



United Nations

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

# HIGHLIGHTS 2023-2024

Towards  
Sustainable  
Development  
For All





# HIGHLIGHTS 2023–2024



**United  
Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs

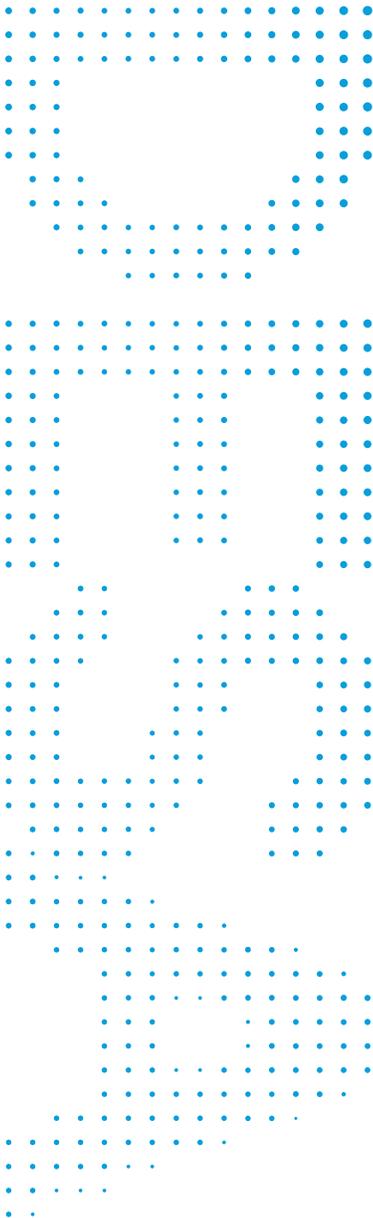
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United Nations, New York



## About the UN DESA Annual Highlights Report

The UN DESA Annual Highlights report is a tool to communicate the contributions of the Department to the realization of internationally agreed development goals and shared social, economic, and environmental aspirations. It showcases the Department's role in gauging trends, building capacities, and shaping solutions. UN DESA Highlights 2023–2024 covers activities over the period of the 78th Session of the General Assembly (September 2023 – August 2024) and reflects the Department's response to the set priorities and expressed needs of Member States. Over the course of the 78th General Assembly UN DESA put its expertise to the task of supporting Member State efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda amidst multiple, intertwined, compounding crises, building their capacities to respond effectively and shape a transformative recovery that builds their resilience for the future.

The UN DESA Annual Highlights is produced by the Strategic Planning and Communication Services in the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, drawing on input authored across the Department. Acknowledgements go to the team of dedicated focal points who helped pull it all together: Adriana Alberti, Anni Haataja-Beri, Michaela Konstanze Brunner, Elie Hobeika, Kenneth Iversen, Stephen Kisambira, Amine Lamrabat, Meng Li, Ryo Nakamura, Monica Nogara, Tomoyuki Okada, Anjali Rangaswami, Cheryl Sawyer and Andrew Smith.

The design of the UN DESA Annual Highlights has benefited from the skill and artistry of a series of interns and consultants who have worked on the report since its initiation in 2019. Thanks go to Jihye (J) Kang and Huafeng Fan for their input to and design of the original 2018–2019 report, to Yihang Ouyang, Yawen Yao, Siyuan Li and Haoting Yao for their work on the following editions from 2020 to 2023, and Rachel Babruskinas for her work on the 2023–2024 edition.

The UN DESA Annual Highlights is available on UN DESA website at: <https://www.un.org/en/desa/highlights-report-2023-2024>. It can also be accessed through the QR code on the left.



# LIST OF ACRONYMS



<b>ABAS</b>	Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS	<b>FfD4</b>	Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development
<b>AHAGH</b>	ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti	<b>FINS</b>	Financing for SIDS
<b>AI</b>	Artificial intelligence	<b>G20</b>	Group of Twenty
<b>AIS</b>	Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Seas	<b>GDP</b>	Gross domestic product
<b>APRM</b>	African Peer Review Mechanism	<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Facility
<b>AU</b>	African Union	<b>GFFFN</b>	Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network
<b>CEPA</b>	Committee of Experts on Public Administration	<b>GISD</b>	Global Investors for Sustainable Development Alliance
<b>COP</b>	United Nations Climate Change Conference	<b>GSDR</b>	Global Sustainable Development Report
<b>COSP</b>	Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	<b>HESI</b>	Higher Education Sustainability Initiative
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus disease 2019	<b>HII</b>	High Impact Initiative
<b>DGC</b>	United Nations Department of Global Communications	<b>HLAB</b>	United Nations High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs
<b>ECA</b>	Economic Commission for Africa	<b>HLPF</b>	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
<b>ECLAC</b>	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	<b>IATT</b>	UN Interagency Task Team on STI for the SDGs
<b>ECOSOC</b>	Economic and Social Council	<b>ICPD</b>	International Conference on Population and Development
<b>ESCAP</b>	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	<b>IDLO</b>	International Development Law Organization
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	<b>IFA</b>	International financial architecture
<b>FfD</b>	Financing for Development	<b>IGF</b>	Internet Governance Forum
		<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund



UN PHOTO/LOEY FELIPE

<b>INFF</b>	Integrated national financing framework	<b>UNCTAD</b>	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
<b>LDC</b>	Least developed country	<b>UN DESA</b>	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
<b>LLDC</b>	Landlocked developing country	<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>LOSI</b>	Local Online Service Index	<b>UN-ENERGY</b>	The United Nations' mechanism for inter-agency collaboration in the field of energy
<b>LRGF</b>	Local and Regional Governments Forum	<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>MGoS</b>	HLPF Major Group and other Stakeholders Coordination Mechanism	<b>UNFF</b>	United Nations Forum on Forests
<b>MDB</b>	Multilateral development bank	<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>MSMEs</b>	Micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises	<b>UN-OHRLLS</b>	United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization	<b>UNPSA</b>	United Nations Public Service Awards
<b>QCPR</b>	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review	<b>UN-Water</b>	Interagency mechanism for coordinating the UN's work on water and sanitation
<b>RCO</b>	United Nations Resident Coordinator Office	<b>UNITAR</b>	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
<b>SAI</b>	Supreme Audit Institution	<b>VLR</b>	Voluntary Local Review
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal	<b>VNR</b>	Voluntary National Review
<b>SIDS</b>	Small Island Developing States	<b>WESP</b>	World Economic Situation and Prospects
<b>SIDS4</b>	Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States	<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>STI</b>	Science, Technology and Innovation		
<b>STI4SDGs</b>	Science, Technology and Innovation for SDGs		
<b>TFM</b>	UN Technology Facilitation Mechanism		
<b>ToT</b>	Training of Trainers		
<b>UN</b>	United Nations		
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team		

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DRIVING  
INNOVATION

# INTRODUCTION

4TH INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE  
Small Island  
Developing  
27-30 MAY  
ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA



Gaston Alphonso Browne (second from right), Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, presides over the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4), with Under-Secretary-General Li Junhua (left) and Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed (centre).



UN PHOTO/ESKINDER DEBEBE

In today's challenging global context – characterized by escalating conflicts, severe climate disruptions, widespread debt distress, and high and rising inequalities – UN DESA has remained steadfast in its mission to support and guide Member States. Amid these complex challenges, UN DESA has maintained focus on supporting the commitments made by Member States through the Political Declarations of the SDG Summits in 2019 and 2023, while responding with agility and determination to the Secretary-General's vision, outlined in Our Common Agenda, to turbocharge SDG progress.

# 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 Dathon. 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.

Li Junhua  
Under-Secretary-General for Economic  
and Social Affairs and Head of UN DESA

# WHAT DOES UN DESA DO?

UN DESA is a vital interface between global policies and national action in the economic, social and environmental spheres. Our main activities focus on promoting progress towards global development priorities, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UN DESA's work falls into three broad categories:

- **Intergovernmental support:** By facilitating major global conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields, as mandated by UN Member States, UN DESA assists countries as they find common ground, set norms, and take decisive steps forward.
- **Analysis:** UN DESA, generates, analyses and compiles and monitors a wide range of economic, social and environmental data and statistics to inform and advise Member States and other stakeholders

on recommendations for shaping effective development policy and practice.

