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## Advancing the global goals together

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"The multilateral system is the best we've got. There is no other system that can help us to deal with our global problems," says Bob Rae, [President of the Economic and Social Council](#) and Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations. As the international community is getting ready to convene for the 2025 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development this month, Ambassador Rae stresses the opportunities for multilateral action.

"The Pact for the Future, as well as the SDG Political Declaration of 2023, have given us the chance to define a common vision to advance sustainable development. Now is the time to reaffirm our collective commitment to the 2030 Agenda and to take decisive action to address today's interlocking crises," says Mr. Rae.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are shared pathway to building an inclusive, peaceful, thriving and healthy world for all. We must act now, and act boldly. With only five years remaining, we cannot afford to lose momentum on our 2030 promise. The time for words has passed, now is the time for action.

This call to action comes at a moment of global urgency. The world is facing multiple, overlapping crises—from conflict and economic slowdown to rising inequalities, and an accelerating climate emergency. The implementation of the SDGs has become more critical than ever. Alarming, acute hunger reached a record high in 2025 with [343 million people experiencing severe food insecurity](#). According to the United Nations, the number of [forcibly displaced people reached 122.1 million by the end of April 2025](#).

“Urgent action is critical to reverse alarming trends and consolidate hard-won gains,” said UN Secretary-General António Guterres. “While progress has been uneven and limited on several Goals, notable achievements across regions and countries demonstrate that change is possible.”

Even though extreme poverty has declined around the world despite the profound impact of the global pandemic, there are still over 700 million people living in extreme poverty, and the risk of falling into, or back into, poverty remains high, driven by compounded shocks and crises.

This year’s [UN Ocean Conference](#), [Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development](#), [Second World Summit for Social Development](#), and the [High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development \(HLPF\)](#) provide important opportunities to strengthen and revitalize multilateralism. In an increasingly interconnected world, these global gatherings serve as essential platforms for fostering inclusive, coordinated, and effective international cooperation for both people and the planet.

As UN DESA’s Under-Secretary-General Li Junhua said, “bold actions are essential to turn the corner and show the world that multilateralism can still deliver.”

### **Countdown to 2030: How the HLPF is turning commitment into action and impact**

On the cusp of the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which launched the [Voluntary National Reviews \(VNRs\)](#), thirty-seven countries will present bold actions they have taken to advance the SDGs at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, to be held on 14-23 July at UN Headquarters in New York.

Under the theme, *Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for leaving no one behind*, the HLPF will review in depth Goals 3 (good health and well-being), 5 (gender equality), 8 (decent work and economic growth), 14 (life below water) and 17 (partnerships for the goals) will be reviewed in depth.

The HLPF will also feature a series of [special events](#) and close to 190 side events ([on-site](#), [off-site](#) and [virtual](#)) bringing together governments, international organizations, the private sector and other key stakeholders engaged in the SDGs implementation.

Get the latest event updates on the HLPF website [here](#) and follow live via [UN Web TV](#).





## Meet the experts helping chart a course to a more sustainable future

When tackling the world's biggest challenges — from deepening inequalities and economic uncertainty to the climate crisis — it helps to have some

of the sharpest global minds at the table. That's the role of the UN High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs (HLAB), a group of 22 distinguished thought leaders in fields such as economics, finance, demography, the environment, and gender equality.

Convened by UN DESA, this diverse group includes former Heads of State, a Nobel Laureate, former senior government officials and intellectual leaders from all regions. They offer independent, cross-disciplinary insights to help shape the UN thinking on sustainable development and bring us closer to a world that leaves no one behind.

The HLAB recently launched its third term with a multi-day session in Bangkok, Thailand. These meetings, held twice a year, are led by UN DESA Under-Secretary-General Li Junhua and include participation from the Principals of the UN Regional Commissions and UNCTAD, among other special guests. Key takeaways are shared with senior UN leadership—including the Secretary-General—to inform decision-making in support of sustainable development.

But the HLAB's impact goes beyond internal discussions.

Through the **UN DESA Global Policy Dialogue Series**, HLAB members engage and share their expertise directly with the public—from civil society, students, policymakers and people working toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In Bangkok, members participated in an interactive policy dialogue at Chulalongkorn University titled "Converging Crises, Shared Solutions: Applying Lessons from Asia and the Pacific to Global Challenges," showcasing SDG good practices for an online and in-person audience.

Before the next HLAB meeting this fall, many of them will participate in Policy Dialogues alongside major UN events in July, including the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4) and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). By connecting global expertise with inclusive dialogue, HLAB is helping to turn big-picture goals into concrete actions and lighting the way toward a more sustainable future for all.

*For the full list of HLAB members, please visit [the HLAB website](#). To register for the upcoming Policy Dialogues at FFD4 and HLPF, please visit the [Policy Dialogues website](#).*



## 4 things you should know about the latest data on SDG progress

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This month, the world will come together at the [High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#) (HLPF) to assess where we stand in our joint efforts to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Where are

we advancing, and where are we falling behind? To guide this work, UN DESA's Statistics Division is launching the latest Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025. Here are 4 things you need to know.

### 1. The report provides a comprehensive picture of global progress

With only five years left to achieve the SDGs, the report provides a comprehensive picture of global progress and gives readers a compelling reminder of why the Goals matter now more than ever for our shared future. 10 years into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the report highlights notable achievements in some key areas: new HIV infections have dropped by 39 per cent since 2010; malaria prevention efforts have saved 12.7 million lives; and 110 million more children and youth are in school now than in 2015. Internet access has surged 70 per cent since 2015 and electricity now reaches 92 per cent of the world's population. These are numbers reflect real progress made and real lives transformed.

