VOICE
UN DESA

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Delivering on the promise of Sevilla

In a world tormented by war, crises and an already fragile economy, financing challenges, including in response to shocks, continue to obstruct progress towards sustainable development. Many of the poorest and most vulnerable countries are experiencing a "financing squeeze", suffering from historically high debt service burdens, unprecedented declines in aid, and structurally low tax revenue. A more fragmented world economy is undermining trade, investment and capital flows.

Only a comprehensive and ambitious global policy response will suffice to overcome these challenges. In the Sevilla Commitment, adopted a little less than a year ago, UN Member States adopted just such a framework. This blueprint outlines an ambitious package of reforms to scale up financing and investment, and to address structural issues that hinder effective functioning of the international financial architecture. Today, its timely implementation is more important than ever.

A new report, the Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2026, by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, identifies the drivers of this financing squeeze and highlights recommendations to advance implementation of the Sevilla Commitment in five areas.

First, scaling up financing. Actions to close the SDG financing gap are at the heart of the Sevilla Commitment. It includes concrete steps to both to increase volumes and to enhance quality of financing.

Second, maximizing sustainable development impact. The Sevilla Commitment includes measures to ensure country ownership so that that financing is directed toward investments that are aligned with countries' priorities and needs.

Third, investing in resilience. In a more crisis-prone world, it puts forward mechanisms to strengthen the capacity of countries to both prepare for, and deal with, shocks and crises must be strengthened.

Fourth, adopting a multilayered approach to cooperation, enhancing coherence and coordination across national, regional and international actors and initiatives, such as those in the Sevilla Platform for Action.

Fifth, investing in multilateralism. Progress at the country level depends on global stability and shared frameworks that underpin investment, risk-sharing and collective action. The Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in Sevilla demonstrated that multilateralism can still deliver. Now the world must work to fulfill its promise.

UN DESA's Financing for Sustainable Development Office (FSDO) is leading efforts in bringing countries and international actors together to realize the Sevilla Commitment. Learn more about the work here.

EXPERT VOICES

Forests are running out of time. How can we save them?

Forests cover nearly one-third of our earth and sustain billions of lives. Yet, they're disappearing rapidly, putting our natural world and economy at risk. The new *Global Forest Goals Report 2026*, launching this month, will reveal just how much ground we've lost and what it will take to turn the tide before 2030. We spoke with UN DESA's expert Shyam Paudel about the report and what we can do to reverse course.

What is the state of the world's forests today?

"Today, the world's forests cover about 4.14 billion hectares, around 32 per cent of Earth's land area, including 1.18 billion hectares of primary forests with high ecological value. Forests are vital for economies and livelihoods: 1.6 billion people depend on them, and the formal forest economy is worth about US$1.5 trillion annually. Forests also harbour most terrestrial biodiversity, store carbon, regulate water, support climate adaptation, and contribute to land restoration and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Despite progress in some regions, global forests remain under pressure. Between 2015 and 2025, gross forest loss averaged 10.9 million hectares per year, while net forest loss reached 4.12 million hectares annually. The largest declines occurred in South America and Africa, and about 16 million hectares of primary forests were lost during the decade. Forest degradation from fires, pests, climate change, and unsustainable use continues to reduce forest health and resilience. Conservation and sustainable management are expanding. Around 813 million hectares (20 per cent) of forests are legally protected, and 2.13 billion hectares (over 55 per cent) are under long-term management plans, though regional disparities remain significant."

How is the UN Forum on Forests working to make a difference and what is UN DESA's role in these efforts?

"The United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) is the main global intergovernmental platform dedicated to forests, bringing countries together to advance the conservation, restoration, and sustainable forest management. The Forum shapes international forest policy and promotes collective action to address deforestation, forest degradation, biodiversity loss, and financing gaps. One of its key milestones was the adoption of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030 (UNSPF), which includes six Global Forest Goals and 26 targets that serves as the global framework to reverse forest loss, expand forest benefits, and contribute to the SDGs.

UN DESA, through the UNFF Secretariat, supports Member States in strengthening forest governance, developing national strategies, building capacity for implementation of the UNSPF, and mobilizing resources through the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network.

In addition, UNFF promotes cooperation among international partners through the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to strengthen the synergy and policy coherence on forests, climate, biodiversity, livelihoods and other relevant sectors. It also supports forest financing by helping countries through capacity-building in accessing funds."

The *Global Forest Goals Report 2026* will be launched on 11 May. What can we expect to learn from the report and its findings?

"The Global Forest Goals Report 2026, to be launched on 11 May, will provide the most comprehensive assessment to date of global progress toward achieving the six Global Forest Goals and 26 targets under the UNSPF 2017–2030. It will review where the world stands on forests ahead of 2030, and how forests are contributing to sustainable development, climate action, biodiversity conservation, livelihoods, and resilient economies.