- **Capacity-building:** UN DESA aids in translating policy frameworks developed in UN conferences and summits into programmes at the country level. Through technical assistance and advisory support, the Department supports Member States to build capacities in policy formulation and implementation, data collection and data application, to translate internationally agreed commitments, standards, policies and programmes into action on the ground.

In executing these functions, UN DESA helps governments and other stakeholders take integrated and networked approaches to decision-making, organising and supporting consultations with a range of stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society.

## MAJOR DATABASES

- [UN Data Commons for the SDGs](#)
- UN COVID-19 Data Hub
- UN Data
- UN e-Government Knowledge Database
- UN Global SDG Indicators Database
- UN SDG Data Hub
- UN LDC Data
- Ocean Voluntary Commitment Database
- Water Action Agenda Commitment Database
- UN Public Service Awards Database
- Population databases
- [2023 SDG Summit Acceleration and Accountability Platform](#)
- [SDG Actions Platform](#)
- SDG Acceleration Action Database
- SDG Good Practices Database
- SIDS Partnerships Database
- UN Comtrade International Trade Statistics Database
- UN System SDG Implementation Database
- Voluntary National Reviews Database

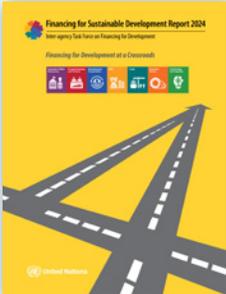
# MAJOR PUBLICATIONS



**World Social Report**



**World Economic Situation and Prospects**



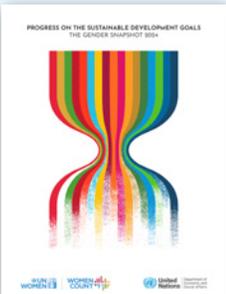
**Financing for Sustainable Development Report**



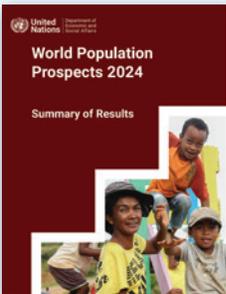
**The Sustainable Development Goals Report**



**United Nations E-Government Survey**



**The Gender Snapshot**



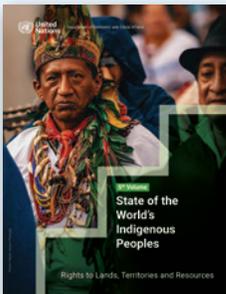
**World Population Prospects**



**Global Sustainable Development Report**



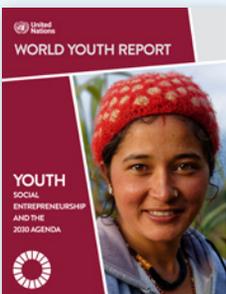
**World Public Sector Report**



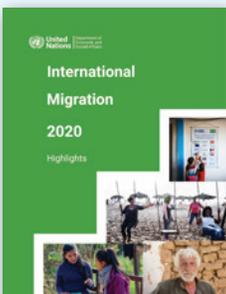
**State of the World's Indigenous Peoples**



**The Global Forest Goals Report**



**World Youth Report**



**International Migration Report**



**The World's Women**

# SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL THROUGH INTERGOVERNMENTAL PROCESSES AND INTER-AGENCY AND MULTISTAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

## General Assembly

### Intergovernmental Processes Supported by DESA

- Economic and financial committee (Second Committee)
- Social, humanitarian and cultural committee (Third Committee)

### Related high-level events and special thematic meetings supported by UN DESA in 2023–2024

- SDG Summit 2023
- High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development
- Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States

## Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

### Intergovernmental Processes Supported by DESA

#### Commissions

- Commission for Social Development
- Commission on Population and Development
- United Nations Forum on Forests
- United Nations Statistical Commission

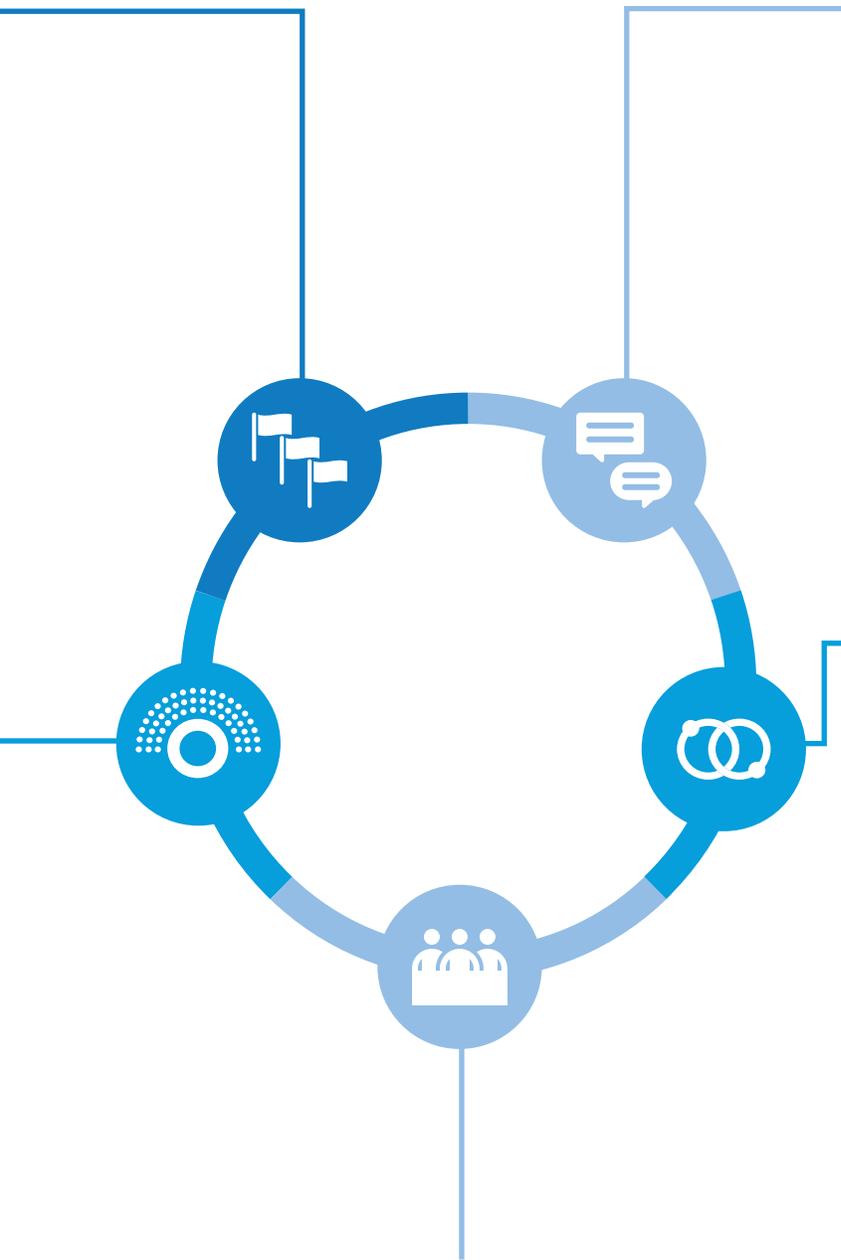
#### Committees and Advisory Bodies

- Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters
- Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations
- Committee of Experts on Public Administration
- Committee for Development Policy
- Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
- UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management
- United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

### Related high-level events and special thematic meetings supported by UN DESA in 2023–2024

- Special Meeting on Harnessing Artificial Intelligence for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Special Meeting on International Cooperation in Tax Matters
- Special Meeting on the Future of Work

United Nations intergovernmental processes and multistakeholder mechanisms support policy reflection and peer learning, galvanize political will, and help mobilize international cooperation and solidarity for moving development forward. UN DESA supports these processes through preparation of thematic reports, stakeholder consultations, and other input and advice to meetings and negotiations.



