



Business giants worth \$16 trillion commit to sustainable investment

Leaving for New York last month, Deanne Stewart, the CEO of one of Australia's largest pension funds, told her daughter that she was going to join a new UN-led sustainable investors' alliance, whose members manage around \$16 trillion between them. Her daughter, who had recently led a successful campaign to ban single-use plastic from several local businesses, replied: "With 16 trillion dollars, mom, can you imagine what I could get done?"

The CEOs of 30 global business giants who make up the newly launched Global Investors for Sustainable Development (GISD) Alliance decided to put that question to the test and find out just how much they could achieve if they joined forces to support sustainable investment in every sector and every region of the world.

Although they do manage a staggering amount of assets, the GISD Alliance is about much more than money. GISD members represent the complete investment chain—from financial institutions to business networks, to non-financial corporations—from developed and developing countries alike.

More importantly, the Alliance, coordinated by UN DESA, represents a new, forward-looking trend in the private sector, which recognizes that long-term environmental sustainability and social responsibility are every bit as important as short-term profit.



In their first joint statement, GISD members openly recognized that their “business success is inseparable from sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic development” and committed to a “long-term approach to business and investment decisions.”

Breaking with stereotypes still held by many investors, the GISD CEOs acknowledged that sustainable development is not incompatible with good business practice. On the contrary, business success and a sustainable future are inextricably linked. Investment in societal development and reduction of inequality creates healthy, educated, and empowered workers and, ultimately, customers—who are vital to growth and prosperity in every business, sector, and industry.

“If we’re operating in an environment where people cannot access health care, where people cannot access quality education, then we cannot talk about the long-term sustainability of our businesses,” summed up Joseph Ogutu, Chief of Special Projects at Kenya’s telecommunications giant Safaricom.

Convened by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, the Alliance is a response to our interconnected and interdependent times. In the 21st century, the continued success of any business depends on lifting others from poverty and the world from the brink of climate disaster. The members of GISD will identify and advance solutions to scale up long-term finance and investment for sustainable development and ensure that funds are going where they will be most effective for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In their joint statement, GISD Alliance members committed to develop innovative financing facilities, establish partnerships and contribute to sustainable economic growth that benefits all stakeholders—not just the shareholders of companies.

The Alliance is expected to produce actionable recommendations and workable initiatives in two short years, between now and October 2021, because the world needs inspired action, and fast. “Our undertaking is ambitious, but so are the Sustainable Development Goals. Hence, we are determined to turn these ambitions into reality,” the CEOs wrote in the joint statement.

UN DESA coordinates UN system’s support for the Alliance, with additional substantive inputs from the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Environment Programme Finance Initiative (UNEP-FI), UN Regional Economic Commissions, UN Global Compact, the Principles of Responsible Investment (PRI), the International Finance Corporation (IFC) as well as the World Bank Group.

For more information: [Global Investors for Sustainable Development \(GISD\) Alliance](#)



One world. One Net. One Vision – the 14th Internet Governance Forum

More and more of us seem to live our lives today in equal parts in the physical world and in cyberspace. From public discussion to education, to catching-up with friends and online commerce, a sizable portion of our social interactions now happens online. But while we have millennia of experience in managing our relations in the physical world, governance of the Internet is an area

nearly as new as the web itself.

For the past 13 years, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) has been the place where stakeholders from all walks of life can meet as equals and freely discuss the most burning issues in Internet governance.

With a Secretariat hosted by UN DESA, the IGF does not have decision-making mandates, but it does inform and inspire those who do. It facilitates a common understanding of how to maximize Internet opportunities and minimize its risks and challenges.

The fourteenth annual meeting of the IGF will be hosted by the Government of Germany in Berlin from 25 to 29 November 2019, to discuss the overarching theme of “One World. One Net. One Vision.” More than 3,000 participants from different stakeholder groups, including some of the most prominent authorities on global Internet governance, will attend the Forum.

