

VOICE

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Sustainable Development Goals – a new social contract

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Climate change, growing inequalities, the fourth industrial revolution, the sixth extinction and many other universal issues go beyond the coping capabilities of any single country, bloc or organization. Realizing this, all 193 UN Member States came together in 2015 to agree a worldwide pact on a scale never witnessed before in history – the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

“The SDGs are not your run-of-the-mill development strategy for big international organizations to fix the problems in the South,” said UN Assistant Secretary-General, UN DESA’s Thomas Gass in a recent interview. “The SDGs are the missing vision piece of the globalization puzzle.”

Among other duties, Mr. Gass coordinates the SDG Advocates programme – a project that brings together 17 outstanding personalities from the worlds of politics, sports, show business, social activism and academia – to help spread the word about the SDGs.

“If [global problems] don’t impact you specifically this year, they will next year or the year after that,” said Alaa Murabit, SDG Advocate, medical doctor and activist. “The world has gotten so small in that sense and we really need to be proactive and recognize that we’re a global community and we have to work together.”

“The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is too comprehensive and too ambitious to be implemented the same way we implement a classic development cooperation programme,” said Mr. Gass. “It needs to become a new social contract, based on the accountability of the leaders to their people, so the people need to know about it.”

“That is why the SDG Advocates were chosen by the UN Secretary-General – the SDG Advocate in chief – to help him ensure that their respective audiences know about the Goals. They are a diverse group of personalities who have a proven track record of tipping the scales on several important areas related to sustainable development.”

“Your government has made a promise that they will find solutions to those [global problems], so when you’re fighting at your most local level, you’re a part of a huge global effort and you can apply the global muscle to that local level,” said SDG Advocate, film producer and director, Richard Curtis.

So, what does it take to be a champion for the SDGs? According to Mr. Gass, “An SDG Advocate is someone who understands how the Sustainable Development Goals are different from anything else that preceded them, who understands what happened on the 25th of September 2015 when the leaders adopted this shared vision for humanity. And someone who has the courage and the audacity to communicate and to link their action to this shared vision.”

Nobel Prize-winning economist and SDG Advocate, Professor Muhammad Yunus certainly demonstrates the courage and audacity to face the global problems head-first and to inspire others to do the same.

“Ignore all those problems,” he advised young people during the recent UN General Assembly high-level week. “Create the world that you want! In the process, these problems will disappear. If you try to fix these enormous problems, you’ll never get out of it – they’ll suck you in. Design your own path and go after it!”

For more information:

[Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#)

[SDG Advocates](#)



UN's definitive report on the world economy to launch this month

Following a decade of economic crises and shocks – from the global financial crisis of 2008-2009, to the European sovereign debt crisis of 2010-2012, to the global commodity price realignment in 2014-2016 – is the global economy finally headed for a lasting recovery?

Although the world is currently witnessing stronger economic activity,

economic gains remain unevenly distributed across countries and regions, and many parts of the world are yet to restore a healthy growth rate.

The uneven pace of global economic recovery continues to raise concerns regarding prospects for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the year 2030. Little growth in per capita income is expected in several parts of Africa, Western Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The impacted regions combined are home to 160 million people living in extreme poverty. Without sustained, economic growth, the chances of bringing that number to zero remain slim. To achieve the goals of eradicating poverty and creating decent jobs for all, it is essential to address the longer-term structural issues that hold back a faster progress towards sustainable development.

What are these structural issues and can countries afford to address them now? What is the shape of the global economy and will it improve over the next two years? What should the world's development priorities be?

To find out, join the launch of the **World Economic Situation and Prospects 2018** – UN DESA's flagship report on the state of the world economy with a detailed global and regional economic outlook for 2018 and 2019.

Watch the launch live on 11 December 2017, 11 am EST at webtv.un.org

Following the launch, the report will be available for download at <http://bit.ly/wespreport>



Building accessible societies for all

Urban poverty, inequalities and exclusion often exist at the expense of sustainable development. The speed and scale of urbanization brings challenges for all family members such as youth, particularly young girls and women, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and older persons. To meet these future challenges that the growing urban population is facing, city leaders must move quickly and plan accordingly.

It is against this backdrop that UN DESA's Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) is organizing the event "Building Future Societies for All." It is part of the Expert Discussion Series: Towards inclusive, accessible and resilient societies, and takes place in the lead up to the 56th Commission for Social Development.

The goal is to create a platform where civil society and governments work together on poverty eradication strategies and on creating innovative public policy frameworks to build resilient societies and to shape the future of urban communities.