**High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**

**Forums**

- Development Cooperation Forum (ECOSOC)
- Financing for Development Forum (ECOSOC)
- Internet Governance Forum
- Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (ECOSOC)
- Partnership Forum (ECOSOC)
- Sustainable Development Goals Investment Fair
- World Data Forum
- World Summit on the Information Society Forum
- Youth Forum (ECOSOC)

**UN Collaborative Mechanisms**

- Collaborative Partnership on Forests
- Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs
- High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-building for the 2030 Agenda
- Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators
- Inter-agency Consultative Group on SIDS
- Inter-agency Group on Ageing
- Inter-agency Network on Youth Development
- Inter-agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Inter-agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues
- Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development
- Interagency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs
- UN-Energy
- UN-Oceans
- UN-Water
- UN Task Force on Leveraging Partnerships towards the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda

# UN DESA IN NUMBERS

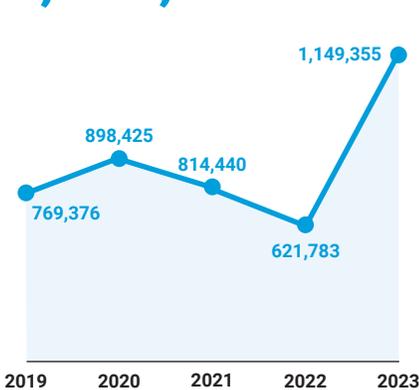
## CAPACITY BUILDING



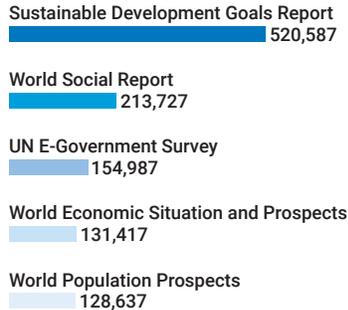
## PUBLICATIONS OUTREACH

In 2023, UN DESA's top 5 most popular publications were downloaded a combined

**1,149,355** times

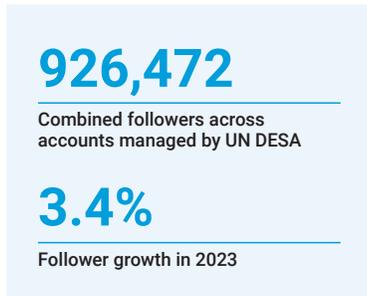


Top 5 downloaded UN DESA publications in 2023



## SOCIAL MEDIA

X (2023)



FACEBOOK (2023)



## PARLIAMENTARY DOCUMENTS

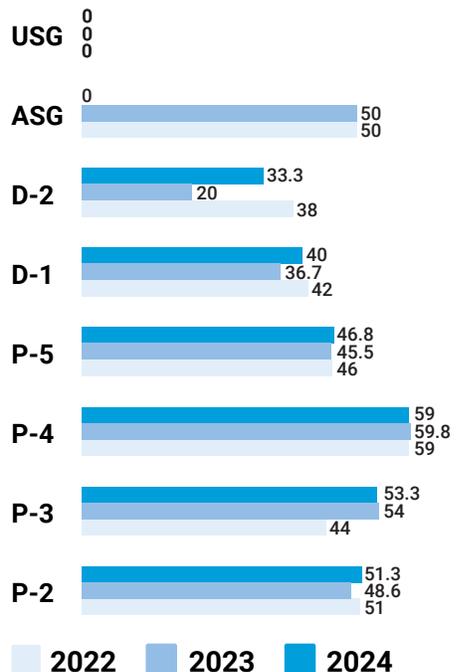
**388** Parliamentary documents were submitted by DESA from January to December 2023, including:

- 100** Reports of expert group and other meetings
- 80** NGO Statements
- 51** Reports of the Secretary-General
- 50** Quadrennial reports, merger applications and new applications for NGO Committee
- 35** Notes by the Secretariat
- 34** Notes by the Secretary-General
- 23** Reports of the intergovernmental bodies
- 15** Procedural documents – Agendas and Programmes of work

## INSIDE DESA

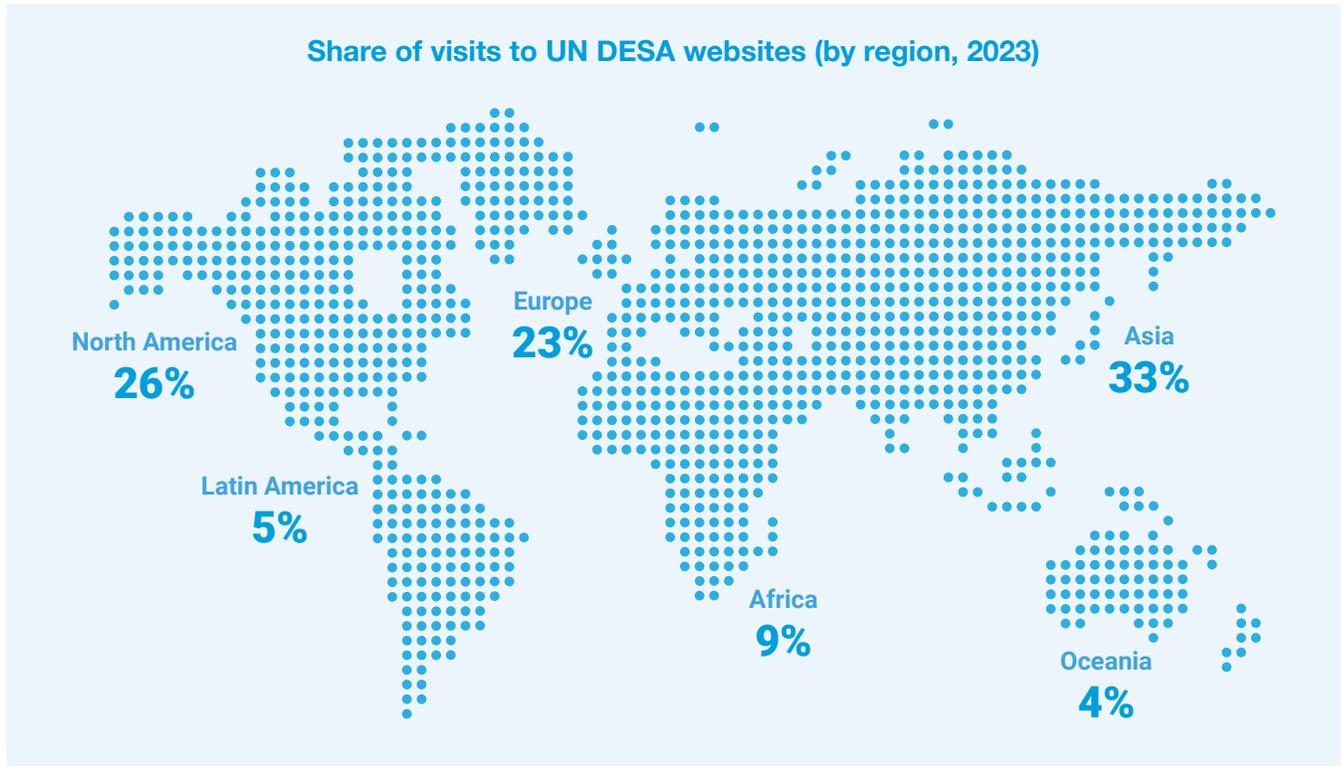
UN DESA staff represent more than **97** countries worldwide, from all world regions

% of staff in professional categories who are female (2022–2024)



