



ECOSOC at 80: A milestone for global cooperation and sustainable development

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) will commemorate its 80th anniversary by holding a special event on 23 January 2026. The event will be an opportunity to celebrate the Council's many milestone achievements in improving people's lives around the world. "We need to reflect on the legacy of ECOSOC and reaffirm its central role in shaping a more inclusive, resilient, and forward-looking multilateral system," says H.E. Mr. Lok Bahadur Thapa (Nepal), President of ECOSOC.

Established by the Charter of the United Nations in 1945, the United Nations Economic and Social Council held its first meeting on 23 January 1946 in London. As one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, ECOSOC has been at the centre of global progress, advancing the principles of the United Nations Charter and promoting international cooperation on economic, social, cultural, educational, health and related issues.

ECOSOC has brought nations together to advance dignity, equality, solidarity and opportunity. It has championed human rights, promoted gender equality, and guided countries toward shared goals for a better future.

ECOSOC has also provided strategic policy guidance to the UN development system, while fostering, integration and coherence across its broad network of subsidiary and expert bodies.

By the 2000s, ECOSOC emerged as a central platform to review the progress of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and, since 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), helping to unite the global community behind a common vision of multilateralism and solidarity.

Throughout its history, ECOSOC has served an important platform for reflection, debate and innovative thinking, bringing together diverse actors to address the world's most pressing sustainable development challenges. The Council's work is enriched by over 6,500 NGOs in consultative status, and it provides civil society, youth and other stakeholders a platform to contribute to intergovernmental policy making.

Today, the world continues to face poverty, rising inequalities, fast-moving crises and growing pressures on our planet. Yet, ECOSOC remains steadfast in promoting sustainable development, safeguarding people and the planet while ensuring that no one is left behind.

"The role of ECOSOC has never been more relevant and important," says President Thapa. "ECOSOC's convening power is indispensable—for restoring trust in multilateralism and driving coherent, collective action in our shared interests."

Follow the commemoration of ECOSOC at 80 live on [UN Web TV](#) to:

- Learn more about ECOSOC's impact and legacy over the past eight decades.
- Celebrate ECOSOC as a forum for inclusive engagement
- Highlight its crucial role in accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

For more information: [ECOSOC at 80: Commemoration Event](#)





Delivering better through partnerships

“Delivering better is how we rebuild trust in multilateralism and make the SDGs real for every person, in every place,” said ECOSOC President Lok Bahadur Thapa, as we spoke with him ahead of the 2026 ECOSOC Partnership Forum on 27 January 2026. “The Partnership Forum is where we test whether our commitment

to partnership is real and where we turn good ideas into change that benefit people around the world.”

Your presidency is framed around “Delivering Better.” What does this mean for ECOSOC this year and where do you hope to generate early momentum?

“‘Delivering Better’ is about turning commitments into visible change in people’s lives. For ECOSOC, it means a sharper focus on what works, less fragmentation and clearer follow-up across the ECOSOC cycle.

The [2025 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(SDG\) Report](#) notes that low- and middle-income countries faced record-high USD 1.4 trillion debt-servicing costs in 2023 alongside a USD 4 trillion annual investment gap, while official development assistance (ODA) declined for the first time by 7.1 percent. In this context, mobilizing stronger, more purposeful partnerships is essential to deliver at scale.

Against this backdrop, I hope to generate early momentum by using the Partnership Forum - the first major meeting in the 2026 ECOSOC cycle - to mobilize and showcase concrete partnerships, clarify who will do what next, and then carry those insights into the Coordination Segment, the Operational Activities Segment, the Financing for Development workstream and the HLPF.”

You have highlighted transforming agriculture and food systems. What would a fair and future-ready food system look like to you? How might partnerships help us get there?

“A fair, future-ready food system allows farmers to earn a decent living, protects soils and water and makes nutritious food affordable for all. Partnerships are crucial. They can connect smallholders to markets, bring finance and innovation to rural areas and support national strategies that leave no one behind. I would like to see more cross-sector partnerships that link farmers, cities, youth innovators and development banks and investors around concrete solutions that can be scaled.”

