



Building capacity to realize the global goals

Our world today faces unprecedented economic, social and environmental challenges. They are complex and closely connected. Countries need to address these challenges to move towards a sustainable future.

UN DESA partners on capacity development to support Member States in building integrated, evidence-based, inclusive and well-funded national strategies and plans to achieve sustainable development that ensure no one is left behind. How exactly does the department do that, and how is it able to extend its assistance to more than 75 countries?

In 2015, the world came together to adopt a set of landmark agreements – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Climate Accords, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development – that provide a roadmap to a more sustainable and prosperous future for all.

The realization of this vision calls for more coherent action across a wider scope of issues and the engagement of a broader range of stakeholders than ever before. A new set of capacities is needed to set this in motion.

Member States, especially developing ones, have been requesting the UN System to assist them in building or strengthening these capacities as they strive to translate the new vision into national reality.

“UN DESA has responded to this new demand with a fresh approach that is more strategic, integrated and longer-term in nature,” said Monica Nogara, Head of Programme Development at UN DESA’s Capacity Development Office. “In partnership with others, the Department can help Member States address capacity gaps in five key areas.

1. **Policy coherence** – strengthening national analytical and quantitative capacities to conduct cross-sectoral analyses and identify policy options that help achieve national goals. 2. **Social inclusion** – providing visibility to disadvantaged groups to give them a voice in national policymaking and implementation. 3. **Inclusive institutions** and integrated approaches – promoting institutions and mechanisms that support inclusive and integrated policies and public service delivery. 4. **Evidence-based policy** – modernizing statistical systems to increase national production and access to quality and disaggregated data for policy formulation and 5. **Means of implementation** – strengthening capacities of national systems to mobilize resources for sustainable development.

“Such support is provided through technical advice, training workshops, and expert group meetings at the regional and sub-regional levels as well as through on-line, open-source global knowledge platforms that provide access to a broad range of analytical tools, manuals, and best practices,” said Francois Fortier, Inter-Regional Advisor on Macroeconomic Development.

With a pool of about 50 staff members, including dedicated inter-regional advisors, with diverse expertise, and working with an array of strategic partners, UN DESA has been able to develop state-of-the-art tools and to adapt and scale-up their application across more than 75 countries, 29% of which are Least Developed Countries (LDCs), 13% Small Island Independent States, and 37% in Africa.

If you would like to learn more about UN DESA's tools, approach and projects, visit the [Capacity Development Office website](#).

HIGHLIGHTS



Youth Delegates raise their voices at the UN General Assembly

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are often heralded as the new social contract between the world's leaders and the people they represent. But given the 15-year time span of the 2030 Agenda, it is also a unique agreement across time.

“I see Sustainable Development Goals as a contract between generations,” said Clara Halvorsen who represents

Denmark as Youth Delegate to the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly. “Two years ago, the world leaders decided on a plan for how the world should look like in 2030. And in 2030, it will be us, the young people who take over. That's why we should be incorporated in the implementation of the Agenda 2030.”

This year, more than 30 countries have included youth delegates as part of their official delegation to the UN General Assembly. Many of them aged below 25, these inspiring young people represent their countries in UN meetings and informal negotiations, and provide input on youth-related issues.

In their impassioned statements to the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly, this year's youth delegates called on all countries to give young people a voice not only at the UN, but at every level of decision-making.

“Member States are at a crossroads: the choice is either to make decisions for youth or with youth,” said Giuseppina De Marco and Tommaso Murè, this year’s Youth Delegates from Italy. “By letting us, Youth Delegates, be here today and involving youth representatives in high-level decision-making processes, you have made the choice that will lead to a ‘more sustainable and inclusive development.’”

“Being surrounded by such a number of brilliant and vocal young people, my fellow youth delegates, is a reminder that we need to be given a seat at the table and a voice to be heard when it comes to the challenges that concern our common future,” said the 2017 Young Delegate from Slovenia, Sabina Carli.

The youth delegates were particularly concerned about the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2250, which recognizes the value of including youth in the peacebuilding process and defines youth not as victims or perpetrators, but as agents of change.

“I encourage all Member States to involve young people in peacebuilding efforts as well as decision making processes at all levels,” said this year’s Youth Delegate from Finland, Ilmi Salminen. “This is necessary if we want to achieve a peaceful and prosperous future. Inter-generational dialogue requires that more space is given to young people.”

The Youth Delegates see their age as an advantage, not a hindrance, for building better international relations. They find it easy to communicate with their peers, regardless of their cultural background, and their open-mindedness makes it easier for them to learn from each other.