### 2. Data reveals a harsh reality for many

At the same time, the report reveals some harsh realities. One in 11 people still suffer from hunger, and billions lack access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene. Gender inequality persists with women performing 2.5 times as many hours per day of unpaid care work as men. The global landscape is growing more challenging: escalating conflicts, growing geopolitical tensions, record-breaking global temperatures, unsustainable debt burdens, and a staggering \$4 trillion annual financing gap that hinders progress in developing countries.

### 3. Scaled up actions and solutions can advance progress

Despite these obstacles, the message is clear: progress is possible if we scale up solutions and build on hard-won gains. Grounded in the latest evidence, the 2025 edition of the report will help shape policy discussions at the HLPF and guide evidence-based decisions to get the SDGs back on track.

### 4. Follow the report launch on 14 July to get the latest SDG data

UN DESA will launch this flagship report on the first day of the [High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#) on 14 July. Stay tuned for the launch event and be sure to check out the complete report which will be available at 12:30 pm EDT on 14 July 2025 here: [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025](#)





## Culture shift on gender equality required to achieve sustainable development

*By Violet Eudine Barriteau, former Principal and Pro Vice-Chancellor Professor Emerita of the University of West Indies Cave Hill Campus, Member of the UN High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs (HLAB) and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).*

Countries worldwide confront intersecting, often contradictory conditions in overcoming gender inequalities and achieving sustainable development. No country argues women and girls are irrelevant to its social, cultural, political and economic well-being. However, they differ on what qualifies as acceptable circumstances for half of humanity, resulting in girls and women continuing to suffer wide-ranging discriminations.

While all countries are dedicated to developing sustainably, some remain reluctant to alter policies and practices that harm girls and women. These countries do not sufficiently examine how promoting gender equality advances achieving the very Sustainable Development Goals they desire. Instead, they maintain that removing punitive legislation and prohibiting harmful practices, while introducing remedial laws and corrective policies, would violate their culture. Culture is not an impenetrable, immovable wall. Instead, culture offers a valuable, vibrant and dynamic gateway for States, the UN, and civil society organizations, working collaboratively to organize dialogues on how best to tackle gender inequalities.

Gender inequalities include: unequal pay for work of the same value; limited or no employment opportunities; poor provision of health care; no role in communal, regional or national decision-making; limited educational opportunities; no opportunity to participate in recreational or professional sport; no safe public spaces for leisure, sexual harassment, gender-based violence; and women and girls undertaking an unequal share of domestic and care work. Dialogues should emphasize that women and girls experience disproportionately the impact of conflicts, climate change and new technologies. The dialogues should generate equal opportunities for women and girls to access education, healthcare, housing, transportation, employment and the fair distribution of income as affirmed by Article 8 of the [Declaration on the Right to Development](#).

Working with the respective cultures, these dialogues must be inclusive, respectful and consultative. They should generate greater awareness of gender equality and its benefits to families, communities and countries when women and girls are treated as integral, valued members of societies. Countries should lead on creating culturally sensitive approaches that devise multiple outreach strategies through listening to the concerns of women and girls. The involvement of women's organizations, UN agencies, universities, trade unions, and employers' associations are all critical to explaining the linkages between development policies, programmes and projects, and gender equality.

These consultations should demonstrate that when women participate in decision-making, countries and communities enjoy stronger social cohesion and expanded economic activity. When women participate economically, GDP increases, quality of life improves, and States enjoy greater economic, political and social stability. When women and girls experience gender-based violence and gender discrimination (GBV&D), it robs societies of stability and cohesion. When violence, negative views about their relevance, or workplace discrimination, prevent women from participating equally in the workforce, macroeconomic activity is reduced. In many cases, GBV&D mushrooms into economic violence.

When States do not confront GBV&D, through legislation, policies, programmes, and supportive structures, women are not only harmed, but are often unable to work, earn a living or undertake household work. This is economic violence. This also works against achieving sustainable development. Besides experiencing unfair employment practices such as being bypassed for training, promotion, equal pay, and forced to endure a range of sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination, States can unwittingly perpetuate an additional layer of gender discrimination by not addressing the complaints of women and girls. When States do not provide legislative protection, when there is an absence of policies, monitoring mechanisms, and supportive structures to provide redress and shelter, States compound existing gender inequalities.

Development partners must work together to correct the misconception that pursuing policies that benefit women's economic activity is a form of undeserved charity, working against men and families. Improving women's economic participation delivers benefits to women, their families and their countries. Investing in enhancing women's economic

engagement, promoting and protecting their economic participation is required for sustainable development.

Women and girls have a right to participate as full and equal members of their societies. Viewing women as a marginalized group in need of State welfare transfers, ignores the facts that when women earn more income, or are more productive in economic sectors, economic and social activities within countries increase. Women build or repair houses, maintain homes, buy cars or other means of transport, invest in or start businesses, plant food crops and raise livestock. They support households, educate children, run their businesses and assist their spouses emotionally and financially. These activities contribute social, cultural and economic value.

In deploying culture as a gateway to introducing improvements in the lives of women and girls, States should emphasize the widespread social and economic benefits of recognising women as equal citizens and advancing achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

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



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