



Advancing the inclusion and rights of persons with disabilities: From Convention to commitment

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the landmark treaty that transformed the global understanding of disability, from a charity and medical model to a human rights-based approach grounded in dignity, equality, autonomy and full participation.

From 9 to 11 June 2026, the nineteenth session of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD (COSP19) will convene at United Nations Headquarters in New York under the theme: *"CRPD at 20: Celebrating and consolidating achievements and shaping the next phase of implementation in a changing world."*

Over the past two decades, the Convention has driven important progress. Countries have strengthened legal protections, advanced accessibility, promoted inclusive education, and expanded participation in public and political life. Disability inclusion has also become an essential part of the global sustainable development agenda.

Yet significant barriers remain. Persons with disabilities continue to face unequal access to education, employment, healthcare, digital technologies, social protection and decision-making processes. Emerging global challenges, including conflict, climate change, inequality and technological disruption, risk deepening exclusion.

COSP19 provides a critical platform for advancing solutions. Discussions will focus on preventing exploitation, violence and abuse; strengthening care and support systems that promote autonomy and resilience; and enhancing accessible civic engagement, leadership and political participation.

A defining strength of the CRPD has been the leadership of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, whose voices remain central to shaping progress.

As the international community marks this milestone, the focus must be on accelerating implementation and translating commitments into measurable change. The CRPD remains a vital roadmap for building inclusive, resilient and equitable societies.

Twenty years after its adoption, the promise of the Convention endures: a world where persons with disabilities can fully exercise their rights and participate equally in every aspect of life.

For more information: [Conference of States Parties to the CRPD \(COSP19\)](#)



EXPERT VOICES



The essential role of public servants in an uncertain world

Public servants keep the world running by delivering essential services to support peoples' lives like health care, education and emergency services. Yet, they face increasingly complex challenges, from rapidly evolving technologies to rising citizen expectations and persistent inequalities. This month, the [2026 UN Public Service Forum](#) in Tbilisi, Georgia will explore practical solutions to these challenges. We spoke with UN DESA's Elizabeth Niland about what it will take to build governments that work for everyone.

Why are public servants essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, especially at a time of growing global uncertainty and mistrust?

"Public servants are essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) because they turn global commitments into real services that improve people's daily lives. While political leaders set priorities, public institutions deliver health care, education, clean water, climate action, and social protection. In the current context of economic instability, climate shocks, conflict, and declining trust in institutions, competent public servants provide continuity, stability, responsiveness and resilience.

They also help rebuild trust in government by ensuring transparency, fairness, and accountability. Citizens are more likely to trust institutions when they experience reliable services and see government acting in the public's interest. This is why on 23 June annually the United Nations recognizes the value public servants bring through UN Public Service Day."

How can public servants help rebuild trust in institutions and deliver results that reach everyone?

"Public servants rebuild trust when governments are experienced as accountable, participatory and inclusive, and responsive:

- **Accountability:** Institutions must communicate decisions clearly, use public resources responsibly, and hold officials accountable for ethical conduct and measurable outcomes.
- **Participation and Inclusion:** Citizens are more likely to trust institutions when they feel heard and included through consultations, open dialogue, and participatory policymaking.
- **Responsiveness:** Reliable services, timely action, and policies that adapt to people's needs demonstrate that government is people-centered and effective.

These issues will be explored during the 2026 UN Public Service Forum, held in Tbilisi from 23 to 25 June under the theme: *Transforming public institutions: advancing innovation, accountability, participation, and inclusion.*"

What are some examples of how strong public institutions improve everyday lives?

"The impact of robust public institutions is woven into the fabric of daily life, often in ways people don't even notice. Through the [United Nations Public Service Awards](#), UN DESA aims to showcase the ways in which public institutions work daily to improve the lives of people in different areas. Some recognized examples are:

- In Thailand, the *Digital Transformation for Smart Environment* initiative uses drone technology to protect marine ecosystems and coastal livelihoods. (UNPSA 2022)
- In Latvia, the *Unified Portal for the Development and Agreement of Draft Legal Acts* increases public participation and transparency in lawmaking. (UNPSA 2024)
- In Costa Rica, the *Single Digital Health File (EDUS)* modernized healthcare delivery, improving equitable access and resilience during health crises. (UNPSA 2019)

Learn more about the 2026 UN Public Service Forum and Public Service Awards: <https://publicadministration.desa.un.org/capacity-development/unpsf/2026-un-public-service-forum>

Commemorate UN Public Service Day: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/public-service-day>





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

After showing notable resilience in 2025, the global economy faced a major setback in the first half of 2026. Weaker growth, mounting inflationary pressures, and heightened uncertainty are creating

new challenges for sustainable development. As UN DESA released the mid-year update of the World Economic Situation and Prospects 2026, here are 5 key things you should know:

1. The global economy has been hit hard...and could face worse headwinds ahead.

The Middle East crisis has delivered a significant shock to global growth prospects, disrupting energy markets, raising transport and production costs, and sharply increasing uncertainty across trade, investment and financial markets. Global growth is now projected at 2.5 per cent in 2026, a downward revision to an already subdued outlook. In an adverse scenario, where disruptions last longer and oil prices remain high throughout the year, global growth could fall as low as 2.1 per cent, the lowest in the 21st century setting aside the years of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Global Financial Crisis.

2. Developing countries are bearing the brunt of the fallout.

Countries that depend heavily on affected trade and transport routes are experiencing the strongest impacts. Many energy-importing developing countries face a combination of slower growth, rising inflation, and growing pressure on external balances. While some energy exporters may benefit from higher prices, weaker global demand is limiting those gains.