“We have different channels of communication, we are familiar with the same things because of globalization and it’s easier for us to talk to each other and realize that we’re not so different from one another,” said the 2017 Youth Delegate from Serbia, Teodora Pavković.

“Our next step, when we go back to our country, is to share the experiences that we’ve learned here, at United Nations, with colleagues from different countries,” echoed Abdeldjalil Bachar Bong, one of three Youth Delegates from Chad this year. “This way we bring our friends at schools and universities a new way of thinking and new tools.”

One thing that stands out from the statements and conversations with the youth delegates is their determination to build a more just world and not repeat the mistakes of the generations before them. That is why they demand their voices be heard.

“We are often said to be the future of our countries. But we are also their presents,” said Teodora Pavković from Serbia in her statement. “And we are called upon – and willing! – to make contributions. Our representatives, therefore, should be included into national working groups and help devise SDG implementation plans.”

“I think as young people we can speak up, because we are the future,” added Denmark’s Clara Halvorsen. “We can make sure that the world we leave will be a more equal world.”

For more information:

[UN Youth Delegate Programme](#)



World Toilet Day 2017: Where does our poo go?

By 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals aim to reach everyone with adequate and equitable sanitation, as well as halve the proportion of untreated wastewater and increase recycling and safe reuse. For that to be achieved, everyone's poo needs to be contained, transported, treated and disposed of in a safe and sustainable way. To raise awareness of the importance of this four-step journey, 'wastewater' is the theme of World Toilet Day 2017 on 19 November.

For billions of people, there is no safe toilet or sanitation service to take away the waste, allowing poo to get out into the open air where it's spread by flies, making people seriously ill.

And even where there is some sanitation infrastructure, pipework can break or raw sewage can be emptied into the environment, contaminating farmland and water sources.

Dealing with our poo properly is not only about averting danger, it's also about seizing an opportunity. Poo, safely treated and reused, has massive potential as an affordable and sustainable source of energy, nutrients and water, as well as generating jobs and investment opportunities.

The poo journey

If there's one thing that unites humanity, it's the call of nature. But depending on where people live, it's not always possible to dispose of bodily waste safely and responsibly.

To achieve SDG 6 and ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, everyone's poo needs to take a 4-step journey:

- **Containment.** Poo must be deposited into a hygienic toilet and stored in a sealed pit or tank, separated from human contact.
- **Transport.** Pipes or latrine emptying services must move the poo to the treatment stage.
- **Treatment.** Poo must be processed into treated wastewater and waste products that can be safely returned to the environment.
- **Disposal or reuse.** Safely treated poo can be used for energy generation or as fertilizer in food production.

UN DESA's support to water and sanitation

UN DESA works towards achieving availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all in many ways, including by providing support to the High Level Panel on Water in its pursuit of SDG 6.

The department also supports the UN Secretary-General in carrying out the mandates of General Assembly resolution 71/222 which proclaims the period from 2018 to 2028 the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", to further

improve cooperation, partnership and capacity development in response to the ambitious 2030 Agenda.

For more information on the poo journey, World Toilet Day, and some that you can take to help achieve SDG 6: <http://www.worldtoiletday.info/>

GET INVOLVED



When it comes to climate action, small can be big

Nearly 50 years ago, Neil Armstrong landed on the Moon with the famous quote: “That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” Armstrong’s single pace made history and to this day it symbolizes the overcoming of a generational challenge. For our generation, that challenge is climate change, but this time everyone can make their small step right here on Earth.

The warming of our climate, which is causing extreme weather events, sea-level rise and bleaching of coral reefs, is severely affecting our lives and prosperity. That is why the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes Goal 13 – to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. The Goal calls for tackling climate change by transforming our energy, food, agriculture and forestry systems to ensure the increase of global temperature is stemmed.

In 2015, the world took an important step by adopting the Paris Agreement in 2015. Close to 200 countries came together and committed to address climate change. This year, the 23rd session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 23) will take place on 6-17 November in Bonn, Germany, under the presidency of Fiji, to advance the aims, ambitions and implementation of the Paris Agreement.

However, the governments alone cannot effectively fight climate change, if we all do not do our part. Here are some quick tips on how you can join the fight against climate change by making small steps of your own:

- Take public transportation instead of driving
- Purchase minimally packaged goods, and non-reusable containers
- Access e-service – get your bank statement, bills, etc. online
- Use a power strip and unplug it when not in use
- Share this article in social media with your family and friends and convince them to take action
- More tips can be found on the website of the [Sustainable Development Goals..](#)

All these small actions may seem insignificant, when we consider the billions of tonnes of greenhouse gases that humanity is pumping into the atmosphere. Yet, all these billions of tonnes are created by the billions of people living unsustainably. If we all change even the tiniest things, we can make a huge difference.

