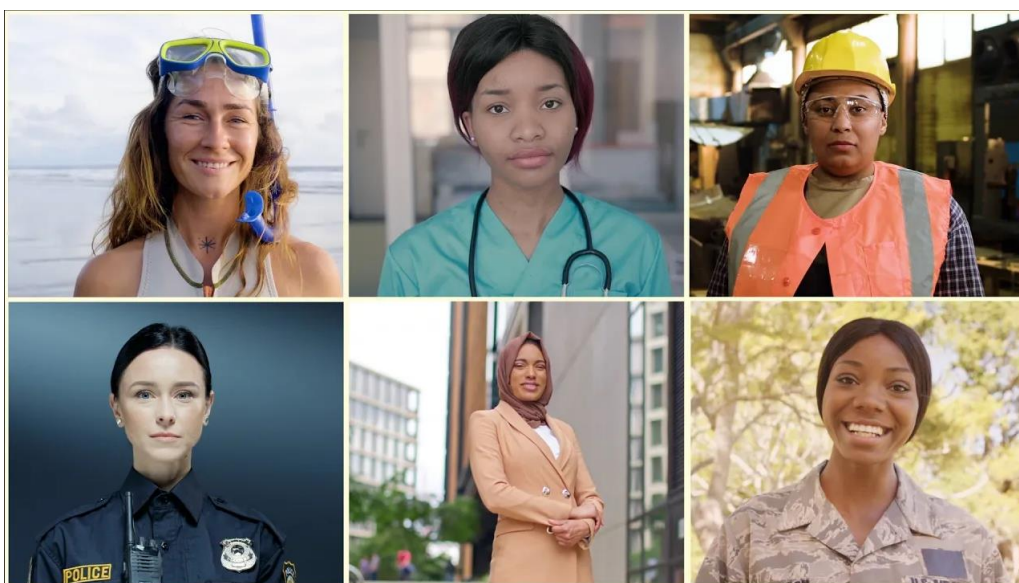


VOICE

— UN DESA —

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER, VOL. 29, NO. 10 – OCTOBER 2025



What the data tell us about equality between women and men

The newly released Gender Snapshot 2025 paints a nuanced picture of progress towards gender equality. On one hand, there have been historic gains: girls are more likely to complete school than ever before, and maternal mortality fell by nearly 40 per cent between 2000 and 2023. Women's participation in climate negotiations has doubled. In the past five years alone, 99 positive legal reforms have been enacted to dismantle discrimination.

Yet significant setbacks persist. If current trends continue, 351 million women and girls could still be living in extreme poverty by 2030. In 2024, nearly 64 million more women than men faced moderate or severe food insecurity, with anaemia among women aged 19-45 years projected to rise from 31 per cent today to 33 per cent in 2030. Women spend on average 2.5 times as many hours on unpaid care and domestic work as men. Only 30 per cent of managerial roles globally are held by women – a pace of change so slow that parity remains nearly a century away.

At the same time, targeted investment can be transformational. Closing the gender digital divide alone could add \$1.5 trillion to global GDP by 2030. Accelerated action and interventions focused on care, education, the green economy, labour markets and social protection could unlock an estimated \$342 trillion in cumulative economic returns by 2050.

The report's main message is clear: gender equality is more than a moral imperative; it is an economic and social necessity. The 2030 deadline to meet the Sustainable Development Goals is fast approaching, and the next five years will determine whether the world seizes this opportunity – or allows hard-won gains to slip away.

Read the complete report, published by UN DESA and UN Women, here: [The Gender Snapshot 2025](#)



EXPERT VOICES



Sharing benefits of transformation broadly, leaving no one behind

Preparations are ramping up for the Second World Summit for Social Development taking place in Doha in less than two months. Expected to gather leaders from around the world, the Summit will seek ways to accelerate social progress and continue efforts to put people at the center of sustainable development. We spoke with UN DESA's Neil Pierre about this milestone event and what he hopes it will achieve.

It's been 30 years since the landmark World Summit on Social Development was convened in Copenhagen, Denmark. Reflecting on the past three decades, what progress have we made and what more do we need to do as inequalities have risen?