"Building future societies should aim at advancing social, cultural and economic growth for everyone," said Daniela Bas, Director of DSPD, ahead of the event which takes place at UN Headquarters on 1 December 2017.

Considering the increasing economic importance of travel and leisure worldwide, the tourism industry offers a unique opportunity to shape future cities by ensuring social inclusiveness, employment and poverty eradication. Bearing in mind that 2017 is the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, the event will explore the benefits and contributions of pro-poor tourism, to encourage stakeholders to better identify strategies for building prosperous, inclusive and resilient societies for all, leaving no one behind.

The event, co-sponsored by the United Nations World Tourism Organization and the Permanent Missions of Antigua and Barbuda, Bulgaria, Ecuador, European Delegation and San Marino, is also part of a day-long series of activities to commemorate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This and other events to celebrate the day will be broadcast live via [UN Web TV](#).

To follow the conversation via social media, the online audience is encouraged to use the hashtags #FutureSocieties4All and #IDPD.

For more information: [International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#)



Be part of solving data challenges at the UN World Data Forum 2018

Calling all data geeks! Data experts and users from government, business, academia and civil society are invited to harness the power of data to meet the world's sustainable development challenges at the next [UN World Data Forum](#), taking place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 22 to 24 October 2018. The 2018 Forum is building on the

initial success of the [first ever UN World Data Forum](#), held earlier this year in Cape Town, South Africa.

The Forum aims to foster collaboration between users and producers of data from diverse backgrounds, to propose solutions and showcase successful initiatives that improve availability, access and usability of data for decision making at all levels. It also seeks to demonstrate how investment in data and statistics translates into better development outcomes for all.

An open call for proposals for sessions at the 2018 Forum has been issued by its Programme Committee, a group of data leaders from various sectors that is putting together the Forum's content and outcomes.

Sessions should relate to the Forum's [key thematic areas](#), including new approaches to capacity development for better data; collaboration and partnerships between national statistical offices and non-traditional data producers; leaving no one behind by capturing data on vulnerable groups; boosting data literacy; and building trust in data and statistics through data principles and good governance.



The criteria for sessions also include innovation and concrete experiences and recommendations for the production and use of data; and balance across different data communities, geographic regions and gender. Young data leaders are especially encouraged to contribute to the Forum with their energy and creativity.

Please visit undataforum.org to submit your session proposal. The deadline is 31 January 2018. The final Programme will be approved by the UN Statistical Commission's High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building (HLG-PCCB).

For more information: [UN World Data Forum](#)



The UN Public Service Awards – what does it take to earn the highest accolade?

Every year, UN DESA grants the most prestigious international recognition of excellence in public service – the UN Public Service Awards. Institutions from around the world are honoured for their creative achievements that lead to more effective and responsive public administrations. As the call for nominations to the 15th edition of the Awards opens this month, we ask Stefania Senese, Governance and Public Administration Officer in UN DESA’s Division for Public Administration and Development Management, why public service is so important.

Who are public servants and why do we need them?

“Public servants are the men and women who dedicate their lives and careers to serve their fellow citizens. They are the officials who run the day-to-day matters of government and design, implement, and deliver public services to people. Without them, governments would not be able to function. They are the essential link that allows people to access the services they need to improve their lives.”

How is the public servant profession different from any other occupation?

“A public servant is selfless – it is about service to others with no regard for personal gain. Their objective is to improve the lives of the people and it is the people that public servants are ultimately accountable to. A public servant works for the common good of their fellow citizens, the people and the country. Their profession is, by its very nature, public, which means they work for everyone, especially for the poorest and the most vulnerable. That is why some people refer to public service as a vocation rather than a profession or occupation.”

UN DESA runs an award programme for outstanding public service institutions from around the world. What qualities are you looking for in such institutions and teams? Why?

“We look for creative institutions and initiatives that improve peoples’ lives and support the Sustainable Development Goals and the principle of leaving no one behind. These ambitious Global Goals can only be achieved with the public servants on board, encouraging innovation in public institutions and helping people living in poverty. There are no shortcuts to effective, inclusive and accountable delivery of social services. The only way leads through having the best talent in the public sector. [The UN Public Service Awards programme](#) rewards teams of civil servants that introduce innovation in the public sector. By shining the spotlight at the most innovative and efficient approaches, it helps public sectors from different countries learn from each other’s experiences.”

What makes a great public servant?

“A great public servant is someone who listens to the views of different people, tries to understand their needs and works tirelessly towards enhancing their lives. They are motivated and resilient and demonstrate an inclusive attitude. A great public servant is never afraid to innovate and change.

