 and follow @UN4Youth on Facebook and Twitter.

Join the discussion by using #YouthDay



Raise your ambition, register your SDG Acceleration Action

Is your government planning new initiatives that will impact implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals? Can your business commit to going carbon-neutral by 2025? Will your organization pledge to achieve gender parity in the workplace? Can future generations count on your city to invest more money in sustainable infrastructure?

The world needs every stakeholder to raise their hands to raise their ambition for the SDGs. UN DESA is collecting these actions in a new SDG Acceleration Action registry ahead of September's SDG Summit, which aims to ramp up international commitments to the 2030 Agenda.

Anyone can submit an SDG Acceleration Action—a national, regional or local government, business, civil society organization, a philanthropic foundation, a university, school or community group—as long as you back up your words with action on the ground.

The inclusive, searchable platform provides a space for all stakeholders to register commitments that, among other things, can reflect a new policy or programme, new investments or an increase in support for specific SDGs and/or groups. They could build on existing efforts, for instance, scaling up a successful initiative or pushing it into a new growth phase, and include the means of implementation such as finance, technology or capacity-building.

Here's how it works:

- Come up with a way to accelerate one or several SDGs and make a plan to implement it.
- 2. Visit the SDG Acceleration Action website.
- 3. Fill out the online form with as much detail as possible.
- 4. Submit your entry.
- Keep monitoring the SDG Summit website for updates on the SDG Acceleration Actions. UN DESA will be reviewing all submissions and publishing them in the lead up to the Summit.
- 6. Change the world!

Overall, SDG Acceleration Actions should facilitate and accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, reflecting the interlinkages between goals.

For more information, or to register your SDG Acceleration Action, visit: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsummit#acceleration-actions



Planet or plastic – the choice is yours

With more than 2,000 participants from all over the world, this year's High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) was the largest global review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals yet. Among the 2,000 guests were Heather Koldewey and Sara Hylton of the National Geographic Society's "Sea to Source: Ganges" expedition", part of National Geographic's "Planet or Plastic" initiative. Here is what they had to say about the global plastic pollution crisis.

UN DESA: The fight against plastic pollution has inspired massive global action. Arguably even more so than climate change. What is it about plastic?

Heather Koldewey, National Geographic Fellow: "Plastic really is a very visible part of our society and what we're doing, as people, to the environment. So, I think that connection of cause and effect, of what you choose to buy, what you choose to use, how you choose to live your life, as it links to plastic, is something that's immediately relatable to everybody. And it's also something that everybody can change. That's a very quick action in terms of reducing the amount of plastic or looking for more sustainable alternatives. That means that we can really make quick change very easily."

Sara Hylton, National Geographic Photographer: "I was speaking to a friend yesterday and she bought five water bottles per day and recently just purchased a reusable water bottle. It's not about completely changing our lives, it's about making small, daily steps that make a huge impact in the single-use plastic pollution crisis."

National Geographic has documented plastic pollution around the world – sometimes in the most unexpected places. But have you also seen any progress or local solutions that work?

HK: "All the research that we've done, everywhere we looked there is plastic. We haven't found anywhere yet without plastic, in the oceans or in our waterways, which is a massively concerning challenge. But we are seeing many local solutions emerging."

SH: "We had a chance to speak with waste pickers who are part of an informal sector who are working to recycle plastic bottles because there's value in plastic bottles. So, I think if we look at the grass-roots level, we see a lot of things that are happening among these communities that make us hopeful."

Can we still live without plastic? What are our alternatives? Is it a simple question of swapping one material with another or is there more to it?

HK: "It's not about eliminating plastic, it's how we use it. Over half or about half of the plastic that's manufactured every year is used for single-use plastic. So, we take this remarkable material, we use it for a few seconds or a few minutes, and then we throw it away where we bear the legacy for hundreds—if not thousands—of years on the planet. And it's that use that we're looking to change."