"Since the 1995 World Summit on Social Development, the world has seen major progress in poverty reduction. The share of people living in extreme poverty fell from 33 per cent in 1995 to 8.5 per cent in 2024, and over one billion people have escaped poverty. However, progress has slowed sharply since 2019, with many at risk of sliding back.

Inequalities remain a serious challenge. 65 per cent of the world's population lives in countries where income inequality has increased since the 1990s. Wealth is highly concentrated, with the richest 10 per cent holding 76 per cent of global wealth, while the poorest half owns only two per cent. Labour income shares have declined, and gaps in education and health outcomes persist. Children in the richest households are far more likely to avoid stunting and attend school compared to those in the poorest households, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

Social protection remains uneven: nearly half of the world's people lack coverage, and in low-income countries, fewer than 10 per cent have access. High-income countries are

close to universal coverage, but developing nations lag far behind, leaving the most vulnerable exposed to poverty and climate shocks.

In short, poverty has declined, but progress is fragile. Inequalities, gaps in access to education and health, and weak social protection systems show how much remains to be done.”

What outcomes and commitments can we expect from the Second World Summit for Social Development in Doha? How will this Summit move beyond the 1995 Copenhagen commitments to address today's challenges of digital transformation, climate change and rising inequalities?

“The Second World Summit in Doha will deliver a Political Declaration reaffirming global commitments to social development. Member States recognize the urgency of tackling poverty, unemployment, and exclusion, while addressing structural causes and consequences in line with human rights.

The Declaration builds on the Copenhagen commitments by reaffirming the three pillars of social development: poverty eradication, decent work, and social integration. It emphasizes their interdependence and the need for enabling environments that allow them to be pursued together. It links social development directly with peace, security, and human rights, underscoring that one cannot exist without the others.

The Declaration also reaffirms the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, with a promise to “leave no one behind.” It acknowledges today’s realities, including climate change, digital transformation, and widening inequalities, and calls for holistic approaches to eradicate both extreme and multidimensional poverty. It highlights resilience, inclusion, and combating the feminization of poverty.

Finally, it commits to inclusive, sustainable economic growth, full employment, decent work for all, and cohesive societies grounded in solidarity, equality, and human dignity.”

How can we harness new tools—such as digital participation, community-led innovations, and inclusive governance platforms—to make multilateralism truly people-centered?

“The Summit will highlight how digital participation, innovation, and inclusive governance can help achieve people-centered multilateralism. Building on the Pact for the Future, it will stress the role of stakeholders in harnessing transformative technologies to advance social development.

Investment will be a key focus, including international cooperation and South-South collaboration, to support developing countries in poverty eradication and social inclusion. Discussions will call for equitable access to markets, investments, and technologies, while boosting productivity, diversification, and digital innovation.

Youth employment and skills development will be central. The Summit will promote policies that expand access to education, vocational training, lifelong learning, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and universal social protection. This also includes addressing informal work, ensuring fair wages, safe conditions, and full respect for workers’ rights.

A major priority will be closing digital divides within and between countries. The Summit will promote safe and affordable access to digital infrastructure, public goods, and emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence. At the same time, it will stress responsible governance to prevent harm and risks.

By linking technology, governance, and social inclusion, the Summit aims to ensure that the benefits of transformation are shared broadly, leaving no one behind.”

For more information: [Second World Summit for Social Development](#)

THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW



7 ways UN DESA boosts change through multilateral action

With just five years remaining to achieve the 2030 Agenda, the world stands at a crossroads. The past year has brought unprecedented challenges—from converging crises, rising geopolitical tensions to persistent inequalities that have tested our collective resolve and threatened progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Yet, this period has also sparked bold innovation, renewed partnerships, and fresh momentum for multilateral action.

UN DESA's annual [Highlights 2025 report](#) captures seven transformative ways the Department has supported Member States and partners to drive SDG progress during the 79th session of the General Assembly.

1. Accelerating action for the SDGs

Amidst global uncertainty, UN DESA has served as the intergovernmental nexus of the UN development pillar. The Department supported Member States through pivotal moments, including the adoption of the Pact for the Future at the Summit of the Future, revitalizing global cooperation. UN DESA also supported the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), advancing SDG localization, science and technology innovation, and multistakeholder partnerships.