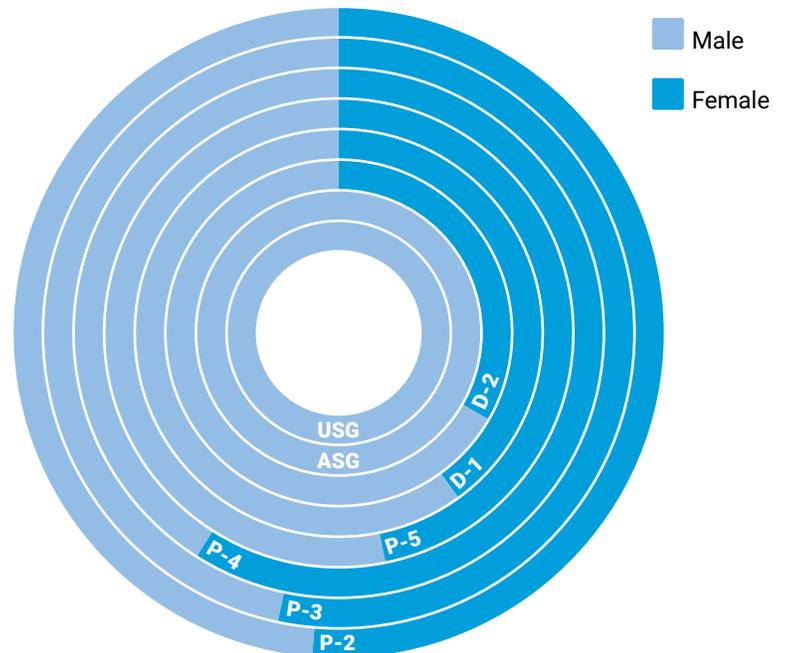
# UN DESA ON THE WEB

In 2023, UN DESA website visits increased **5.4%** over 2022



## Progress towards gender parity at the Professional level in UN DESA

As of 30 June 2024, **51%** of UN DESA staff in professional categories identified as female. UN DESA has so far met or exceeded gender parity at the P-4, P-3 and P-2 levels. Women represent more than 50% of staff at each level in general service categories. The Department remains committed to the promise of gender parity and women's empowerment within its workforce, operations and substantive approach.





# ACCELERATING ACTION FOR THE SDGS

## ...to realize the ambitious and transformative vision of the 2030 Agenda

In 2023–2024, UN DESA continued to work towards the bold, ambitious, and just transformations needed to put the world back on track to achieve the SDGs, by supporting Member States and engaging UN system partners and other stakeholders in intergovernmental and multistakeholder platforms.

### UN DESA...

- Galvanized broad stakeholder engagement and fostered partnerships with the private sector, local authorities, and higher education institutions among others, to build SDG ownership.
- Supported Member States in conducting Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) through preparatory workshops and webinars and facilitated relevant peer learning through VNR Labs.



UN PHOTO/CIA PAK

- Advanced implementation of the 2030 Agenda through support to the ECOSOC forums on financing, science, technology and innovation (STI), and partnerships.
- Galvanized broad stakeholder engagement and fostered partnerships with the private sector, local authorities, and higher education institutions among others, to build SDG ownership.
- Supported SDG implementation at the regional and national levels, in collaboration with Regional Commissions, with special attention to countries in special situations such as Small Island Developing States.
- Contributed to UN system-wide coordination and coherence-building in support of the SDGs.
- Mobilized efforts to advance SDG localization, including collaboration with local networks and on-demand support to conduct Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs).
- Provided data, analysis, policy recommendations and expert guidance to support a successful 2023 SDG Summit and 2024 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), including supporting the intergovernmental consultations on the Political Declaration and the thematic reviews of the five SDGs in focus.

# 01

## ACCELERATING ACTION FOR THE SDGs

---

*Interlinked crises and ongoing conflicts continue to threaten SDG progress, with livelihoods overturned and well-being compromised, especially for many vulnerable groups. In 2023–2024, through the SDG Summit, High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and other intergovernmental processes, UN DESA continued to support Member States to deliver sustainable, resilient, and innovative solutions to realize the 2030 Agenda and leave no one behind.*

### Conducting an in-depth review of the implementation of the SDGs

At the July 2024 High-level Political Forum, more than 90 Heads of State and Government, Deputy Prime Ministers, and Ministers, along with other actors, gathered at the UN Headquarters in New York to review progress towards SDG 1 on no poverty, 2 on zero hunger, 13 on climate action, 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and 17 on partnerships for the Goals. At this first meeting of the forum after the 2023 SDG Summit, 125 high-level presenters, experts, and representatives of the UN system shared experiences and showcased innovative solutions to achieve the SDGs.

Thirty-six countries presented Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), demonstrating further deepening of data and indicators, maturing of institutional frameworks, and more inclusive engagement with stakeholders. Also notable was that several countries continued to address the localization of the SDGs, including through Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs).

Adopted at the closing of the Forum, the focused and balanced Ministerial Declaration identifies current challenges, and future actions and investment pathways to reinforce the 2030 Agenda and deliver on the SDGs.

During the HLPF, 14 VNR Labs served as an informal platform for experience-sharing and reflection on the VNR process, covering a range of topics related to SDG implementation. In addition, UN DESA – in collaboration with key partners – showcased the impact and achievements of higher education institutions, private sector, local and regional governments, parliamentarians, and the scientific community among others through 13 high-level special events. The special events also provided opportunities to learn from experts, such as the United Nations High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs (HLAB) and the Expert Group on Climate and SDG Synergy, and to follow up on recent commitments, from Transforming Education to the High Impact Initiatives announced at the SDG Summit in 2023.

# HLPF IN NUMBERS

## 2024 HLPF and High-level Segment of ECOSOC

Theme: Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions

9

Days

5

SDGs under review

36

Countries presented VNRs

### Who was there?

About 90

Heads of State and Government, Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers, Vice Ministers and Ministerial-level Officials

125

Keynote speakers, panellists, lead discussants, respondents, and moderators in townhall meeting and panels

176

Statements in general debate

### to talk about



About

1000

MGoS and NGOs accredited to ECOSOC

13

Special Events

13

VNR Labs

236

Side Events  
162 in person  
and 74 virtual

14

Exhibitions



Astra Bonini, Chief of the Integrated Policy Analysis Branch in UN DESA's Division for Sustainable Development Goals, speaks at the Expert Group Meeting on SDG 2 and its interlinkages with other SDGs in Rome, Italy, in March 2024. | FAO/GIUSEPPE CAROTENUTO



### Galvanizing ownership and maximizing the support of key stakeholders for the SDGs

UN DESA created spaces alongside intergovernmental meetings for key sectors and stakeholder groups to galvanize their ownership, support and commitments to the 2030 Agenda. For example, the Department worked with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General to organize the SDG Action Weekend ahead of the 2023 SDG Summit, which brought more than 6,000 participants to UN Headquarters. The SDG Mobilization Day on 16 September showcased how youth, women, science and academia, local and regional governments, civil society, the private sector, major groups and other stakeholders are contributing to the SDGs. The SDG Acceleration Day on 17 September centred around three special sessions and the UN-led High Impact

Initiatives, such as Energy Compacts, FutureGov, SDG Stimulus and Power of Data. UN DESA also supported the commitments made by governments through the SDG Summit Acceleration and Accountability Platform.

### Facilitating peer-learning for effective review of SDG implementation

UN DESA facilitated the exchange of experiences and knowledge among government officials from more than 30 countries engaged in preparing VNRs for the 2024 HLPF through three Global Workshops for the 2024 VNRs in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in December 2023, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in April 2024 and New York in July 2024. The workshops also explored specific issues and challenges related to the VNR preparations, featuring sessions on institutions, stakeholder engagement, data and statistics, and means of implementation, among



Under-Secretary-General Li Junhua, addresses a session on Small Island Developing States during the High-level Political Forum 2024. | UN PHOTO/LOEY FELIPE



Secretary-General António Guterres (centre right) participates in the SDG Action Week Civil Society Dialogue at UN Headquarters in New York, in September 2023. | UN PHOTO/PAULO FILGUEIRAS



Participants at the Second Global Workshop for the 2024 Voluntary National Reviews in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, April 2024. | UN DESA

other subjects. UN DESA followed up these workshops with a virtual “knowledge exchange” webinar of VNR-presenting countries with UN entities, academic institutions, and other organizations assisting with the VNR process.

