



HLPF 2026: Where hope turns into action for a sustainable future

Our world is grappling with multiple persistent crises. Climate shocks, geopolitical tension, poverty, and growing economic uncertainty are all imposing burdens and impacting people's everyday lives. With only four years until the 2030 deadline of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the need for action is more urgent than ever.

At the [2026 High-level Political Forum \(HLPF\)](#) on Sustainable Development, taking place from 7 to 15 July, the international community will come together to take stock of global progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and forge solutions. The three-day ministerial segment of the HLPF (13-15 July), convened as part of the [ECOSOC high-level segment](#), will be followed by the segment's concluding day on 16 July.

The latest SDG Progress report shows that progress is possible when countries choose to invest in people, innovation, and partnerships. Today, for example, 92

per cent of the world's population has access to electricity. Renewable energy sources are also rapidly growing, having more than doubled since 2015. Additionally, Internet access has increased, now reaching three-quarters of the world's population.

The 2026 [HLPF](#) will offer an important opportunity to maintain momentum, share solutions, and strengthen international cooperation to advance the SDGs. The Forum will feature [36 countries](#) showcasing their actions and best practices to achieve the SDGs as part of the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process. So far, over [400 VNR reports](#) have been presented on actions taken to achieve the SDGs.

Participants will also conduct an in-depth review of [SDG 6](#) (clean water and sanitation), [SDG 7](#) (affordable and clean energy), [SDG 9](#) (industry, innovation, and infrastructure), [SDG 11](#) (sustainable cities and communities), and [SDG 17](#) (partnerships for the goals).

Making progress in these areas can directly transform the lives of billions of people worldwide. From ensuring access to safe drinking water and clean energy to fostering innovation and creating sustainable cities, advancements across these sectors are critical to achieving the 2030 Agenda.

Alongside the official programme, the HLPF will feature a broad range of [special events and side events](#) bringing together governments, United Nations entities, international organizations, the private sector, academia, youth and civil society to exchange knowledge, showcase innovations and leverage partnerships for sustainable development.

As the world enters the final stretch toward 2030, the HLPF presents a chance to re-energize the global conversation on sustainable development. As United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Li Junhua has [emphasized](#), "The challenges before us are significant, but with collective action, they are not insurmountable."

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

UN DESA's Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development (OISC) leads the efforts coordinating and preparing the annual High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development. Learn more about this work [here](#).





Delivering energy access: leaving no one in the dark

Despite notable progress over the past decade, millions of people still live without electricity. The remaining gap is concentrated in the world's most fragile and challenging

settings, with 86 per cent of those without access in sub-Saharan Africa. With 2030 fast approaching, we spoke with UN DESA's energy data experts Leonardo Souza and Jessica Ying Chan about closing the energy divide for good with insights from *Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report 2026*.

The *Tracking SDG 7* report shows that 655 million people still lack access to electricity. What will it take to turn this around before 2030?

"A lot of progress has been made, if we consider that the deficit was roughly one billion people a decade before. Still, the remaining deficit is increasingly concentrated in least developed countries and countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence. This calls for innovative solutions, such as mini-grids and stand-alone systems. Moreover, 86 per cent of the access deficit is in sub-Saharan Africa, where there is limited public funding available. Limited public funding makes it critical to attract private sector co-investment and to plan for least-cost electrification. To turn this around before 2030, we need to increase investment and replicate the success stories of low- and low-middle income countries with high access rates. In these countries, there are two common defining factors. First, there is strong government ownership of the electricity access agenda; and second, there is a commitment to creating an enabling environment for private sector delivery and co-investment."

Affordability is a major barrier: even where electricity infrastructure exists, many cannot afford to connect. How can we make access equitable and not just expansive?

"Countries that have been successful in breaching the affordability barrier often make use of targeted and well-designed subsidy systems. But it's important that countries make sure that these subsidies reach the right people while remaining financially sustainable. Thus, when designing these subsidies, countries might turn to least-cost electrification planning. This kind of planning uses geospatial data and economic modeling to identify the most cost-efficient solutions to ensure no one is left behind. For example, Togo used household survey data, satellite imagery, and mobile phone data to map out the most impoverished villages, which were then prioritized for a monthly stipend."