2. Reducing poverty and inequality

UN DESA has called for a bold new global policy consensus to leave no one behind. As reflected in the [World Social Report 2025](#), the Department outlined pathways to universal social protection, decent work, and inclusive institutions. Its initiatives have empowered marginalized communities, advanced disability inclusion, and promoted economic models designed to leave no one behind.

3. Ensuring sustainable financing

Addressing the heart of the sustainable development crisis, UN DESA played a pivotal role in reshaping the global financing landscape. The historic Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in Sevilla, Spain brought together world leaders to adopt the landmark Sevilla Commitment. Breakthrough achievements in international tax cooperation and tailored support for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have opened new avenues for sustainable investment.

4. Making data count

Robust, high-quality data remains the foundation of effective policymaking. UN DESA's critical role in setting global standards, launching the 2030 World Population and Housing

Census Programme, and mainstreaming gender perspectives in official statistics has enabled countries to monitor and accelerate SDG progress with evidence-based solutions.

5. Strengthening national institutions and accountability

UN DESA has strengthened governance by supporting effective, accountable, and inclusive public institutions. This year, the Department convened global leaders and innovators at the 2025 United Nations Public Service Forum, launched a cutting-edge E-Government Toolkit to modernize public service delivery, and energized digital cooperation through the Internet Governance Forum, which broke participation records and sparked vibrant global dialogue.

6. Ending the war on nature

UN DESA's integrated approach to the triple planetary crisis has mobilized transformative action. From the "Our ocean, our future" declaration at the UN Ocean Conference to \$1.4 trillion in commitments under the Energy Compacts, and leadership in climate and forest conservation, the Department is advancing holistic solutions for people and planet.

7. Framing the future of development

Strategic foresight and anticipatory action are at the heart of UN DESA's work to navigate global uncertainty. Through flagship reports, innovative AI-powered tools, macroeconomic modeling, and youth engagement, the Department is equipping Member States and the UN system to meet both present and future challenges.

Read more about these achievements in the *UN DESA Annual Highlights Report* available [here](#).





It is up to us to act when action is needed, and to be better together

By Annalena Baerbock, President of the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Eighty years. Longer than the average human life.

This anniversary of the UN should have been a moment of celebration. But this is not an ordinary year.

Just look at the state of our world, as the Secretary-General described.

- Thousands of orphans in Gaza are wandering around the rubble eating sand, drinking contaminated water.
- Ninety-year-old women in Ukraine are hiding from drones, trapped in their homes instead of living their final years in peace.
- Children in Haiti, too afraid to walk to school, afraid they might be gunned down by gangs, like their friends.

And for every conflict and tragedy that seizes the headlines, there are so many more that are forgotten. Lost to the news cycle.

Like women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo shielding their daughters from armed groups, fearful they might be raped.

And Rohingya children, spending their whole childhood in tattered tents. Unable to remember what home looks like. Faced with these realities, now is not the time to celebrate.

But to ask ourselves: Where is the United Nations? People out there in the world, watching us.

Clearly, we have to do better. But what we should not allow, is to let cynics weaponize these failures. To argue that our institution is a waste of money.

Outdated. Irrelevant. When the principles of the Charter are ignored, is it the UN that has failed?

When tanks rolled into Ukraine, was it because Article 2 of the Charter is not clear enough about sovereignty and territorial integrity? When civilians, children are killed in Gaza, is it humanitarian law at fault for failing to protect them?

It is not the Charter which fails. It's not the UN as an institution which fails.
The Charter, our Charter, is only as strong as Member States' willingness to uphold it.
And their willingness to hold to account those who violate it.

Yes, our world is in pain. Yes, we have failures. But imagine how much worse it would be
without the United Nations.
Would a single person be better off without it?

Without UNICEF, 26 million children would not have received an education. Without the
World Food Programme, nearly 125 million people would have lacked life-saving food
assistance. Without the World Health Organization over a billion vaccines would not have
been supplied.

Sometimes we could have done more. But we cannot let this dishearten us.
If we stopped doing the right thing, evil would prevail.

This 80th session is not about big celebrations. It's about finding the resolve not to give
up.
The resolve to be Better Together.
Just as our predecessors did eight decades ago. This institution was born in a world on
fire and desperate for reprieve.