The report is expected to present key achievements at global, regional, and national levels, including progress in forest conservation, afforestation and reforestation, restoration of degraded lands, expansion of sustainable forest management practices, and the state of forest governance and policy frameworks, highlighting the examples of innovation, partnerships, community leadership.

Importantly, the report is expected to identify pathways for accelerated action during the remaining years to 2030, including scaling up investment in forests, strengthening policy coherence across sectors, empowering local communities and Indigenous Peoples, improving forest monitoring and data systems, and integrating forests more fully into national development plans. It can also help shape the global forest agenda beyond 2030 by outlining priorities for addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification, and sustainable development."

For people who want to contribute to healthy forests around the world, what everyday actions can they take to help support efforts?

"People who want to contribute to healthy forests around the world can make a real difference through everyday choices and community action. First, they can choose forest-based commodities such as timber, paper, coffee, cocoa, palm oil, and rubber that are responsibly and sustainably sourced, helping reduce pressure on natural forests. Second, they can make forests part of everyday conversations with family, friends, schools, and communities, highlighting the vital role forests play in tackling planetary challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, water security, and livelihoods. Raising awareness helps build a culture of stewardship. Third, they can support conservation and restoration efforts through donations, volunteering, tree-planting initiatives, or contributing to trusted organizations working on forest protection.

People can also reduce waste, recycle paper and wood products, lower their carbon footprint, support policies and leaders that prioritize forests, and choose eco-tourism that respects nature and local communities. Even small actions, when multiplied across millions of people, can have a powerful global impact."

For more information: [UN Forum on Forests]

THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

7 things you should know about innovating for sustainable development

This month, young innovators, scientists, world-leading experts and entrepreneurs are coming together at the annual STI Forum with one purpose – to leverage their knowledge and solutions to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Here are 7 things you should know about this annual event and efforts to innovate for a sustainable future.

1. A global hub for science and solutions
The annual Multistakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (STI Forum), under the UN's Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM), brings together governments, scientists, innovators and entrepreneurs to accelerate progress on the SDGs through collaboration and shared knowledge.

2. Thousands of voices are shaping the future
Each year, the STI Forum convenes thousands of stakeholders - from young innovators to world-leading experts - many engaging with the UN for the first time, creating a uniquely inclusive global science-policy space.

3. 950+ innovations from around the world
Through an open call, 950+ solutions for sustainable development were submitted this year, with strong participation from developing countries, highlighting the global momentum behind grassroots innovation.

4. Breakthroughs are becoming more accessible
New technologies are transforming access. Solar systems are for example up to 80 per cent lighter and water-monitoring tools up to 80 per cent cheaper, which are expanding solutions to underserved communities.

5. Innovation is solving everyday challenges
From biodegradable materials that help crops survive drought to circular solutions that turn waste into resources, practical innovations are delivering real-world impact across sectors.

6. A space to tackle emerging technologies
The STI Forum enables open discussions on rapidly evolving fields like AI and biotechnology. These are critical areas for SDG progress but raise complex governance, equity and ethical questions.

7. Partnerships that go beyond the Forum
The Forum doesn't just discuss ideas. It helps launch collaborations, inform global policy processes, and feed directly into the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development.

UN DESA's Division for Sustainable Development Goals is organizing the STI Forum and related events in May 2026, in close collaboration with the 10-Member-Group of High-level Representatives, and the 51 UN entities of the interagency task team IATT. Learn more about the efforts here.

Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2026 – a powerful compass to keep the momentum from Sevilla

By Amina J. Mohammed, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General

We have only four years to go before the deadline to deliver the SDGs. But today, we are moving backward: increasing fragmentation, rising trade barriers, heightened geopolitical tensions and conflicts, and widespread climate-related disasters all undermine SDG progress. Financing gaps are increasing, particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable countries.

The Sevilla Commitment, adopted at last year's Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4), provided us with a roadmap for overcoming these financing challenges. It also provided a much-needed boost to multilateral cooperation, at a time when many question its value. But for FFD4 to have a lasting impact and deliver on its promise, we have to see tangible progress in implementation.

This year's *Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2026* of the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development provides a first assessment of these early implementation efforts. It shows that the shockwaves of instability are contaminating development prospects.

The report presents two important findings.

The first is the financing squeeze that the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries experience from every direction at once: falling aid, rising borrowing costs, structurally low tax revenue and private investment that falls far short of the scale the moment demands.

In 2024, debt service burdens reached 20-year highs in developing countries and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). More than 70 developing countries still collect tax revenue below the 15 per cent of GDP threshold identified in the Sevilla Commitment. ODA fell by 23.1 per cent from 2024 to 2025, the largest annual drop ever recorded.