The gap between high-income and low-income countries in renewable energy capacity is stark. How can we make sure the clean energy transition does not leave the poorest countries further behind?

"You're right, the gap is stark—low-income countries have a capacity of 33.6 watts per person, compared to high-income countries with 1,224 watts per person. However, while renewable energy capacity may be much lower in low-

income countries, it is proportionally higher as a share of total installed capacity. This is because the total installed capacity (renewable and non-renewable) in low-income countries is very low. The good news is that efforts to increase access to electricity also help increase renewable capacity, given that off-grid solar is the source of choice to reach those that remain without access to electricity. For an energy transition that does not leave the poorest countries behind, there is an urgent need to upgrade and develop infrastructure in these countries, and targeted support and investment remain key.”

Join UN DESA to learn more about SDG 7 and the latest global energy trends in our upcoming webinar event on ***Clean and Affordable Energy: Where do we stand? How to move forward?*** taking place on 2 July 2026 at 10 am EDT. To learn more about the event, visit the [UN-Energy website](https://trackingsdg7.esmap.org/).

Read the full report: <https://trackingsdg7.esmap.org/>



THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW



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

As world leaders gather at the [High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#) to take stock of progress on the 17 SDGs, UN DESA’s Statistics Division is

releasing [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2026](#) on 7 July 2026. Here is what the data show.

1. A decade of determined action has delivered real results

The evidence is unambiguous: sustained global commitment produces measurable change. Since 2015, billions of people have gained access to safe drinking water and sanitation, electricity now reaches 92 per cent of the world's population with a third from renewable sources, and internet access has nearly doubled from 40 to 74 per cent. New HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths have each fallen by roughly a third, 134 countries have met the child mortality reduction target, and disaster-related deaths have dropped by 65 per cent. Social protection now reaches more than half of humanity for the first time in history. A decade ago, data existed for only half of all SDG indicators; today, a global database of three million data points spans nearly every indicator.

2. The report is honest about what remains to be done

But we face serious headwinds. From sharp cuts in development assistance to rising debt burdens in developing countries, persistent poverty, climate chaos and lack of opportunity, countries are struggling to make life better for their people. Violent conflicts are unravelling human development. At every step, these pressures are hitting vulnerable countries the hardest. Of the 139 targets

with trend data, about 36 per cent are on track or making moderate progress, nearly half are advancing too slowly, and 15 per cent have fallen below 2015 baselines.

3. The path forward is clear: scale up and act now

Progress is possible when proven solutions are scaled and hard-won gains are protected. Closing the financing gap through the [Sevilla Commitment](#), harnessing digital technologies, prioritizing peace, and strengthening multilateral cooperation will be critical. With just four years remaining, the choices made now will have lasting effects for generations. Grounded in the latest data, [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2026](#) provides an evidence base for discussions at the High-level Political Forum and for the urgent actions needed to put the Goals back within reach.

4. Join the report launch on 7 July for the latest on global SDG progress

UN DESA will launch this flagship report on the opening day of the [High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#), on 7 July 2026. Follow the launch live via [UN Web TV](#) and access the complete report available from 12:30 pm EDT at [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2026](#).

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Public institutions and public servants are key to delivering the SDGs – the UN Public Service Awards show us how

By Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

Only a few days ago, I had the privilege of celebrating and honoring 12 outstanding public service initiatives at the ceremony for the United Nations Public Service Awards 2026, held in Tbilisi, Georgia. The initiatives recognized at this event were selected out of more than 700 submissions received from 62 countries. I was inspired by this year's awardees and their new solutions for providing public services at the national or sub-national level, addressing multiple challenges and enhancing the capabilities of public administrations while advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We also saw how some of the winning initiatives leveraged information and communication technologies, artificial intelligence, and digital government.

Effective public institutions are paramount in our efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and all the SDGs. Institutions that deliver public services play a critical role in advancing many of the SDG targets, from education to health to the environment, and in making the imperative to leave no one behind a reality for all, including women, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized or underserved groups.