In a critical year for sustainable development, the world came together to review SDG progress

With reports indicating that current efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are being undermined by climate change and sharply rising inequalities, the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) concluded on 18 July with calls

for an increased critical role for local communities and civil society in getting the world back on track to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

The eight-day Forum, which brought together more than 2,000 participants, including 125 heads and deputy heads of state and government, ministers, vice-ministers and other ministerial level officials. During the Forum, 47 countries presented their voluntary national reviews (VNRs) on their progress so far.

Opening the ministerial segment of the Forum, which reviewed progress on specific goals relating to education, economic growth and decent jobs, climate change, good governance and justice, and partnerships for the SDGs, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said that development must focus on empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality.

"The evidence is clear," he said. "Development is not sustainable if it is not fair and inclusive— and rising inequality hinders long-term growth." He added that there was a need for the "Inclusion Imperative" to ensure that all countries and communities benefit from the successful implementation of the SDGs.

This would include more public and private investments for the SDGs; shifting to a greener economy; ensuring that global migration is safe and orderly and strengthening global commitment to end conflict and displacements.

"Many countries have been mainstreaming the SDGs into their planning documents or sustainable development policies. Many local governments have taken the initiative to implement the SDGs systematically, in some cases going further than national governments," noted Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

More than 142 countries have now presented the work they are doing to achieve the SDGs at the Forum.

"The 2030 Agenda has inspired an impressive response from governments, the private sector, local authorities, civil society, the scientific community and many more" stressed the outgoing President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Inga Rhonda King. "We need to recognize and give space for the actions of the multiple actors who are embracing the SDGs," she added.

The Forum also showed that communities are driving change. New York City, under its OneNYC 2050, is mobilizing efforts to combat climate change, fight injustice and ensure a safer, healthier city for all of its constituents. Bristol of the United Kingdom established the Bristol SDG Alliance which is working to raise awareness about the SDGs in the city. Under the Helsinki City Strategy 2017-2021, the city seeks to create a more agile and service-oriented environment for its people.

The outgoing ECOSOC President Inga Rhonda King stressed that "We understand the strategic importance of achieving the SDGs and halting climate change. But to deliver, we need to move out of our comfort zones in pursuing new ways of collective action".

The High-Level Political Forum is the forerunner to the SDGs Summit that will take place on 24 and 25 September where heads of government and state are expected to announce accelerated actions to achieve the SDGs and ensure that no one is left behind.

UN President of the General Assembly Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés said the SDGs Summit in September is more than a two-day High-Level event. "It is the outcome of many years of our efforts that began even before 2015, at local, national and multilateral levels". "Indeed, it is the greatest milestone since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, and the best opportunity to reaffirm and fulfill our commitments to our people," she added.

In that context, Mr. Guterres also called on "leaders to come to the September summits not with beautiful speeches, but with concrete actions, plans and commitments to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change".

The SDGs Summit is part of the High-Level Week at the 74th session of the UN General Assembly that will see countries and individuals take decisive action to improve conditions for people and planet. It will culminate in a political declaration. That week will also feature the Climate Action Summit and High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage on 23 September, the High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development on 26 September and the High-Level Midterm Review of the Samoa Pathway on 27 September.

For more information:

High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

From local to global: Sub-Saharan infrastructure saving Caribbean lives



At first glance, there may seem to be little in common between the lush Caribbean island of Jamaica and the sea-port city of Dar es Salaam, the largest city in Tanzania, with a population three times larger than the entire island nation. However, technical innovations developed for sub-Saharan schools are helping protect children across the globe from danger as they make their most important journeys – the ones to access education.

Road crashes are the leading cause of death for children over the age of five. The majority of deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries despite the lower rates of motorization. In sub-Saharan Africa, home to just 2 per cent of the world's cars, a child is twice as likely to die on the roads than in the second most dangerous region.