The discussions will revolve around the three priority themes of data governance, digital inclusion and security, safety, stability & resilience. In addition, the Best Practice Forums, led by the Internet community, will share experiences on big data, the Internet of things, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, gender and access and local content. With 18 Dynamic Coalitions and 116 national and regional IGF initiatives, the Forum’s programme will have something for everyone.

The Forum will discuss how digital frontier technologies can benefit our economies and societies, bringing us closer to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The IGF community will also consider a growing number of concerns and challenges that are eroding public trust in cyberspace. The increasing prevalence of cyber-attacks, data and privacy breaches, and the proliferation of hate speech and overly-restrictive forms of censorship, among other emerging challenges, threaten to undermine the beneficial impact of the Internet.

The Forum will conclude with forward-looking key messages from its main sessions and workshops and a closing ceremony to thank the host government and welcome the host of the 15th IGF – Poland.

For more information: [Internet Governance Forum \(IGF\)](#)

HIGHLIGHTS



More than 125 Acceleration Actions already registered to speed up SDG implementation

At the recent SDG Summit, United Nations Secretary-General called for a Decade of Action to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. To support this effort, UN DESA's Division for SDGs has set up a dedicated online mechanism to mobilize and publish new and ambitious

SDG Acceleration Actions from national governments and all non-state actors.

As we were closing this issue of UN DESA Voice, 129 SDG Acceleration Actions had been registered, including major commitments from Sweden, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Finland and the Netherlands. Given the numerous announcements of actions made during the September “summits week,” the list is expected to grow even further over the coming months.

An overwhelming majority – 78 per cent – of the 129 registered SDG Acceleration Actions aims to address multiple SDGs at the same time. SDGs 17 (partnerships) and 16 (peace, justice, strong institutions) have mobilized the largest number of actions (60 and 57 respectively). They were followed by SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth – 45 actions) and SDG 13 (climate action – 45 actions); SDG 5 (gender equality – 43 actions); and SDG 1 (no poverty – 40 actions).

Staying true to the spirit of the “global goals,” actions came flowing in from all over the world, with 43 per cent coming from Europe; 19 per cent from Latin American and the Caribbean; 14 per cent from Asia and the Pacific; 11 per cent from North America; 7 per cent from Africa; and 5 per cent from Arab States.

Over a half of all Actions – 65 per cent – came from high-income countries, with 32 per cent coming from middle-income countries and 3 per cent from low-income countries. National governments submitted the largest number of SDG Acceleration Actions (36 per cent), followed by civil society organizations (34 per cent) and UN entities (19 per cent). Other groups, such as the private sector, academia and philanthropic organizations made up the rest.

Major commitments include:

Sweden aims to become the world's first fossil-free state by 2045. The country has doubled the support for its “Industry Leap” initiative which funds fossil-free steel projects. The country also plans to issue its first Green Bond by 2020 and is scaling up its Feminist Foreign Policy.

The **United Kingdom** announced a £515 million package to support education for girls. The country also launched the “Future High Streets Fund” to innovate urban infrastructure and services; mainstreamed social values in procurement in government; doubled its initial contribution to the Green Climate Fund (GCF); pledged an additional

£7 million to support the Blue Belt Programme; and doubled its contribution to the Peacebuilding Fund (from £8 to £16 million for 2018-2020).

Mexico launched its plan to provide universal access to internet services for vulnerable communities and will set up a hundred 2030 Agenda Labs in universities.

In **Finland**, assessing climate impacts will become a set process for drafting legislation. Aiming to be carbon neutral by 2035, the country is encouraging its citizens to commit to reducing their average carbon footprints through a “sustainable lifestyle” service, through which users can calculate their personal carbon footprints and draw up a personal plan to reduce them by choosing actions from recommended smart choices.

The **Netherlands** will double the target for its initiative that helps people obtain access to justice. This means that the country aims to improve access to justice for 200,000 individuals in 2020.

The **Philippines** has an ambitious programme to provide free public Wi-Fi to all citizens in all public places in the country. As of June 2019, a total of 2,677 sites have become operational.