Past winners of the UN Public Service Awards are inspiring examples of such people. Particularly those, who work to empower and elevate the role of women in the society and boost their socio-economic opportunities. From an initiative that uses conditional cash transfers to prevent child marriage in India, to a team that fights fraud against senior citizens in the UK, these dedicated, selfless people stand for all that’s best in public service.”

For more information: [UN Public Service Day and Award](#)

Photo credit: 2017 UNPSA Winner Argentina

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



High-level Conference in Qatar concludes with “Doha Messages” on financing sustainable development

The High-level Conference on Financing for Development and the Means of Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was organized by the State of Qatar in cooperation with UN DESA, concluded on 19 November. After two days of stimulating discussions, UN DESA’s Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin, presented a set of ten “Doha Messages” aimed at strengthening the coherence and cooperation for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development.

The two-day Conference attracted more than 100 high-level participants representing 58 countries from all regions of the world. Representatives of international financial institutions, the private sector, civil society and academia were also present. In the spirit of the Conference, multilateralism was identified as the fundamental basis for the achieving peaceful and sustainable development.

As the first joint preparatory meeting for the 2018 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development follow-up (FfD Forum) and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), the Conference served to strengthen the coherence and coordination of these follow-up mechanisms.

Mr. Liu highlighted that the Conference “tested a new approach to support the global follow-up and review mechanisms, one that combines both financing for development

and the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We built a bridge that connects policy-makers and other stakeholders.”

During the ministerial round tables on the first day of the Conference, there was a general agreement on the key role of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Agenda for the achievement of the SDGs. Participants emphasized that financing the SDGs will require a mix of all available sources of finance – domestic and international, public and private. In addition, they agreed that the SDGs can create new business opportunities, which will balance profitability and sustainability.

On the second day, the Conference discussed the SDGs selected for in-depth review at the 2018 HLPF. Participants called for scaling up investments in water and energy infrastructure, while ensuring resource efficiency and environmental resource management.

A dedicated session focused on the underutilized potential of sovereign wealth funds. The meeting also addressed the specific challenges of cities, which are at the forefront of implementing many SDGs, and elaborated on the role of science, technology and innovation in the context of ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns and the protection of terrestrial ecosystems. Considering the regional context, participants developed recommendations on how to strengthen the contribution of Islamic finance to the SDGs.

At the closing session, Mr. Liu presented the ten “Doha Messages” from the Conference. It was recognized that the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Agenda had spurred an unprecedented shift in the governance of the economy, the environment and the society within and across countries. Sharing of national experiences was considered crucial for a tighter connection between local knowledge and global norm-setting.

It was further stressed that domestic resource mobilization for long-term development did not have to come at the cost of urgent short-term needs. National development banks, as well as blended finance, have strong potential to address shortfalls in current funding. In addition, international development cooperation, including meeting the ODA commitments, remains essential to support those most in need and to foster the continued dialogue among all stakeholders.

Mr. Liu reiterated that the ten “Doha Messages” will feed into the preparations for the third ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development and the High-level Political Forum in 2018. He concluded that the United Nations has a key role to play in supporting Member States to realize the vision reinforced by the “Doha Messages”, as well as in addressing the full range of interrelated challenges.

For more information:

High-level Conference on Financing for Development and the Means of Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Shaping your digital future



The Internet has become an integral part of our lives over the past decade: from education, personal finance and effective public services, to social networking and health care. The impact of the Internet on the world today is undeniably significant.

Meanwhile, more than half the world still lacks access to the Internet. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)'s 2016 *Measuring the Information Society Report*, an estimated 10% or less of people in least developed countries have Internet access, compared with more than 80% in developed countries.

The world is moving rapidly towards a digital future where the Internet determines how people live and communicate with others. The digital divide, if left unaddressed, widens gaps among regions and genders, and leaves many behind.

The 12th annual meeting of the [Internet Governance Forum \(IGF\): Shape Your Digital Future!](#) will take place from 18 to 21 December in Geneva, Switzerland. Drawing on its location in Geneva this year, it represents an invaluable opportunity for strengthening engagement between the IGF's multistakeholder participants and the international community.

"Information and communications technology can advance human rights, sustainable development and peace," UN Secretary-General António Guterres noted during the 2017 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum. "With mobile phones, farmers can monitor prices. Refugees can let their families know they are safe. Health workers can respond to emergencies".

This IGF meeting aims to facilitate discussions on how Internet opportunities can be maximized and challenges addressed. It gives developing countries the same opportunity as wealthier nations to engage in the debate on Internet governance and promotes their participation in existing institutions and arrangements. Ultimately, the involvement of all stakeholders, from both developed and developing countries, is necessary for the future development of the Internet.