In collaboration with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), UN DESA co-convened *SDGs in Practice*, a series of nine virtual and in-person capacity-building and knowledge-sharing training sessions on the margins of the HLPF.

### Accelerating localization of the SDGs

UN DESA continued to join efforts with partners to accelerate the push for SDG localization. UN DESA led the formulation of a network on “Localization of the 2030 Agenda” in September 2023, aiming to facilitate collaboration,

coordination, and coherence within the UN in mobilizing action at the local level for SDG achievement.

UN DESA continued to provide capacity-building support to the development of VLRs in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, aimed at facilitating a dialogue between the national and local processes, as well as coordinating coherent approaches to SDG implementation. Local and national governments in Honduras, South Africa and Zimbabwe prepared VLRs, with the support of Italian Cooperation and the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation, and in partnership with Resident Coordinators and United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs).

During the 2024 HLPF, UN DESA showcased effective localization policies and high-impact coalitions led by local and regional governments in relation to the SDGs



Mayor Carmen Paz of San Nicolás, Honduras (centre), consults with key stakeholders from the health sector as part of San Nicolas' Voluntary Local Review preparatory process in March 2024. | REINA ZAVALA

under review at the 2024 HLPF through convening the Seventh Local and Regional Governments Forum (LRGF), in collaboration with partners. The forum focused on the SDG Rescue Plan and the Summit of the Future, highlighting the importance of partnerships among different spheres of government, and the role of VLRs and Voluntary Subnational Reviews in fostering policy transformation towards SDGs progress.

### Strengthening science-policy-society interface and putting science, technology and innovation to the service of the SDGs

Recognizing the centrality of science to sustainable development, UN DESA continued to support the UN Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM) as the Secretariat for the UN Inter-Agency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (IATT). The Department also played a key role in the Secretary-General's Group of Ten High-level Representatives of Civil Society, Private Sector, and Scientific Community to Promote Science, Technology, and Innovation for the SDGs (10-Member-Group). With the support of UN DESA, the 10-Member-Group has already advanced proposals for initiatives, policy, partnerships and innovative

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Since 2018, the Voluntary Local Review global movement has provided an unprecedented push towards localization. The more than 200 voluntary local reviews carried out to date have shed light on and raised the profile of local action vis-à-vis national action and international processes.

Progress towards Sustainable Development Goals: towards a rescue plan for people and planet, Report of the Secretary-General (special edition, A/78/80), paragraph 54

”

solutions related to emerging science and technology for the SDGs. The group has emphasized both formidable challenges and unprecedented opportunities in the face of accelerating climate change and the burgeoning capabilities of artificial intelligence (AI).

One critical capacity-building component of the TFM is Science, Technology and Innovation for SDGs (STI4SDGs) Roadmaps. As a follow-up to the 2023 Multistakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (STI Forum), UN DESA, together with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the European Commission on Building Capacity and Scaling Up Adoption of STI4SDGs Roadmaps in Africa, co-organized a workshop in October 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It served to enhance STI capacity, facilitate peer learning and partnership, and support governments in assessing and advancing the implementation of STI roadmaps.

The Department supported STI-driven solutions to SDG challenges, focusing on climate action and harnessing AI for the SDGs, at the 9th STI Forum held in May 2024. In partnership with Engineering for Change, UN DESA brought selected young innovators to the STI

Forum for lightning talks and showcases, spotlighting those innovations from and for Small Island Developing States. The Forum was held around the theme “Science, technology and innovation for reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions”.



### Harnessing the power of partnerships to accelerate SDG implementation

UN DESA continued to galvanize partnerships between Member States and all other key stakeholders for sustainable development, as the Secretariat for the ECOSOC Partnership Forum. The Forum demonstrated how innovative partnerships could be scaled up to drive the implementation of SDGs under review in 2024, leveraging learnings from the High Impact Initiatives. It featured a set of SDG Action Segments organized by key partners from the UN system working in collaboration with Member States and other stakeholders.

The 2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator Initiative led by the Department continued to support effective multi-stakeholder partnerships for the SDGs – offering training and advisory services for stronger collaboration across sectors to Member States, UN entities, and stakeholders. Through the Partnership Accelerator, UN DESA established the Mexico Network of Partnerships for Local Action, collectively developed by various stakeholders dedicated to realizing the SDGs through strengthened partnerships and local approaches. A comprehensive national partnership landscape assessment for Moldova was conducted, analysing challenges and opportunities to accelerate SDG implementation through multi-stakeholder partnerships. The Department also collaborated with Partnerships2030 and the Global Forum on National SDG Advisory Bodies to raise awareness and develop enabling factors for multi-stakeholder partnerships through the SDG Partnership Symposium and the launch of the Unite to Ignite report.



Participants at the SIDS Partnership Symposium, February 2024, Bangkok, Thailand. | UN ESCAP

UN DESA also further strengthened partnerships in support of SIDS development priorities, by organizing the SIDS Partnership Symposium, in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The symposium – held during the 2024 Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development – gathered insights from SIDS stakeholders, explored ways to enhance partnerships on key SIDS priorities, and fostered peer learning for effective collaborations. In addition, the Department supported the organization of the “Partnering for the Planet” online course by St. George’s University, which engaged 468 participants from 74 countries to build capacity and demonstrate partnership principles for SDG support. The course covered modules on partnership approaches, including those related to health and climate adaptation.

### Enhancing coordination of the ECOSOC system to support the implementation of the SDGs

In 2023-2024, UN DESA continued to support the ECOSOC Coordination Segment, which emphasized that the reinvigoration of multilateralism is the key to

achieving the 2030 Agenda and crucial for advancing and building momentum towards the Summit of the Future. Discussions stressed the importance of integrated approaches to eradicate poverty and hunger, support for climate change adaptation and innovative strategies for environmental sustainability. It also highlighted financing as a crucial enabler for transformative and sustainable policies, and the fundamental role of international cooperation and partnerships in accelerating the implementation of the SDGs. There was a call for decisive action in response to marked gaps in digital transformation and population dynamics, which have the potential to multiply efforts to advance SDG implementation.

### **Enhancing the effectiveness and coherence of the UN Development System to support countries in achieving the SDGs**

UN DESA played a key role in the ECOSOC Operational Activities for Development Segment, focusing on enhancing the effectiveness and coherence of the UN development system to support Member States in achieving the SDGs. The Department's comprehensive support aimed to ensure no country is left behind. The segment reviewed progress and provided guidance on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) and the repositioning of the UN development system. It highlighted the need to reinvigorate the Funding Compact for a more strategic and responsive system, emphasizing the importance of adequate, predictable, and flexible funding for the Resident Coordinator system, which is essential for effective leadership and coordination in national development and crisis response. The outcome of the segment underscored several critical actions, including the need for the UN to enhance its efforts in six targeted areas where urgent transitions were needed to deliver SDG acceleration, continue efforts to mainstream gender equality, youth and disability inclusion in the UN's work, and to close the resident coordinator funding gap to unlock the full potential of the system's reforms. Additionally, the segment focused on addressing systemic inequalities in

international financial architecture to better enable developing countries to invest in the SDGs. Member States also welcomed the renewed Funding Compact, which will be a critical tool in the coming years to help shift funding trends towards less earmarked, high-quality resources for the UN development system.

### **Providing data, analysis and policy recommendations for the quadrennial comprehensive policy review**

Through four hugely successful surveys in 2023, UN DESA gathered feedback on the implementation of the General Assembly resolution on the repositioning of the UN development system, as well as feedback on the implementation of the QCPR. The review will issue vital policy guidance to strengthen United Nations development system support in accelerating action on the SDGs for the 2025–2028 period. The Department canvassed programme country governments, United Nations entities, resident coordinators, financially contributing governments and UNCTs. Survey feedback shows positive results from reforms to ensure better support for national priorities, perceived enhancements to alignment with national plans, better coordination of policy support, joint planning, and more cohesive communication efforts. Data and findings from the surveys were contained in a Secretary-General's report, which offers analysis and recommendations for consideration by Member States in ECOSOC with a view to the 2024 QCPR to be undertaken by the General Assembly.