One small action for an individual, one giant leap for the environment. For climate change, small can be big.

For more information:

SDG Goal 13 on climate change
UN Climate Conference – COP 23
Lazy person's guide to saving the world
Download the SDGs in Action app

EXPERT VOICES



World Toilet Day – no laughing matter

Most people don't give much thought to what happens to their feces once they flush their toilet. Others have their faces flush with shyness, when the subject of toilet pops up. But for billions of people who still lack access to sanitation services, toilets are often a matter of life and death. Ahead of this World Toilet Day, UN DESA Voice speaks to Kate Medicott, Technical Officer at Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Health at the World Health Organization (WHO). WHO

coordinates this year's World Toilet Day campaign on behalf of UN-Water.

Next to the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty or World AIDS Day, the World Toilet Day might sound to some like a joke. Why is the UN so serious about it?

"It may sound like a joke, but it's really not. 4.5 billion people still lack safe toilets or sanitation services that take away the waste and safely treat it. That allows poo to contaminate our communities, waterways and even our food, making people seriously ill and, in worst case, killing them. Babies and children are the ones who are most affected and more than 360,000 children under the age of five die each year due to diarrhoea – a common and preventable disease caused by unsafe water and sanitation. Right now, we are in the midst of a cholera and acute watery diarrhoea outbreak in Yemen and the Horn of Africa, with over 750,000 people affected to date. This is how important safe sanitation for all is."

"Where the king goes alone," "the little ladies' room" or even "powder room" and "tea room" – the euphemisms we use for toilet show us just how uncomfortable we are discussing the subject. How is the UN approaching this touchy topic?

"Talking about a topic openly can often be a first step to breaking a taboo. In 2013, the former Secretary-General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon urged us to break the taboos and prioritize sanitation as a global development issue. This is the line we're following with the campaign for World Toilet Day. By talking about poo and pee, involving as many actors as possible and informing people, we believe we will promote a greater understanding and, hopefully, change."

Target 6.2 of the Sustainable Development Goal 6 calls for universal access to equitable sanitation and hygiene and an end to open defecation. Are we on track to achieving it?

“In 90 countries, progress towards basic sanitation is too slow, meaning they are not on track to reach universal coverage by 2030. Of the [4.5 billion people](#) who do not have safely managed sanitation, 2.3 billion still do not have basic sanitation services at home. Today, 600 million people share a toilet or latrine with other households, and 892 million people – mostly in rural areas – defecate in the open. Lack of sanitation also increases the risk of sexual violence against women, as they are exposed to attacks when they leave the house at night to defecate. It also makes girls more inclined to drop out of school when they reach puberty.”

What is this year’s World Toiled Day theme?

“This year’s theme is wastewater, which links it to the theme of the 2017 World Water Day, celebrated in March. We chose this theme mostly because of the huge issue we have with pollution. Today, 80 per cent of our wastewater just flows back to nature, polluting the environment and wasting valuable nutrients and other recoverable materials. We wanted to highlight this for World Toilet Day by asking the question of where does our poo go? Not everyone knows where their poo goes once it drops into the toilet and whether it’s harming or helping our health and the environment. Our poo needs to take a four-step journey to be safely treated and reused and this is what we want to inform people about on World Toilet Day.”

For more information:

[World Toilet Day](#)

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



Sophia the robot joins UN meeting

The future of everything took center stage at a joint event of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the UN General Assembly’s Second Committee on 11 October. But this was not your average UN meeting; neither were the panelists joining to discuss the role of artificial intelligence to help spur sustainable development. Among them was Sophia, the first ever robot to participate in an official UN meeting.

Artificial intelligence has the potential to fast-track progress on sustainable development. But at the same time, it poses a range of complex challenges, including ethical questions, human rights issues and security risks.

Gathering a number of expert panelists, the joint event on ‘[The future of everything](#) – sustainable development in the age of rapid technological change’, honed in on the many opportunities as well as challenges of technological advancement.

The moment that drew big applause during the day-long event came when Sophia, a humanoid robot, had a brief interaction with UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed.

To Ms. Mohammed's question about what the UN can do to help people in many parts of the world who have no access to the Internet or electricity, Sophia said "the future is already here. It's just not very evenly distributed [...]," quoting renowned science fiction writer William Gibson.