Greece announced an innovative cross-sectoral priority plan to speed up circular economy by setting criteria in public procurement, clustering businesses and taking employment measures towards collaborative economy.

The **Maldives** is partnering with Parley for the Oceans, American Express, AB InBev and Adidas to create a nationwide framework to deliver on several goals.

India has an ambitious plan to install 175 GW of renewable energy capacity by the year 2022, which includes 100 GW from solar, 60 GW from wind, 10 GW from bio-power and 5 GW from small hydropower.

The **City of Barcelona** announced an ambitious plan to guarantee the right to decent housing for every resident through addressing housing crisis and enhancing the functionality and affordability of houses.

Companies from 25 countries committed to science-based targets for achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 as part of the UN Global Compact's “Business Ambition for 1.5 °C: Our Only Future” initiative.

Through the “**World’s Largest Lesson Nigeria**” initiative, Project Everyone aims to spread the word about the SDGs to youth and adults throughout Nigeria. So far 500,000 children have learned about the SDGs, and 8,000 youth and teacher volunteers have been mobilized as trainers.

Agrolibano, a melon export company in Honduras, is working to reduce the multidimensional poverty in rural communities through social investment in education, health services and standard of living.

The **Kadiwaku Family Foundation** in the Democratic Republic of Congo has been reaching out to 650 youth with disabilities to strengthen their entrepreneurial capabilities.

You can browse the database — and find out how your government or organization can register an SDG Acceleration Action— here: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgactions>.



Know of an innovative public service institution? Nominate it now to the 2020 United Nations Public Service Awards!

We often take public services for granted. These services in public transportation, health care, education, social and emergency services are critical for a well-functioning society and they are primarily provided by public institutions. Most of the time, we are not

aware of these important services, especially if they are effective, efficient and responsive.

Although these services are essential, many public institutions are operating at their full capacity with limited resources while meeting growing public needs and expectations. The United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA) recognizes the importance of public service delivery and highlights resilience and out-of-the-box thinking in the public sector.

Since its launch in 2003, the programme has showcased innovative practices at local, regional and national levels around the world which improved the lives of people through enhanced service delivery, fostering participation and promoting accountable institutions.

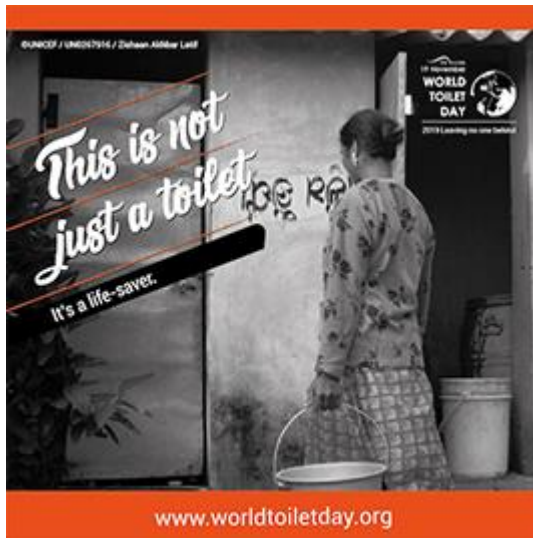
The time has come to nominate potential honorees for 2020. This time, the awards will focus on the achievements and contributions of public service in five categories:

- Delivering inclusive and equitable services for all;
- Promoting integrated mechanisms for sustainable development;
- Developing transparent and accountable public institutions;
- Promoting digital transformation in public-sector institutions; and
- Promoting gender responsive public services to achieve the SDGs.

Do you know of any innovative public service institution that works within these areas? Then don't miss the opportunity to nominate them! The 2020 Awards is now open for nominations [[here](#)] until **27 November 2019**. The submission rules and guidelines are available [here](#) in all six official languages.

The winners will be recognized and awarded during the week of 23 June 2020, in connection with the celebration of the United Nations Public Service Day.

Curious to know which institutions have been awarded this prestigious prize in the past? Look no further! All UNPSA initiatives are featured on the [Innovation Hub](#). The Hub allows users to explore innovations trends in specific SDGs and in relations to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.