### **Supporting Small Island Developing States on their paths to resilient prosperity**

UN DESA helped deliver the landmark Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS – A Renewed Declaration for Resilient Prosperity (ABAS) at the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4). The ABAS outcome – adopted by consensus at the

Conference and for which UN DESA supported the intergovernmental negotiations – sets out the sustainable development aspirations of SIDS over the next ten years and the support required from the international community to achieve them. The conference itself assessed SIDS' progress towards their sustainable development objectives and was a forum for practical and impactful solutions and partnerships to address SIDS' most pressing challenges.

As secretariat of the conference, UN DESA coordinated substantive and logistical preparations, in collaboration with the host country and other UN entities. Under the theme “Charting the course towards resilient prosperity”, it brought more than 3,000 representatives from 121 countries, the UN system and other stakeholders to Antigua and Barbuda in 2024. Plenary sessions, five interactive dialogues, over 200 side events, and five informal special events convened by the Host – in collaboration with UN entities – galvanized support among stakeholders, including Member States, the private sector, and civil society for a sustainable future for SIDS. UN DESA, together with UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service/DGC, coordinated the special accreditation process that granted 105 civil society organizations and other stakeholder organizations special accreditation to attend the SIDS4 Conference, and supported the registration of 1,030 stakeholders, 537 of whom attended the Conference in person. Webinars, social media and newsletters were key channels employed by UN DESA to promote the SIDS4 Conference and avenues for stakeholder participation. The Secretary-General also convened a high-level meeting on mobilizing resources to implement the new SIDS agenda.

To support sound intergovernmental decision-making on the ABAS outcome, UN DESA convened two global stakeholder consultations in 2023 to bring substantive inputs from stakeholders. The first global online consultation was held between June/July 2023 and generated 170 responses. UN DESA prepared a global report and three regional snapshots (AIS, Caribbean and Pacific) summarizing the inputs received

and outlining several policy recommendations that can assist SIDS in achieving their sustainable development priorities. The second global online consultation was held between December 23 and January 24 to solicit informal inputs from stakeholders related to the themes of the five interactive dialogues for SIDS4. The consultation generated 64 responses from stakeholders from different sectors and regions of the world which were captured in a summary report highlighting key messages and takeaways from the consultation.



UN DESA continued to build national capacities for integrated planning and mainstreaming sustainable and green growth opportunities in the Caribbean. A regional workshop entitled “Accelerating Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in the Caribbean Region: Sustainable and Green Transition Opportunities” was organized in November 2023 in cooperation with ECLAC and the RCO/UNCT. The workshop benefited policymakers, civil society, academia, private sector and relevant stakeholders from Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, and Jamaica. Participants addressed their sustainable recovery post-COVID-19, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, identifying green growth opportunities to achieve sustainability and resilience.



Building on collaborative relationships with major private sector umbrella organizations, UN DESA carved out spaces alongside important intergovernmental gatherings to shine a spotlight on the impact of the business sector on SDG implementation. The



UN DESA Under-Secretary-General Li Junhua, Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, Prime Minister Gaston Browne of Antigua and Barbuda, and High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS Rabab Fatima at the closing session of SIDS4 in Antigua and Barbuda in May 2024. | UN PHOTO

Department collaborated with UN Global Compact and the International Chamber of Commerce on the 2023 Private Sector Forum, bringing together leading CEOs, investors, Heads of State and Government, senior UN leadership and civil society representatives for interactive discussion and to build alliances to turbocharge SDG implementation. UN DESA also continued to collaborate with International Organisation of Employers, World Business Council of Sustainable Development, and UN Global Compact to bring the annual SDG Global Business Forum to the special events programme of the High-level Political Forum in July. Considering the goals under in-depth review, the 2024 SDG Business Forum placed special emphasis on a just transition, poverty eradication and the future

of work, as well as the corporate governance aspects of food systems transformation.

### Ensuring higher education supports sustainable development

Recognizing the key role of higher education in achieving sustainable development, UN DESA continued to co-chair the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI), a partnership between the UN and the higher education community, including UN University, UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education and the Sulitest Association. The 2024 HESI Global Forum at the HLPF, under the theme “The Future of Higher Education for Sustainable Development”, served as a



Bolaji Balogun, CEO of Chapel Hill Denham (centre left), Maria Fernanda Garza, Chair of the International Chamber of Commerce (centre right), and Fabio Barbosa, CEO of Natura (far right), discussing leveraging points to accelerate SDG investments during the 2023 Private Sector Forum, in New York. | UN GLOBAL COMPACT

preparatory platform for initiatives to be advocated or launched at the Summit of the Future.

### Enhancing global coordination and collaboration on sustainable transport

UN DESA continued to play a key role in the organization's work on sustainable transport by preparing for the Implementation Plan of the upcoming United Nations Decade of Sustainable Transport – declared by the General Assembly to start in 2026 – as well as the proposed Third United Nations Sustainable Transport Conference. In November 2023, UN DESA organized the first-ever UN Expert Group Meeting on Sustainable Transport, together with the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). The meeting brought together a wide array of representatives from Member States, the United Nations system, think tanks, civil society

and other stakeholders to consider how sustainable transport can best accelerate SDG progress. In conjunction with the meeting, a celebratory meeting was held to commemorate the first World Sustainable Transport Day on 26 November, as mandated by the General Assembly.

### Supporting countries and stakeholders in navigating the future of work

The need to accelerate action towards creating decent jobs as a crucial response to addressing poverty and deepening inequalities was highlighted at the ECOSOC Special Meeting on the Future of Work, supported by UN DESA. Under the theme “Towards a productive, inclusive, and sustainable global society,” Member States and other stakeholders underscored how demographic trends and rapid technological

advancement were shaping the future of work. Quality education and skills training were highlighted as essential, alongside the need to close the digital divide. Furthermore, particular attention was paid to supporting vulnerable groups in the labour market through improved access to social protection programmes and urging international cooperation to ensure policies keep pace with rapid market changes.



### Harnessing artificial intelligence for the SDGs

Member States recognized the importance of accelerating action to regulate AI globally and ensure the potential of AI is utilized in support of sustainable development at the ECOSOC Special Meeting on Harnessing

Artificial Intelligence for the SDGs in May 2024. Supported by UN DESA, the meeting underscored the need to address the risk of AI exacerbating existing inequalities due to the widening global digital divide. The discussions also emphasized the significant challenges in regulating AI globally, balancing innovation and regulation, keeping up with the rapid pace of technological advancement, emphasizing ethical and societal implications, and overcoming technical expertise and capacity gaps. Presenters also highlighted specific applications of AI for the SDGs. In support of the meeting, UN DESA together with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Slalom Element Lab, organized a special hands-on AI for Good Lab, demonstrating how AI is being deployed to advance the SDGs. Member States were urged to invest in responsible AI development and governance that leaves no one behind.

# UN DESA HIGHLIGHTS 2023–2024:

## Intergovernmental support: at the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4)

UN DESA convened world leaders, civil society, youth and other actors at the SIDS4 conference in Antigua and Barbuda in May 2024 to address key issues confronting small island nations – including the climate emergency, spiraling debt and health crises. The Conference was a resounding success, culminating in the adoption of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS – a Renewed Declaration for Resilient Prosperity (ABAS). It establishes the sustainable development aspirations of small islands over the next 10 years and the support required from the international community to achieve them. UN DESA now will work to champion follow up on the ABAS in a range of intergovernmental fora, recognizing that partnerships will be fundamental

to pair bold action from SIDS governments with support from the international community.

SIDS4 featured more than 170 side events and five special events, and UN DESA also organized two Global Policy Dialogues at the Conference – one on the economic prospects for SIDS and one on their demographic prospects, drawing on expert analysis from the Department's *2024 World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP)* report and the *Population Prospects of Countries in Special Situations* report.