Financing remains a chokepoint for many. What reforms are most needed for Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS)?

“We need a system that rewards long-term investment in resilience, not short-term risk aversion. For LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, this means more predictable concessional finance, fit-for-purpose debt workouts and stronger use of national development banks and regional instruments, among others. Partnerships that blend public and private finance and ensure that benefits and risks are shared fairly will be essential as well to move from pledges to implementation.”

ECOSOC at 80 and the ECOSOC/HLPF review offer a rare opportunity. How would you use this moment to help the UN “deliver better”?

“This anniversary invites us to streamline mandates, reduce duplication and make ECOSOC more accessible to those who implement the SDGs every day. I would like the review to strengthen peer learning, bring youth and local actors systematically into our work, and ensure that every major ECOSOC discussion leads to a few clear, trackable follow-up actions that people can see and feel beyond New York.”

The [2026 ECOSOC Partnership Forum](#), under the theme “Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for a sustainable future for all”, will take place on 27 January 2026 at UN Headquarters in New York. The Forum will place a special emphasis on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will be reviewed at the 2026 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), namely Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The Forum will also offer an opportunity to reflect on how ECOSOC and the Partnership Forum can better support meaningful partnerships.

UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe



THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW



5 things you need to know about the global economy in 2026

The global economy showed notable resilience in 2025, performing better than anticipated despite repeated shocks and heightened uncertainty. Trade flows continued to expand, and overall activity held up more strongly than many

expected. The key question now is whether this resilience will persist into 2026.

The *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2026* report — to be released on 8 January 2026 — offers some early answers. Here are five main points to know:

1. Global economic growth remains stable but subdued. The world economy is projected to grow at a modest pace. Subdued investment, high debt burdens, and limited fiscal space continue to constrain countries' capacity to boost productivity and achieve stronger, sustained growth. Geopolitical tensions and financial risks add to these pressures, leaving the global outlook fragile.

2. Expansion is steady but uneven across countries. Developed economies are projected to maintain broadly stable yet moderate growth. Several large developing economies are expected to sustain growth momentum, supported by resilient domestic demand or targeted policies. For vulnerable countries, however, the outlook remains challenging, as

limited economic diversification, climate-related shocks, and high debt levels continue to weigh on prospects.

3. Trade tensions have intensified but global impacts remain contained. A sharp increase in United States tariffs in 2025 introduced new trade frictions and unsettled the global trade environment. However, overall disruption to trade flows has thus far been limited. Bilateral deals between the United States and key trading partners helped prevent a broader escalation of tensions. Front-loaded shipments boosted activity early in the year, but this temporary momentum is expected to fade in 2026.

4. Global inflation is cooling, though risks are still present. Disinflation is likely to continue through 2026, allowing central banks to gradually ease monetary conditions. However, potential supply-side shocks—stemming from conflicts, geopolitical tensions, trade disruptions or climate-related events—could still reignite inflationary pressures.

5. Artificial intelligence offers promise for productivity, but uncertainty remains. Advances in artificial intelligence could boost productivity growth, but the scale and timing of gains remain highly uncertain. Benefits are likely to be unevenly distributed, possibly deepening existing inequalities. While AI is already enhancing efficiency and innovation in some sectors, its broader impact will depend on investments in skills, digital infrastructure, and policies that enable inclusive and responsible adoption.

Follow the launch live on 8 January 2026 at 12:45 pm EST via [UN Web TV](#) and access the complete report and all the latest data on [UN DESA's website](#).

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ECOSOC at 80: Delivering better for a sustainable future for all

By Lok Bahadur Thapa, President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council

This year, the United Nations and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) will mark 80 years of service to humanity.