Of course, recognizing the importance of public service in advancing sustainable development pre-dates the 2030 Agenda. In 2003, the UN General Assembly designated 23 June as [UN Public Service Day](#). The same year, the organization created the United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA). Since then, the Awards have celebrated excellence in public service at the local, regional and national levels in all countries and recognized more than 300 initiatives worldwide, showcasing the vital role of public service innovation in promoting sustainable development.

I believe that the Awards contribute to advancing the SDGs in several ways.

Direct benefits from winning initiatives

First, receiving the Award is a signal of excellence that can directly support the winning institutions. In 2023, my department reconnected with past UNPSA

winners to learn how winning the Award affected their initiatives. Projects from 10 countries (Australia, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, India, Kenya, Panama, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, and Ukraine) told us how the Awards brought them visibility and encouraged further innovation and growth.

The city of Jabotão dos Guararapes in Brazil won the Awards twice - one in 2019 for a local waste collection program, and the other in 2020 for a special education initiative. The two projects gained national attention and several municipalities sought to replicate them.

Other initiatives were scaled up after winning the Awards.

A local city bus service in India (MoBus) won an Award in 2022 and became a model of urban development in the region. Another programme secured additional government investment, expanding its scope and impact. Seoul's Public Sanitary Pads Support Policy, a winner in 2019 for gender-responsive public services, saw activity spike after the Awards, with the number of participating organizations growing from 11 to 300. More than 50 regional governments in the Republic of Korea have since initiated support projects for women's menstrual health.

Several recipients have mentioned that winning the Award had a direct and positive impact on staff morale and motivation. A project team reported that the Award lent credibility to their ideas and fostered an environment in which calculated risks are embraced, and novel solutions are celebrated. Thus, the Awards crucially promote innovation within individual organizations.

Accelerated progress towards the SDGs

Ultimately, we see that recognizing outstanding public service initiatives fosters faster progress towards the SDGs.

Another example of this is a regional COVID-19 Vaccination Information System in Panama (Panavac19). The team behind the initiative, a winner of the Awards in 2022, reported that the Award had a positive impact on the vaccination registration process and on access to vaccines for adults and children. It also improved people's access to their medical information.

In Kenya, two sanitation-related initiatives won the Awards in 2019 and 2021, which boosted overall funding and sanitation access in low-income areas.

ProzorroSale, a Ukrainian platform for managing public assets transparently and efficiently, won the Award in 2022. The platform has helped raise millions of euros in revenue for the Ukrainian government and municipalities. Additionally, the platform enhances transparency and helps reduce corruption in asset management.

A key resource for the exchange of experiences

The benefits of the Awards extend beyond the winners.

Together, the many thousands of initiatives submitted to the Awards over the years represent a unique source of information for those who want to study trends in public service delivery and changes in public administration.

This information is also a key resource for practitioners at all levels. I emphasize this point because sharing practical experiences and knowledge is a critical way

to inspire more responsive public services, enhanced participation and inclusion, and increased transparency and accountability. All governments must deliver basic public services to everyone, harness the rapid pace of technological development, and rebuild public trust. They all face similar challenges in this respect. Looking at how other countries innovate to overcome these challenges should be a natural approach for policymakers and public servants.

Information about the Awards is publicly accessible on our website through the [Public Service Innovation Hub](#). As part of this platform, a new [database](#) compiles more than 4,000 initiatives submitted to the Awards since 2007.

Users can browse and filter initiatives by year, theme, SDG, submitting institution, and other categories, and download selected cases in bulk, enabling quick access to examples, insights, and good practices from around the world.

The Hub also features individual profiles of the [UNPSA-winning initiatives since 2015](#), as well as information on UN Public Service Day and Awards. I believe that this platform provides real public good, and I encourage practitioners to use it.

We need the creativity and enthusiasm of public servants more than ever

For public institutions, embracing innovation is more crucial than ever.

The UN Public Service Awards showcase how public institutions worldwide contribute to advancing the SDGs.

We must build on their success to help create a better future for all.



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COMING UP



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