## Analysis: on SIDS prospects for the future

UN DESA highlighted the promising yet vulnerable economic prospects of SIDS in the *2024 World Economic Situation and Prospects* report. In 2023, SIDS experienced a robust rebound in tourism, crucial for their



Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General, with Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and Secretary-General of the SIDS4 Conference, and Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, host of SIDS4. | UN DESA

# SPOTLIGHT ON SIDS & UN DESA

**UN DESA analysis shows that SIDS' external debt stock has grown by more than 50 per cent, relative to their income**



**Source:** UN DESA, based on the World Bank World Development Indicators database.

**Note:** Seventeen SIDS are included in this analysis based on data availability.

economies, with projections indicating a growth of 3.1 per cent in 2024. However, challenges persist, including climate change impacts, oil price fluctuations and significant output losses following the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these obstacles, SIDS are making strides in recovery, with tourism nearing pre-pandemic levels and innovative financing mechanisms like debt-for-climate swaps being explored to foster resilience and sustainable development. The report emphasized the critical need for targeted support and international cooperation to address the unique vulnerabilities and adaptation finance needs of SIDS, ensuring their path towards sustainable economic recovery and growth.

## Capacity-building: on financing in SIDS

UN DESA worked with SIDS to prioritize sustainable financing strategies. Through projects like “Financing for SIDS (FINS)”, spanning Fiji, the Dominican Republic and Seychelles, the focus is on integrating national financing frameworks to bolster planning and coordination. Technical guidance from UN DESA aided SIDS in crafting strategic investment projects aligned with



UN DESA colleagues work with Government counterparts in Fiji on an integrated national financing framework. | UN DESA

the SDGs, promoting resilience and sustainability. UN DESA also is dedicated to empowering SIDS with the statistical tools and expertise needed to navigate their complex development challenges. The Department supported SIDS through workshops, advisory missions and projects to enhance statistical capabilities crucial for policymaking and sustainable development.

UN DESA capacity-building initiatives also fostered collaboration and knowledge-sharing among SIDS, addressing common challenges. Long-term projects including the “Programme on Statistics and Data” and on “Resilient and Agile National Statistical Systems” demonstrated UN DESA’s commitment to building sustainable statistical capacities for SIDS and promoting data-driven decision-making.



For more information on SIDS and UN DESA partnerships, scan the QR code above or visit [bit.ly/SIDS4DESA](https://bit.ly/SIDS4DESA)



# REDUCING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

## ... to give meaning to the commitment to leave no one behind

As the world faces compounding crises – from a cost-of-living crunch to rising inequalities and escalating debt burdens – UN DESA remains steadfast in its commitment to leave no one behind. In 2023–2024, the Department continued to showcase its diverse work in reducing poverty and inequality while catalysing transformative changes across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



UNICEF/MARK NAFTALIN

## UN DESA...

- Galvanized collective efforts to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality, and find innovative solutions to food insecurity.
- Supported the creation of decent work opportunities, including in micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises.
- Advocated for cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy.
- Advanced disability inclusion and supported Indigenous Peoples' rights.
- Addressed global challenges and supported countries facing structural vulnerabilities and crisis.

# 02

## REDUCING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

*UN DESA's initiatives to eliminate poverty, reduce inequalities, and address the structural weaknesses of countries in crisis highlight its dedication to creating a fairer and more equitable world for everyone. By empowering small and medium-sized businesses, promoting innovative solutions, supporting cooperatives, advocating for Indigenous Peoples' rights, and advancing disability inclusion, the Department is driving significant changes across the Sustainable Development Goals.*

### Galvanizing action to eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities

UN DESA supported the 62nd Session of the Commission for Social Development in February 2024, which emphasized the need for context-specific policies, strengthened national statistical capacities, and robust social protection systems to accelerate poverty eradication. Meanwhile, UN DESA's tireless support to Member States in preparing an ambitious Second World Summit for Social Development in 2025, demonstrates its commitment to addressing persistent gaps and mobilizing greater investments for the social pillar of sustainable development.

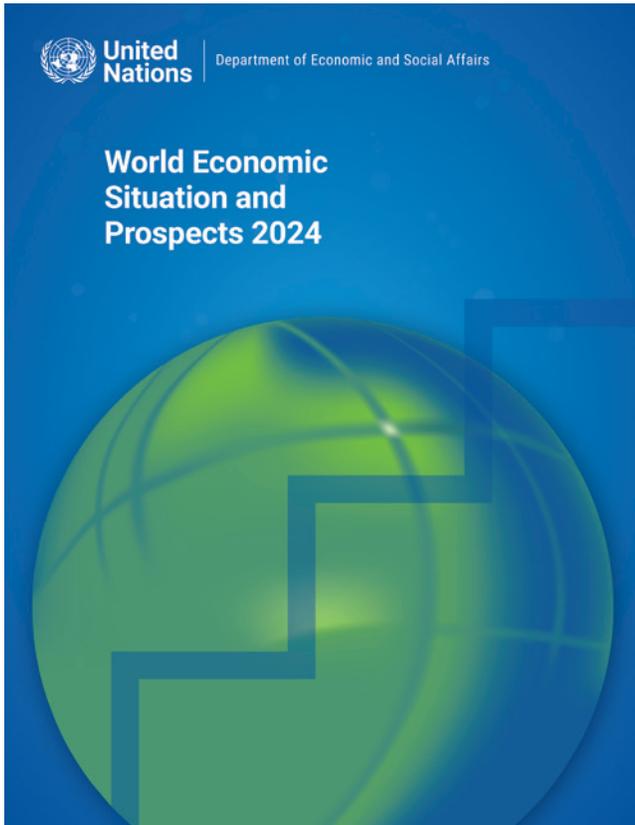
On 17 October 2023, UN DESA promoted the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty by highlighting the theme of decent work and social protection, emphasizing the need for dignified working conditions and income security for all. The Department drew on first-hand testimonials and joined those living in poverty and other stakeholders in calling for political leaders across the world to prioritize human dignity in decision-making, emphasizing the importance of global partnerships to achieve a poverty-free world.



### Calling for collective action to address structural vulnerabilities of countries

UN DESA's normative and analytical work has shed light on critical global challenges to eradicating poverty and ensuring sustainable development. Produced in partnership with United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the five United Nations Regional Commissions, the flagship *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2024* report raised concerns about soaring debt costs hindering investment in education, health, and social protection systems in countries in vulnerable and special situations, including least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Against this backdrop, the report called for stronger and more effective global cooperation to reinvigorate the multilateral trading system, reform development finance, address debt challenges, and scale up climate financing.

UN DESA also supported the independent experts of the Committee for Development Policy to undertake



Participants at the Commemoration of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, celebrated on 17 October 2023. | UN DESA



Meshell Whyte, ATD 4th World Activist at the 2023 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. | UN DESA

“  
**Realizing the SDGs will require investments in people. We need to mobilize financial resources at a level that matched our social development ambitions, both through domestic resource mobilization and international partnerships.**  
**Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs**  
 Opening Remarks at the Commission for Social Development  
 5 February 2024  
 ”



Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, delivers opening remarks at the Commission for Social Development, 62nd session. | UN DESA.



Participants at the international workshop in Fiji cultivating mushrooms using Juncao technology. | UN DESA

the triennial review of the list of LDCs, which highlighted the mixed progress made amidst challenging global conditions, as this group of deeply deprived countries strive to graduate from the LDC classification.

### **Empowering micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises**

Recognizing the pivotal role of micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in creating decent jobs and driving the global economy, UN DESA has focused on empowering them. In February 2024 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, UN DESA partnered with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office and Country Team to deliver comprehensive training to local entrepreneurs. These workshops

equipped participants with enhanced entrepreneurial and digitalization skills, enabling them to tap into regional markets like the Africa Continental Free Trade Area. By strengthening MSMEs – which represent over 90 per cent of all businesses globally – UN DESA is fostering economic growth and job creation, contributing to poverty eradication and inclusive, sustainable development.