More than a toilet: sanitation critical to anti-poverty efforts

The United Nations commemorates World Toilet Day every year on 19 November to draw global attention to the alarming statistic that 4.2 billion people live without adequate sanitation services. Ahead of this year's celebration, we spoke to Madhushree Chatterjee, Chief of the Natural Resources and Interlinkages Branch of UN DESA's Division for Sustainable Development Goals, who filled us in on this year's plans and why sanitation

plays a critical role for global efforts to eradicate poverty. "A toilet is not just a toilet—it's a lifesaver, dignity-protector and opportunity-maker," Ms. Chatterjee said.

What's new for World Toilet Day in 2019?

"The theme of World Toilet Day 2019, "leaving no one behind," is aligned with the central promise of the Sustainable Development Goals. This year, we want to show that a toilet is not just a toilet—it's a lifesaver, dignity-protector and opportunity-maker.

Imagine if hours of your time and your mental and physical effort had to go to something as basic as finding a safe toilet. How could anyone lift themselves out of poverty? We remind the international community that we must leave no one behind as we expand access to safe toilets, because whoever you are, wherever you are, sanitation is your human right."

What does "safe toilet" mean?

"When someone has a "safely managed sanitation service," to use the technical term, it means they use hygienic toilet facilities that are not shared with other households and where excreta are either separated from human contact and safely disposed of in situ or transported and treated off-site, thereby protecting people and the environment from disease agents.

Good examples of this include flush/pour flush toilets connected to piped sewer systems, septic tanks or latrine pits, ventilated improved pit latrines, composting toilets; or, pit latrines with slab covers. More installation of these will help the 673 million people who still practice open defecation. I'll add that 3 billion people lack basic handwashing facilities, and it's the poorest and most marginalized people who are likely to lack safely managed sanitation services and often face many forms of discrimination."

So how can we leave no one behind?

"It's going to require a lot of work and a lot of partnerships between water and sanitation stakeholders. SDG monitoring data shows a massive acceleration in progress is needed on SDG 6. At current rates of progress only 40 out of 152 countries are on track to achieve basic sanitation by 2030. Rates of progress are even slower for rural communities and the poorest populations, so achieving SDG 6 will require faster rates of progress in the least advantaged segments of society. We need more funding, less pollution, better wastewater treatment and stronger water governance structures to manage the growing demand for clean water and sanitation services."

Where can we learn more?

“Learn about World Toilet Day and UN-Water’s efforts toward implementing SDG 6 by visiting worldtoiletday.info. Download our posters and digital materials to help us spread the word about access to sanitation!”

Ms. Chatterjee also serves as the Secretary for UN-Water, the interagency mechanism that coordinates the UN’s work on water and sanitation issues, particularly around implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



Brave old world: UN DESA releases new report on ageing

Today, 703 million people in the world are aged 65 or older. By 2050 – or just 31 years from now, that number is projected to increase to a staggering 1.5 billion, according to the *World Population Ageing 2019 Highlights* recently released by UN DESA’s Population Division.

The report predicts that by the mid-point of this century, one in every six people in the world will be over the age 65, up from one in every 11 today. The number of people aged 80 or over is expected to grow even faster, tripling by 2050. Average global life expectancy at age 65 will have increased by 19 years by 2050.

All societies in the world are in the midst of this longevity revolution – some are at its earlier stages and some are more advanced. But all will pass through this extraordinary transition, in which the chance of surviving to age 65 rises from less than 50 per cent – as was the case in Sweden in the 1890s – to more than 90 per cent at present in countries with the highest life expectancy. The proportion of adult life spent beyond the age of 65 increased from less than a fifth in the 1960s to a quarter or more in most developed countries today.

UN DESA’s Population Division published the *World Population Ageing 2019 Highlights* on 10 October, as part of the celebration of the International Day of Older Persons at the UN Headquarters in New York. The *World Population Ageing Highlights 2019* presents the key findings of a larger and more comprehensive report on the same topic that will become available later this year.