For eight decades, ECOSOC has been at the heart of global efforts to advance peace, prosperity, and dignity for all. It has helped shape the world we know today - from establishing the Commission on Human Rights, which guided the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to endorsing the creation of UNAIDS, and establishing the Ad Hoc Advisory Groups for African countries emerging from conflict and on Haiti, which pioneered integrated approaches to recovery and development.

Equally important, ECOSOC has long served as a gateway for civil society engagement with the United Nations. Through thousands of NGOs with consultative status, people from all walks of life - communities, youth, innovators and changemakers - have found a voice in shaping global priorities. ECOSOC connects the UN directly to those it serves, keeping its work grounded in people's real experiences and aspirations.

As we mark this milestone in a world of profound challenges - conflict, climate change, and inequalities - and opportunities to renew trust and cooperation, we are reminded of a strong United Nations: One that continues to adapt, inspire, and deliver for people and planet.

The 80th anniversary of ECOSOC is not only a time to reflect on ECOSOC's achievements but also to look ahead - to a Council that continues to evolve and inspire action. Through its platforms such as the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, ECOSOC remains central to advancing the 2030 Agenda - enabling countries to share lessons, exchange ideas, and learn from one another.

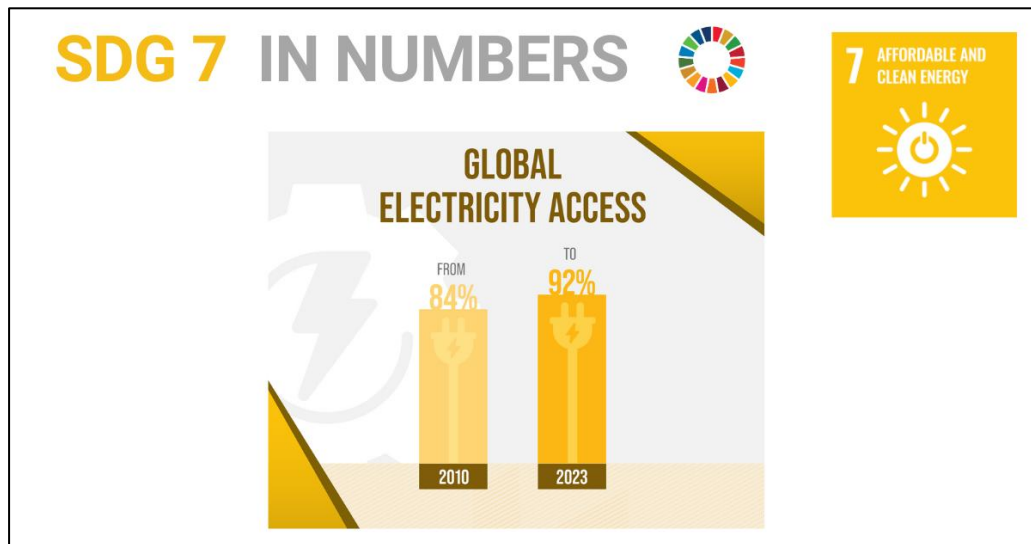
During Nepal's presidency, my focus is to deliver better – by transforming food systems, advancing digital inclusion and youth entrepreneurship, accelerating climate action and resilience, and mobilizing financing for sustainable development.

Throughout the tenure, I emphasize the imperative of revitalizing multilateralism and rebuilding trust, accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda, enhancing coherence across the UN System, fostering dynamic partnerships and synergy, and ensuring robust and effective implementation and follow-up to translate ambition into real action.

I will also make every effort to support countries in special situations – Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). These nations face unique challenges that require solutions built on equity, resilience, and global solidarity.

At 80, ECOSOC remains a beacon of hope and progress - proof that multilateralism works when we act together. Its history reminds us of what we can achieve when nations join around a common purpose. Its future depends on our determination to keep that spirit alive - for people, planet, and for a better tomorrow. Let's seize the moment to deliver better, faster, and together.

This text was originally published as part of the ECOSOC at 80 blog series: <https://ecosoc.un.org/en/blog>



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