Cities where streets are designed for vehicles, not people, pose the greatest risk. This danger is particularly stark around schools where hundreds of pupils flood the streets on the way to school and back. The School Area Road Safety Assessments and Improvements (SARSAI) program by the African-based NGO, Amend, identifies schools where students are at risk of road injury and death. Engineers and statisticians assess surrounding infrastructure and implement simple changes such as speed bumps, footpaths, and traffic-calming measures, along with education to change driver and pedestrian behaviour.

In Dar es Salaam, SARSAI identified the 28 most dangerous schools and protected more than 38,000 students.

Most significant is the measurable impact of the programme's interventions: schools with SARSAI experienced 26 per cent fewer traffic injuries, while vehicle speeds in school zones dropped as much as 60 per cent.

It is the first peer-reviewed method of its kind, proven to reduce road traffic injuries and deaths in the region, with applications for schools around the globe. Projects, which provide empirical proof of impact, are vital examples of best practice and have wide-ranging impacts across the interlinked issues of access to education, health, sustainable communities and others, which are too often siloed within one particular Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).

Amend is part of the Child Health Initiative (CHI), a partnership building a coalition of country and donor support for safe and healthy journeys to school for all children by 2030. It focuses on the rights of children to safe, accessible mobility which enables access to education while maintaining a healthy environment. To achieve these goals, it links partners' regional work to collaborate and share best practice to address similar challenges, and advocates through the 'This is my street' campaign.

The campaign is calling for a UN Global Summit on Adolescent Health to combat two of the leading killers of children and young people – traffic crashes and air pollution. Every day, 700 children die in road crashes and thousands more are seriously hurt. Over 2 million children miss out on education each year because of death or injury in road crashes. And around 300 million children are breathing dangerously toxic air, polluted in large part - by traffic.

The collaborative nature of CHI led its partner, UNICEF, to translate lessons from work across Sub-Saharan Africa to Jamaican roads where three children die each week. At a workshop, Amend presented how to design, implement and conduct infrastructure impact assessments with local engineers to address risks around schools.

Then, UNICEF and Amend joined forces to make the streets of Jamaica's capital, Kingston, safer by implementing safe infrastructure around a pilot school. At the official project launch, the Prime Minister of Jamaica, Andrew Holness, welcomed the programme.

Jamaica's adoption of the SARSAI programme demonstrates how international collaboration with evidence-based best practice can translate a single city pilot into tangible national and regional action. The joint efforts of CHI and UNICEF will be repeated in eight more countries, tying in global coordination and advocacy to leverage further resources for road traffic injury prevention.

This ability of the SARSAI project to be successfully scaled up and replicated in a different country context, has prompted UN DESA to include it in a database of over 500 good practices for the SDGs, which gathers inspiring breakthroughs and success stories from around the world that are helping to make the SDGs a reality.

The case for making the polluters pay



Ahead of the UN Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit on 23 September, UN DESA's latest Monthly Briefing on the World Economic Situation and Prospects

develops the case for internalizing the cost of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions – or put more simply – to make the polluters pay.

Climate change is moving faster than we are, as pivotal records are being shattered before our eyes. Greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere are at the highest levels in 3-5 million years. The last time this occurred, the earth's temperature was as much as 3 degrees warmer and sea levels as much as 10-20 meters higher. The years 2015-2019 will be the five warmest on record. And sea levels are not only rising – but rising at an accelerated pace.

Coupled with intensifying weather-related natural catastrophes, this presses home the point that speaking just of climate change may no longer do justice to the extent of the global challenge at hand; instead of climate change, the more accurate description appears to be climate crisis or climate catastrophe.

In this unfolding climate crisis, and with the window of opportunity to counteract closing rapidly, policymakers must urgently identify the measures that will prove sufficient to put the world on a sustainable development path.

A key requirement is immediately moving away from fossil fuels. This will require a wide range of measures, including phasing out subsidies for fossil fuels, increasing and fine-tuning the targeting of renewable-energy subsidies and making greater use of regulatory instruments such as efficiency standards. However, a key element across all these various measures is putting a price on CO₂.