3. Inflation is back, and leaves policymakers with difficult choices.

Global inflation is now expected to reach 3.9 per cent in 2026, up from 3.1 per cent projected in January. Inflation projections have been lifted in nine out of ten countries. For central banks, the crisis presents a dilemma: tightening policy to contain inflation risks deepening the growth slowdown, while easing risks allowing price pressures to become entrenched. On the fiscal side, rising energy costs are pushing up expenditures and higher borrowing costs are adding further strain to already stretched public finances.

4. Hard-won development gains are under threat.

The downgraded growth outlook understates the true scale of the setback to sustainable development. Rising food and energy prices risk pushing millions more into food insecurity and deeper poverty. This is placing additional strain on countries already facing acute financing pressures, as declining aid and rising debt-service costs crowd out development spending. Low-income families, who devote a larger share of their spending to food and energy, are bearing the heaviest burden.

5. The crisis risks deepening long-term damage to productivity while strengthening the case for renewables.

Higher energy and input costs, trade disruptions, and tighter financial conditions are adding new headwinds to global productivity growth, which has been on a declining trend for two decades. Industrial policy has a growing role to play in supporting investment and resilience, but the capacity to deploy it effectively remains deeply

uneven. At the same time, by exposing the fragility of fossil fuel supply chains, the crisis is reinforcing the strategic case for renewables, even as higher costs and supply bottlenecks create short-term headwinds for the transition.

Learn more in the [mid-year update of the World Economic Situation and Prospects 2026](#).

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Why water could help restore trust in global cooperation

By Retno Marsudi, UN Secretary General's Special Envoy on Water

As I travel across regions and speak with governments, communities, businesses and young people, I hear the same concern again and again: the world feels increasingly fragmented and uncertain. Climate shocks are intensifying. Economic pressures are growing. Trust in multilateral cooperation is under strain.

And yet, one issue still has the power to bring people together: water.

Water connects every aspect of our lives. It shapes our health, our food systems, our energy production, our cities, our economies, and our ecosystems. It also reveals, perhaps more clearly than any other issue, how interconnected our futures really are.

This is why I believe the [2026 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development \(HLPF\)](#) comes at such an important moment.

This year, SDG 6 (ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all) will receive an in-depth review. But this conversation is about far more than water alone. It is about whether we can still deliver on sustainable development in a world facing overlapping crises.

Today, billions of people still lack access to safe drinking water or sanitation. Rivers, aquifers and ecosystems are under growing pressure. Floods and droughts are becoming more frequent and severe. At the same time, demand for water continues to rise across agriculture, energy, industry and cities.

But the challenge is not only about scarcity or infrastructure. In many places, the real issue is fragmentation.

Water is often managed separately from climate policies, food systems, urban planning, energy transitions or financial decision-making. Institutions work in silos. Investments remain short-term. Communities most affected are too often left out of decision-making.

The result is that we continue to respond to interconnected challenges in disconnected ways.

This is why the discussions at this year's HLPF matter so much. They provide an opportunity not only to review progress, but also to rethink how we approach implementation itself.

We need to move from isolated interventions toward integrated solutions. We need stronger cooperation across sectors, across borders and across generations. And we need to focus relentlessly on implementation and results on the ground.

These same priorities are also shaping preparations for the [2026 United Nations Water Conference](#), which will be co-hosted by Senegal and the United Arab Emirates.

Around the world, I see growing recognition that water can no longer remain a secondary issue in global discussions. Water is increasingly understood as a strategic enabler for climate resilience, food security, energy stability, public health, peace and economic development.

The upcoming Conference therefore cannot simply be another moment for declarations. Its success will ultimately be judged by whether it helps accelerate implementation where it matters most: in countries, communities and river basins facing real and immediate pressures.

In recent months, encouraging momentum has been building.

Governments, UN entities, scientists, civil society organizations, financial institutions and private sector actors are already engaging in preparations. Regional meetings and consultations are helping identify practical solutions and partnerships. There is also growing interest in how the Water Action Agenda can become a stronger platform for implementation, accountability and scaling successful initiatives.

What gives me hope is that many of these conversations are becoming more practical and action-oriented.

Increasingly, discussions are focusing on how to mobilize investment differently, how to strengthen governance, how to build institutional capacity, how to improve data and monitoring, and how to support countries in translating commitments into implementation.

I am also encouraged to see stronger recognition that water solutions must be inclusive. Women, young people, Indigenous Peoples, local communities and those living on the frontlines of climate impacts are not simply beneficiaries of water action, they are essential partners in shaping solutions.

Another important shift is the growing understanding that the private sector has a critical role to play, not only as a source of finance, but also as a partner in innovation, technology, infrastructure and long-term resilience.

But partnerships require clarity, trust and shared purpose. Public and private actors alike need clearer pathways for collaboration that support sustainable development outcomes while ensuring accountability and inclusion.

As we approach HLPF 2026 and continue preparations for the UN Water Conference, we therefore face a broader question:

Can water become an example of how multilateralism can still deliver tangible results in people's daily lives?

I believe it can.

Because water is ultimately about people. It is about whether children can go to school healthy and safe. Whether farmers can sustain their livelihoods. Whether cities can

remain resilient in a changing climate. Whether communities can live with dignity and stability.

Water reminds us that despite political divisions, geography or economic differences, we remain deeply connected.

And perhaps in today's world, that reminder is more important than ever.

Learn more about the work of the Special Envoy on Water Ms. Marsudi [here](#).

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



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