These conditions could get worse if capital, trade and investment flows continue to be reconfigured along geopolitical lines. This is the second major finding. Already, geopolitical considerations are shaping economic relations and financial policies, with tensions diverting trade and investment, discouraging cross-border capital, and feeding higher volatility. The poorest countries are often most vulnerable to such shocks. The current conflict in the Middle East has generated violence and economic fallout across the region and the world. It has impacts on the cost of fuel, fertilizer and food – as well as trade, transportation, tourism, and finance. Government finances are stressed through rising energy costs, slower growth and currency depreciations – adding even more pressure to the debt burdens shouldered by developing countries.

Increasing fragmentation also hinders agreement on and implementation of effective multilateral responses to global sustainable development challenges.

However, the Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2026 also offers a path forward. It demonstrates that the full and timely implementation of the Sevilla Commitment can address the financing squeeze countries currently face and can help countries get back on track toward achieving the SDGs. To this end, the report sets out five priorities for the year ahead.

The first is to scale up the financing and investment needed to close the gaps, starting with the actions already agreed in Sevilla.

Second, focus policies and financing flows on sustainable development to maximize impact, aligned with country priorities. This should be the guiding principle, and the report is clear that this is a test for private capital mobilization in particular.

Third, invest in countries' resilience to protect development gains in the face of more frequent shocks. The Sevilla Commitment contains a long list of concrete capacity-building measures that need to move from paper to practice with urgency.

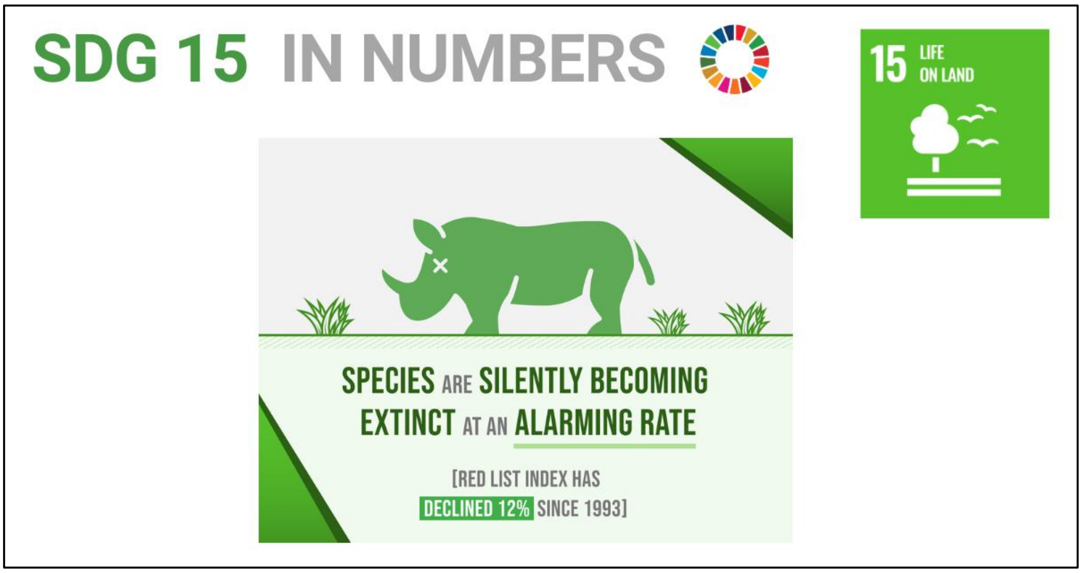
Fourth, strengthen multi-layered institutions and cooperation that hold the international system together. National investments in resilience must be closely linked with regional and global support, ensuring that external financing lines up behind country-owned strategies rather than around them.

Fifth and finally, continue to invest in multilateralism itself. Countries' sustainable development prospects still rely on a predictable, rules-based multilateral system. We cannot retreat from that commitment.

There is reason for encouragement within the report's findings. The 130 initiatives of the Sevilla Platform for Action give us a head start on implementation. These initiatives directly address 115 of the 280 actions in the Sevilla Commitment. More than three quarters of those initiatives have already reported concrete implementation progress.

The report is clear-eyed about the limits being set by the global context. The current environment will not allow us to move on every front at once, and some of the most consequential reforms require the kind of multilateral agreement that is harder to reach today than it was even a year ago.

On this path, this report provides a powerful compass to keep the momentum from Sevilla and stimulate efforts towards the implementation of the Sevilla Commitment. There is no time to waste. The work ahead of us will take political will, and it will take stamina. Division is loud right now; cooperation must be louder.



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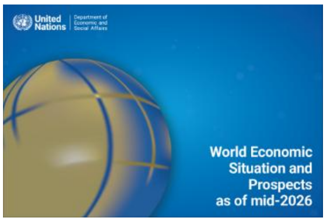
COMING UP



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