The 12th IGF will discuss some of the most pressing Internet Governance issues today: Connectivity and Access; Impact of the Internet on Sustainable Development and

Economic Growth; Human Rights Online; Gender Issues; Cybersecurity; Multistakeholder Collaboration at National, Regional and Global Levels; and Emerging Technologies, and Trends such as Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Fakenews and Virtual Reality; and many others. These discussions will act as inputs toward the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which relies on robust and strategic use of ICTs and sound Internet policies.

Moreover, the 2017 IGF will include a series of 'firsts' in the meeting's history: the highest number of sessions organized by Governments and intergovernmental organizations (including UN Women, OHCHR, UNESCO, UNCTAD, the World Meteorological Organization – WMO, and the World Intellectual Property Organization – WIPO), the development of 'Geneva messages' to provide succinct overviews of the messages emerging from the IGF's main sessions, and the overwhelming popularity of the 'Emerging Issues' subtheme, on which the highest number of sessions focus this year.

With its mandate renewed by the UN General Assembly in December 2015, the IGF has consolidated its position as a platform for bringing together members of various stakeholder groups as equals. While there is no negotiated outcome, the IGF informs and inspires those with policy-making powers in both the public and private sectors. Delegates will hold discussions, exchange information and share good practices with each other at the annual meeting for collectively shaping the digital future.

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

UN awards US \$1 million for Bangladesh solar entrepreneurship initiative to aid rural electrification



Two companies in Bangladesh received the UN DESA US \$1 million 2017 UN Energy grant at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 21 November in recognition of a novel project to spur solar entrepreneurship. The two companies, Grameen Shakti and ME SOLshare, received the grant for their joint project that will allow villagers to secure more solar power, save money through flexible energy access, and generate income from trading electricity.

The project will enable rural Bangladeshi villagers to become solar entrepreneurs by creating an interconnected platform where solar home system users and non-users can exchange electricity.

In today's world, more than 1 billion people globally, mainly in rural areas, live without electricity. Providing access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy is crucial to enable essential health services, gender equality, economic growth, quality education, and to avoid the suffering and death of millions from indoor air pollution resulting from lack of clean cooking technologies. Clean energy is vital to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and leaving no one behind requires providing energy access for all.

The project's bottom-up mini grids seek to transform solar home systems into an income-generating asset. Its approach leverages existing resources to create a platform fueled by solar with numerous business opportunities for the villagers and with potential for replication throughout Bangladesh and under-electrified regions across the rest of the world.

The partnership estimates that the grant money will enable them to establish a minimum of 100 smart grids resulting in at least 15,000 beneficiaries. But the impact of the grant is going to be greater, as it is likely to inspire more such initiatives.

"Grameen Shakti and SOLshare are deeply honored that our innovative idea of creating a countrywide platform where villagers can share their solar electricity among each other and become smart entrepreneurs has been selected as the winner of the 2017 Powering the Future We Want Grant Challenge by UN DESA," the winning partnership said in a statement.

"This not only recognizes our innovation and contribution to the path of sustainable Access to Energy for all Bangladeshis, but also entrusts us to excel it to the next level to create the platform for greater leaps of success. We believe this award also underlines the transformation the global energy sector is undergoing to a decentralized, decarbonized, democratized and digitalized one, where Bangladesh, through the great efforts taken by the Bangladesh Government through the Infrastructure Development Company Limited, has already set a great example."

The grant money will be used to scale up and replicate peer-to-peer solar mini grids, and to leverage the electricity sharing grid infrastructure to power electric rickshaws, run solar water pumps, energy efficient fridges and other appliances, with the potential to strengthen village prosperity and encourage mutual benefits.

"Energy is the golden thread that connects all the Sustainable Development Goals," UN Deputy-Secretary-General Amina Mohammed said in a written statement read out on her behalf during the ceremony. "Achieving SDG7 on energy and transition to sustainable energy can unlock vast economic growth in all regions and for all people, while significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions," she emphasized.

UN DESA's Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin said the "Powering the Future We Want" programme is a "creative partnership that connects the intergovernmental work at UN Headquarters to action on the ground." He added, "Over the past years, this Energy Grant has proved to be valuable in raising awareness, building capacity, and recognizing ingenuity in promoting sustainable energy."

For more information: [UN DESA Energy Grant](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 1 December** International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- 12 December** Launch of the World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP)
- 12-14 December, Manila** Regional Workshop on the Production of Statistics on Asset Ownership from a Gender Perspective through Household Surveys
- 18 December** International Migrants Day
- 18-21 December, Geneva** 12th annual meeting of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

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