750 million – nearly a third of humanity back then– still under colonial rule.
Two World Wars in a generation. 70 million dead. The horrors of the Holocaust revealed
to our collective shame.

This was a generation that knew almost nothing but suffering and despair.
The signing of the Charter in 1945 gave hope to millions.
Gave us a north star that guided our path from the ashes of war. Helped guide nations
from colonial rule into independent states. Helped end apartheid.

Across the decades, the United Nations has been a compass pointing toward peace,
humanity, and justice.
We have not always succeeded. But the story of this institution is not a story of easy
victories.
It is the story of falling and rising.
Of pulling ourselves and each other back up and trying harder.
We gather here for the eightieth time. Not for empty celebration.
Not out of ritual. Not to hear our own voices. We gather to prove that this institution
matters.

And through it, every nation represented here, no matter how big or how small, can
summon again the strength and unity first shown in San Francisco, 80 years ago.
The courage and resolve of leaders who, even while some called them naïve, believed
they could build a better world from the wreckage of the old.

They showed then, what true leadership is. It is not about imposing your will. Or putting
others down.
True leadership is about lifting others up. Not only out of altruism, but for our mutual
benefit.
And even out of our self-interest. Because—as our founders, and every architect of peace
since then has understood—helping others is what ultimately makes your own countries
stronger.

Could any state have faced a global pandemic alone? The virus did not have any

passport. We were only able to solve it at the end with the support of the World Health Organization.

The climate crisis does not stop at borders. CO₂ emissions anywhere affect people everywhere. Even the wealthiest cities in the world cannot shield themselves from wildfires.

And imagine, coming here by plane how safe would you feel to step into the next aeroplane if there were no International Civil Aviation Organization, which is responsible for setting safety regulations for 5 billion passengers each year?

How comfortable would you be with your children using the internet while AI is uncontrolled and unchecked.

As the lines between what is real and fake start to blur.

In this globalised, digitalised world, we work together—or we suffer alone.

The theme of this milestone session and the High-Level Week is therefore Better Together: Eighty Years and More for Peace, Development, and Human Rights.

Will living up to that theme be easy? No. But this Hall was not built for the easy times.

It was built to come together to confront the hardest topics.

This session, this high-level week is about resolving differences.

We showed some of this yesterday already. But even the house of dialogue and diplomacy needs a renovation.

That is why the UN80 initiative—and the wider reform process—are not luxuries but necessities.

We are literally now at a crossroads. A make it or break it moment. Politically, financially.

We have to deliver a United Nations that is agile, cost-effective, and fit for purpose.

Member States have to give the Secretary-General, and this process their full support, because reform cannot stop in New York.

It must carry through to every capital.

That includes delivering the Pact for the Future and accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Again, this is not about charity. It is about addressing the core purposes of this institution.

About strengthening our foundations across all three pillars.

Peace and security. Human Rights. And Sustainable development.

They are inseparable.

Leaving hundreds of millions trapped in extreme poverty, vulnerable to crisis, and denied their human rights is not only a moral failure. It is a recipe for global unrest, terrorism, and a tragic waste of humanity's greatest resource: its people.

Put simply – without the SDGs, there cannot be lasting peace.

Our future as an institution will also be shaped by the selection of the next Secretary-General.

And here we must pause and reflect.

In nearly eighty years, this Organisation has never chosen a woman for that role.

One might wonder how out of four billion potential candidates, there could not be found a single one.

Of course, the choice rests with Member States.

But those of you having been there yesterday celebrating Beijing: one strong female leader after the other, from all our continents.

Like 80 years ago, we are standing at a crossroads. And it is up to us, to every single

Member State, to live up to the same leadership as our predecessors did. To act when action is needed. To uphold the principles of our Charter. To be better together. To show the people around the world that this United Nations is there. Today. Tomorrow. And for the next eight decades. Because after all it's the life insurance for every country.

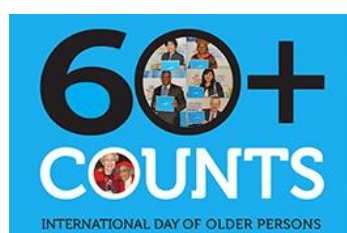
This text has been obtained from [delivered remarks of the PGA](#) on 23 September 2025.



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