

# LOOKING TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE, PROSPEROUS, AND INCLUSIVE FUTURE

I am honoured to present the *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) Highlights 2023 - 2024*. This report encapsulates the Department's unwavering commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the pursuit of a more equitable, sustainable, and prosperous world for all.

The year 2023 marked a watershed moment in our collective journey towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDG Summit, with its groundbreaking Political Declaration, reinvigorated our global commitment and set the stage for accelerated action. UN DESA stands ready to harness this momentum from this year's Summit of the Future, helping Member States to put the 2030 Agenda back on track. In these challenging times, our mission as the home of the development pillar within the UN system has never been more critical.

This edition of the *UN DESA Highlights* shows how we deliver across three key pillars of work – intergovernmental support, analysis, and capacity-building. It showcases the Department's tangible results over the course of the 78th session of the General Assembly (September 2023-August 2024). It demonstrates UN DESA's commitment to the Secretary-General's vision of safeguarding people and planet, and highlights our efforts to achieve the SDGs with just six years remaining.

Structured in seven thematic chapters, it showcases how UN DESA advances key priorities of Member States and the Secretary-General. This includes our support for crucial events including the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the SDG Summit. It also outlines our efforts to transform the international financial architecture, develop metrics that go beyond GDP,

capitalize on digital transformations, improve data accessibility, and develop foresight capacities. It illustrates how UN DESA is broadening and strengthening its collaborative networks, both within and outside the UN system, to ensure enduring impact where it's most needed.

Chapter 1, "Accelerating action for the SDGs", focuses on UN DESA's role in providing critical data, analysis, and policy recommendations to support major events including the 2023 SDG Summit and the 2024 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The Department's efforts extended to regional and national levels, supporting countries in special situations and promoting SDG localization through grassroots partnerships. It also covers meaningful stakeholder engagement across various sectors, ensuring that the drive towards achieving the SDGs remains a collaborative and inclusive one.

Chapter 2, "Reducing poverty and inequality", showcases the Department's work to galvanize collective action to eradicate poverty, address food insecurity, and create decent work opportunities. UN DESA advocated for cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy, while advancing disability inclusion and Indigenous Peoples' rights. By addressing global challenges and supporting vulnerable countries, the Department worked to catalyse transformative changes across all 17 SDGs and foster a more equitable world.

Chapter 3, "Ensuring sustainable financing", highlights how UN DESA has been at the forefront of efforts to address the intertwined challenges of recovery financing and the advancement of the SDGs. Key initiatives included preparations for the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in June 2025,

and advancing progress towards a UN framework convention on international tax cooperation. These efforts underscore UN DESA's commitment to fostering fairer and more resilient economic systems that empower developing countries and are aligned with the SDGs.

Chapter 4, "Making data count", emphasizes UN DESA's role in ensuring data drives sustainable and equitable progress. The Department provided key assessments on SDG progress, launched the UN Data Platform, and focused on global population trends, especially for countries in special situations. The Department also spotlighted gender disparities through the *Gender Snapshot 2023* and fostered innovation through the UN Datathon. Enhanced collaboration within the global data community was achieved through the expanded Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians.

Chapter 5, "Strengthening governance and capacities of national institutions", focuses on UN DESA's work to build capacity in Member States to implement the 11 Principles of Effective Governance, including by fostering innovation and accountability in public institutions. The Department emphasized the role of SDG 16 in advancing the 2030 Agenda, empowered women leaders, and advanced digital government transformation. Additionally, UN DESA collaborated with schools of public administration to enhance public servants' capacities and developed governance strategies aligned with the UN 2.0 "Quintet of Change."

Chapter 6, "Ending the war on nature", emphasizes UN DESA's collaborations with Member States to build capacities and accelerate cross-sectoral actions on energy, climate, forests, oceans, and water, all crucial to SDG progress. The Department supported the Global Stocktaking on SDG 7, linked the 2030 Agenda with the Paris Agreement at COP28, and led preparations for the 2025 UN Ocean Conference. Additionally, UN DESA advanced the Water Action Agenda, supported forest restoration efforts, and highlighted the role of families in climate action.

Finally, Chapter 7, "Framing the future of development", showcases how the Department provided strategic foresight, innovative tools, and policy recommendations to enhance resilience and preparedness for future challenges. Key efforts included supporting the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States,



enhancing policymakers' capacity for systems thinking, and addressing the impact of recurrent crises through the *World Social Report 2024*. UN DESA also promoted evidence-based SDG action, fostered youth engagement in global policymaking, and strengthened its internal capacities to better support Member States.

As we move into the 79th session of the General Assembly, UN DESA will continue to address key development challenges, leveraging the momentum secured in the SDG Summit's Political Declaration and the Summit of the Future's "Pact for the Future". This includes supporting Member States to implement the SDG Stimulus, as well as advocating for reform of the international financial architecture at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development. It also means working to secure a more equitable and inclusive future that leaves no one behind, through COP29, the annual High-level Political Forum, and the Second World Summit for Social Development. In these, and in other important moments, UN DESA is well-prepared to deliver concrete outcomes and support Member States in guaranteeing a prosperous future for all.

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