The *Highlights* conclude with a set of evidence-based policy recommendations to promote the well-being of the growing number of older persons around the world in our collective efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Access *World Population Ageing 2019: Highlights* by UN DESA’s Population Division [here](#).

Water and sanitation for all: letting data lead the way



By Gilbert F. Hounbo, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Chair of UN-Water

The sixth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 6) aims to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030.

So, four years into the SDGs, how are we doing?

Not so well. According to UN-Water's 'SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018,' water pollution is worsening, water resource governance is weak and fragmented, and agriculture places enormous and increasing stress on freshwater supplies.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and UN Children (UNICEF) Joint Monitoring Programme confirms the bad news: 2.2 billion people lack safely managed drinking water services and 4.2 billion – well over half the world's population – still have no access to safely managed sanitation services, many of them living in rural areas and least developed countries (LDCs).

While the situation should be of deep concern to decision-makers, it amounts to a full-blown crisis for those directly affected.

Clearly, we need sound data to find out where we are failing and to help countries make informed decisions that can steer policies and direct finance to where the needs are greatest.

Happily, things are brighter in this respect. UN-Water's new [SDG 6 Data Portal](#) is the result of 18 months of development to integrate existing hydrological, environmental, social and economic information to show where progress is most needed.

But more must be done. Looking at the global picture, we see that country-monitoring systems need strengthening. These systems need more financial resources to hire staff skilled in data collection, analysis and communication.

Today, the average Member State is reporting only on five out of 11 of the SDG 6 indicators. The hope is that the SDG Data Portal will act as an incentive to collect more, standardized data. This information can then be used to measure progress, ensure accountability and generate political, public and private-sector support for further investments.

The Portal:

- Tracks overall progress towards SDG 6 at global, regional and national levels;
- Enables assessment and analysis of the state of water resources and linkages to other sectors;
- Raises awareness of water and sanitation issues to help catalyze action; and
- Encourages and improves SDG 6 monitoring and reporting at all levels.

I encourage you to start exploring the Portal: for example, you can find out how many people still lack safe drinking water and sanitation in your country. Are ecosystems in your region being protected and restored, or exploited and degraded? What is the level of water stress where you live?

Now and in the future, new information and communication technology gives us more and better data to improve our lives, and the SDG 6 Data Portal is UN-Water's contribution to a more evidence-based approach to international development.

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

Finding new support for graduating Least Developed Countries



“Many Least Developed Countries (LDCs) have implemented successful development policies,” said ECOSOC President Mona Juul as the Annual Ministerial Meeting of the Least Developed Countries took place in New York in September. “As a result, an increasing number of LDCs have graduated or are approaching graduation from the LDC category. While this is a cause for celebration, LDC graduation often raises anxiety [on possible implications of graduation], and thus enhancing graduation support should be essential to reduce such concerns,” she said.

Given the large number of LDCs expected to graduate in the next few years, UN DESA's Economic Analysis and Policy Division (EAPD) has recently launched a project on “New support measures for graduating Belt and Road LDCs” to identify targeted assistance measures and strengthen policy frameworks and institutional arrangements in six pilot LDCs: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal and Timor-Leste.

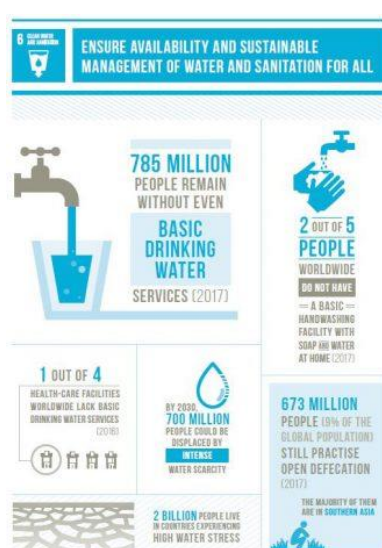
“[We need to find] better ways for the UN system and international partners to support graduating countries and to recommend improved graduation procedures [...]. Also, we should not forget how capacity development work can be undertaken in support of graduating and graduated countries,” UN DESA’s Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin said earlier this year when addressing the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP).