"If we are smarter and focused on win-win type of results, A.I. [artificial intelligence] could help proficiently distribute the world's existing resources like food and energy."

Sophia is Hanson Robotics' latest and most advanced robot. Sophia has also become a media sensation, having given numerous interviews to multiple media outlets, performed in concert, and even graced the cover of one of the top fashion magazines.

In her [opening speech](#), Ms. Mohammed warned that despite profound potential for accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), if technological progress is not managed well, it risks exacerbating existing inequalities.

"The influence of technology on our societies should be determined by the actions of us, humans, not by machines," she said. "Technology is here for us to explore and use for the benefit of all."

Addressing the event, ECOSOC President Marie Chatardová said that the long-term consequences of the deep technological changes underway, for economies and societies at large, are unknown. "We are only starting to see the benefits, but we do need to assess the risks of these technologies," she said.

Second Committee Chairman Sven Jürgenson of Estonia, said that AI-based solutions are taking his country's digital society to the next level.

Mr. Jürgenson said the Government is working on a full legal and cyber-risk management framework for using fully autonomous vehicles in regular road and traffic conditions. And door-to-door robot transport will reshape how goods are shipped and delivered locally.

"Today, Internet access is a social right in Estonia. Every Estonian resident has an electronic ID and nearly all public services are accessible online, including i-Voting in Estonian Parliamentary elections," he said.

"The development of e-Estonia has not happened in one day – it took us 17 years to start from changing legislation and creating our first e-solutions," he added.

For more information:

Joint Meeting of ECOSOC and the Second Committee on "The Future of Everything – Sustainable Development in the Age of Rapid Technological Change"

Watch the webcast of the event

Facebook live interview with Sophia the robot

VIDEO: Artificial intelligence and development

Keeping our promise to the ocean – from commitments to action



OCEAN ACTION #1

In June 2017, 193 Member States of the United Nations gathered at the first-ever Ocean Conference and committed to a set of ambitious measures to start reversing the decline of the ocean's health.

The Ocean Conference marked a global breakthrough in the sustainable management and conservation of the ocean, bringing the world one step closer to implementing the [Sustainable Development Goal 14](#). The conference resulted in the outcome document, [Our Ocean, Our Future: Call for Action](#), and close to 1,400 voluntary commitments for concrete action by governments, UN organizations, civil society, academia, the scientific community, and the private sector.

Now comes the time to turn these pledges into reality, to galvanize new partnerships, to inspire international cooperation and mobilize resources for ocean action.

In September 2017, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres appointed [Mr. Peter Thomson as his Special Envoy for the Ocean](#), aiming at galvanizing concerted efforts to follow up on the outcomes of the UN Ocean Conference in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, maintaining the momentum for action to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

To support implementation of the voluntary commitments, Mr. Peter Thomson, in collaboration with UN DESA, will be supporting Communities of Ocean Action among all stakeholders to spur further action and maintain the momentum generated by the first-ever UN Ocean Conference held in June 2017.

The new Ocean Action newsletter will be providing regular, bi-monthly updates on progress made across the globe to save our ocean. The first issue, detailing the advancements to conserve and restore the planet's mangroves is available [here](#).

Subscribe to the Ocean Action Newsletter [here](#).

The stories that shape the global economy



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After years of outflows, capital is finally returning to emerging economies, but how long can this last? Why are a growing tourism industry and world trade not all good news? What is contributing to economic growth in Africa and Latin America? You can find answers to these and many other questions in UN DESA's World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) Monthly Briefing.

Throughout the year, the Global Economic Monitoring Unit at UN DESA keeps their fingers on the global economic pulse through the WESP Monthly Briefing. The briefings, released on the second Monday of the month, analyse and identify the latest stories that shape the global economy and offer prognoses of future development.

On 12 December, the World Economic Situation and Prospects 2018 report, UN's flagship publication on current world economic conditions and expected trends will be launched in New York. The report is produced annually by UN DESA, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the five UN regional commissions. There will be regional launches happening in Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Beirut, Geneva, Moscow and New Delhi as well.

You can access the latest issues of the Monthly Briefings [here](#) and the full report [here](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

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|----------------------|---|
| 1 November, New York | High-Level Symposium “Global Energy Interconnection: Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals” |
| 1 November, New York | Expert Group Meeting on Integrated Approaches to International Migrations |
| 6-17 November, Bonn | UN Framework Convention on Climate Change COP 23 |
| 18-19 November, Doha | High-level Conference on Financing for Development and the Means of Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development |
| 19 November | World Toilet Day |

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