Carbon pricing would fix a fundamental flaw in the economic system, which allows the greenhouse gas emitters to bear no cost of the damage their emissions are causing to our societies and economies, and ultimately, to the planet's entire life-supporting system.

This understatement of costs has dramatic consequences: certain goods and services are produced and consumed at a quantity that is greater than the environmentally sustainable level. In other words, we are unlikely to change our everyday decisions, which are causing a global climate crisis, unless we see them directly hitting us in the pockets.

Carbon pricing makes producers and consumers internalize into their economic decisions what has so far been offloaded as a negative externality onto society. Creating a market for CO_2 emissions would essentially establish CO_2 as a commodity, whose price has then to be factored into economic decisions.

Carbon pricing can take different forms, but generally falls into one of two categories: emission trading systems and carbon taxes. While both have their pros and cons, policymakers should also ensure that the costs do not fall too heavily on the most vulnerable. This underpins the advice of UN Secretary-General António Guterres: "Tax the polluters, not the people."

More in-depth analysis and a review of recent economic consequences of climate shocks in regions including Central Asia, Australia, Africa, Pacific Islands, South Asia and the Caribbean is available here: August Monthly Briefing on the World Economic Situation and Prospects

SDG 13 in numbers

Climate change is the defining issue of our time and the greatest challenge to sustainable development. As greenhouse gas levels continue to climb, climate change is occurring at a much faster rate than anticipated. We are already seeing that its compounded effects can be catastrophic and irreversible: accelerated ocean acidification, extreme weather conditions, rising sea levels, increased frequency and severity of natural disasters, continuing land degradation, and loss of biodiversity. Although countries have taken positive steps by preparing nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and increasing financing to combat climate change, far more ambitious plans and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society are needed if we are to prevent runaway climate change.



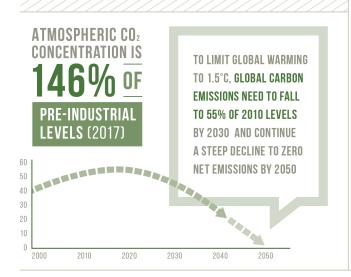
TAKE URGENT ACTION TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACTS





CLIMATE-RELATED AND GEOPHYSICAL DISASTERS CLAIMED AN ESTIMATED 1.3 MILLION LIVES BETWEEN 1998 AND 2017







Geospatial experts look at the bigger picture of the 2030 Agenda



Geospatial information exists in many forms and mediums, integrating all digital data with a location dimension. It can be as simple as a name on a map or as complicated as a multi-layer 3-dimensional model of that place – containing anything from cities, land-use and traffic distribution to monitoring the environment and climate variables.

All countries and all sectors need geospatial information to make informed decisions, to develop national development plans and strategies and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Collaborative information systems that are comprehensive, coordinated and integrated, underpinned by geospatial information technologies and applications, provide the evidence on 'where' people interact with their place, their city and their environment.

At the ninth session of the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), which will take place from 7 to 9 August at the UN Headquarters in New York, experts from across the globe will discuss ways to better manage and coordinate the use of geospatial information to help countries develop national strategies and sustainable development priorities.

Geospatially enabling the SDGs for all countries is a principal focus of the Committee of Experts. At its upcoming August session, the Committee will consider several geospatial frameworks, principles and guides, including:

- The Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF), which translates highlevel strategic geospatial information concepts into practical implementation guidance and action by Member States.
- The Global Statistical Geospatial Framework (GSGF), which enables a range of data from both the statistical and geospatial communities to be integrated to inform and facilitate data-driven decision making.
- The Framework for Effective Land Administration (FELA), to improve advocacy, promote coherence of concepts, and translate 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.

For more information:

9th session of the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

UPCOMING EVENTS

7-9 August, New 9th session of the UN Committee of Experts on Global

York Geospatial Information Management

9 August International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

12 August International Youth Day

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