The new UN DESA project will strengthen analysis and support consultation processes between a range of actors as well as development and trading partners in each country. It will moreover attempt to contribute to the global discussion on support measures for graduating LDCs and to enhance their national capacity. Running until October 2022, the project is supported by the UN Peace and Development Fund, established with a generous contribution from the Government of China.

To further promote a smooth transition for graduating LDCs, the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP) earlier this year developed a set of proposals that focused mainly on the process, emphasizing that the international community’s support to graduating LDCs should be more timely and better coordinated. The issue of financial support will also be discussed in detail at an upcoming Expert Group Meeting on financing for graduating countries led by the Office of the Secretary-General on 11-12 November 2019.

More information on the UN DESA project is available through the LDC portal [here](#).

SDG 6 in numbers



Fresh water is a precious resource that is essential to human health, food and energy security, to poverty eradication and many other aspects of sustainable development.

Water-related ecosystems have always provided natural sites for human settlements, along with a wealth of ecosystem services. Yet, like other natural resources, water is under threat.

The demand for water has outpaced population growth, and half the world’s population is already experiencing severe water scarcity at least one month a year.

Most rivers in Africa, Asia and Latin America are more polluted now than they were in the 1990s. An

estimated 50 to 70 per cent of the world's natural wetland area has been lost over the last 100 years.

While substantial progress has been made in increasing access to clean drinking water and sanitation, billions of people—mostly in rural areas—still lack these basic services. In response, donors increased their aid commitments to the water sector by 37 per cent between 2016 and 2017.

Most countries have recognized the importance of better coordinating the use of water resources and have put in place integrated plans for their management. However, much more effort is needed to improve access to water and sanitation services, increase wastewater treatment, enhance water use efficiency, expand operational cooperation across transboundary water basins, and protect and restore freshwater ecosystems.

Access more data and information on the indicators for SDG 6 in the [SDG Progress Report 2019](#).

Where are the innovation leaders?



Global economic conditions continue to deteriorate, including where economic growth is needed the most – across most developing regions. Preliminary estimates by UN DESA reveal that the average GDP growth in developing economies could fall below 4 per cent in 2019, amid lingering fragilities in Argentina, Brazil and South Africa, and weaker economic conditions in Mexico, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

A range of diverse factors are causing the prolonged slump that has been affecting developing regions since 2015. The knock-on effects from the collapse in commodity prices and the impact of policy uncertainties on investor and consumer confidence have recently been exacerbated by the escalation in global trade tensions.

But the growth slowdown in developing countries is also rooted in structural factors. Many countries are being held back by a weak innovation base and limited technological capabilities. Progress on innovation has differed markedly across regions, with East Asia performing better than other developing regions, while Africa and South Asia continue to lag behind.

In many cases, lagging countries suffer from a limited number of scientists and engineers, and a mismatch between skills developed through the education system and those required by local industry. Moreover, public and private investments in research and development tend to be low and the cooperation between the private sector, universities and research institutions remains limited amid weak institutional frameworks.

Sustainable economic growth and development cannot be achieved without innovation, which should become a policy priority. While this poses an immense challenge, transforming innovation from a barrier to an engine for development is essential to drive a sustained rise in living standards.

More in-depth analysis on this and other regional impediments to economic growth and development are available in the [November Monthly Briefing on the World Economic Situation and Prospects](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

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| 4-8 November,
St. George's,
Grenada | Workshop on Environment Statistics and Climate Change
Statistics for the CARICOM Region |
| 11-12 November,
Lima, Peru | Workshop on Energy Statistics for Latin American and
Caribbean Countries |
| 19 November | World Toilet Day |
| 25-27 November,
Christ Church,
Barbados | Caribbean Regional Thematic Conference on managing a
statistical organization in times of change |
| 25-29 November,
Berline, Germany | Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the Internet Governance Forum
(IGF) |

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