### **Scaling innovative solutions: Juncao technology**

UN DESA is empowering communities to address poverty, environmental degradation, and food security challenges through innovation. In Fiji, UN DESA collaborated with national partners to showcase the transformative



A speaker at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in April 2024. | UN DESA

potential of “Juncao”, a type of grass that can be used in mushroom production, as feed for animals, as wind-breaks, and to minimize soil erosion. An international workshop held in February 2024 brought together participants from 20 countries to witness Fiji’s successful implementation of Juncao across six demonstration sites, facilitating knowledge exchange and promoting the adoption of this versatile technology.

### **Promoting cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy**

UN DESA remains a strong advocate for cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy as drivers of a more inclusive and equitable global economic system.

The Department worked with UN Member States to proclaim 2025 the International Year of Cooperatives by preparing reports, supporting negotiations for the underlying resolution, and establishing mechanisms for its observance. UN DESA plays a key role in coordinating UN activities on cooperatives, conducting capacity-development, and collaborating with diverse partners in the social and solidarity economy.

### **Supporting Indigenous Peoples’ rights**

UN DESA’s commitment to upholding the rights of Indigenous Peoples is exemplified by its assistance to the Government of Paraguay from August to November 2023 in implementing its National Plan on Indigenous

Peoples. Through capacity-building workshops and comprehensive analysis of existing efforts and gaps, UN DESA facilitated collaboration between government officials, Indigenous representatives, and other stakeholders. The workshops focused on practical actions to improve the well-being and rights of Paraguay's Indigenous Peoples, who face poverty, discrimination, and limited access to essential services. UN DESA's collaboration with the Government of Paraguay and the UN Country Team is helping prioritize the needs of Indigenous Peoples and address their disadvantages.

**Advancing and promoting disability inclusion across all fronts**

UN DESA is a long-standing champion for disability inclusion. In June 2024, the Department played

a pivotal role in ensuring meaningful participation of disability experts from traditionally marginalized groups in the 17th Conference of States Parties to the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (COSP17). By consulting with representatives from organizations of Indigenous women with disabilities, deaf persons, and those with deaf blindness on key decisions, UN DESA fostered an inclusive and diverse Conference. This led to record social media engagement, raising awareness and fostering dialogue on disability rights. The Department's major *UN Disability and Development Report 2024*, produced through collaboration with more than 200 experts including representative organizations of persons with disabilities, also provides a robust and up-to-date analytical basis for disability-inclusive implementation of the SDGs globally.



Delegates at COSP17. | UN DESA



United Nations | Department of Economic and Social Affairs



## Disability and Development Report 2024

Accelerating the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities



### Spotlighting the crisis in Haiti and need for scaled-up international support

UN DESA's commitment to addressing complex crises and supporting the people whose lives and livelihoods they threaten is evident in its support to the ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti (AHAGH). This group has been actively monitoring the situation, engaging stakeholders, and advocating for a holistic approach to address the multifaceted crisis in Haiti. In June 2024, the Department supported the AHAGH meeting in its efforts to address the latest developments concerning the implementation of the UN Cooperation Framework for Sustainable Development for Haiti (2023–2027). The meeting underscored the urgency to deploy the Multinational Security Support Mission to assist the Haitian National Police in securing the country and boosting economic activity, as well as a need for funding for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration efforts. UN DESA will continue to contribute to efforts to stabilize Haiti and promote sustainable development in the country.



A woman walks by a fire in the rubble-filled streets of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. | UN PHOTO/MARCO DORMINO



## ENSURING SUSTAINABLE FINANCING

### ... to deliver a sustainable future

In 2023–2024, UN DESA spearheaded its vital support to Member States and other stakeholders in tackling multiple global crises and supporting a coordinated response to finance recovery and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Department initiated preparations for the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development to be held on 30 June–3 July 2025 in Spain. UN DESA also supported negotiations of draft terms of reference for a UN framework convention, aimed at establishing an inclusive, fair, transparent, efficient, equitable, and effective international tax system that supports sustainable development.



ILO/MARCEL CROZET

## UN DESA...

- Led research and analytical work to identify financing challenges in the lead up to the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and presented possible solutions.
- Stepped up support to developing countries, strengthening capacities in tax policy and administration, mobilizing private investment for the SDGs and integrated national financing frameworks.
- Supported the Secretary-General's advocacy for an SDG Stimulus and for reform of the international financial architecture.
- Supported the UN intergovernmental process on tax, towards building a legitimate, fair, stable, inclusive, and effective international tax system that responds to the needs, priorities, and capacities of all countries, and accelerates progress towards the SDGs.

# 03

## ENSURING SUSTAINABLE FINANCING

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*The world is facing a sustainable development crisis, with financing challenges at its heart imperiling the SDGs and climate action. Financing gaps for sustainable development are large and growing, with around \$4 trillion additional investment needed annually for developing countries. The finance divide has not been bridged, with developing countries paying around twice as much on average in interest on their total sovereign debt stock as developed countries. Many countries lack access to affordable finance or are experiencing debt distress. To support countries in addressing these challenges, UN DESA's support was centred around preparation for the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in 2025, which will be a last chance to correct course if the SDGs are to be achieved by their 2030 deadline.*

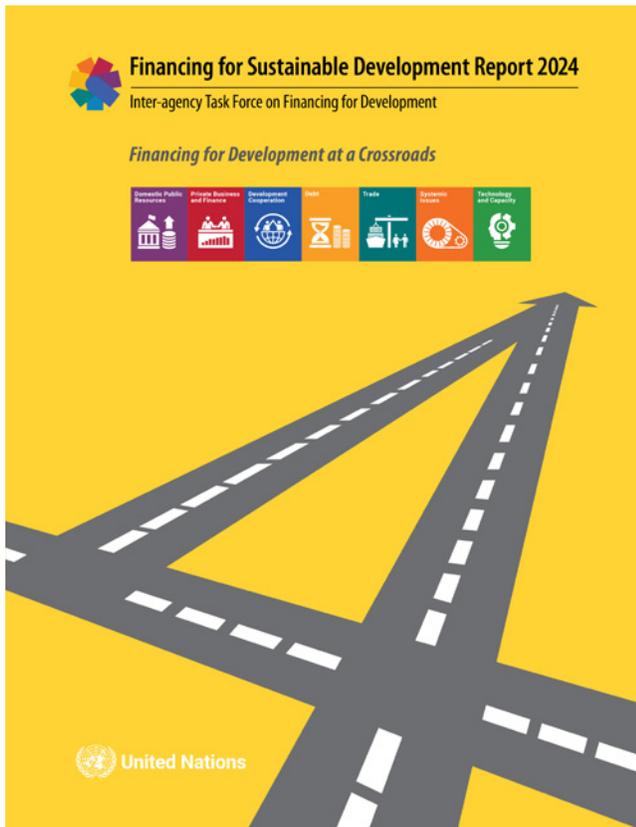
### Financing for development at a crossroads

The Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development, chaired by UN DESA Under-Secretary-General Li Junhua, sounded the alarm that the world is facing a sustainable development crisis, and that financing challenges are imperiling the SDGs and climate action. In its annual evaluation of the global sustainable finance landscape, the *Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2024: Financing for Development at a Crossroads*, the Task Force underscored the need to urgently close financing gaps through an investment push, close policy and architecture gaps to make the international financial architecture (IFA) fit for purpose in a crisis-prone world, and close credibility gaps, translating rhetoric into action to rebuild trust in multilateralism.



### Advancing Integrated National Financing Frameworks in Small Island Developing States

UN DESA supported SIDS to advance integrated national financing frameworks (INFFs), strengthening their capacity to align and mobilize financing with their national development priorities and the SDGs. The Financing for SIDS (FINS) initiative was launched by UN DESA in January 2023, with initial funding from Italy and further supported by Denmark. FINS places financing advisors within the relevant Ministry to assist with INFF implementation, and is currently being implemented in Dominican Republic, Fiji, and Seychelles. In Dominican Republic, an embedded financing advisor is providing



support for assessments and diagnostics, financing strategies and governance mechanisms, along with capacity-building workshops to ensure knowledge transfer. In Seychelles and Fiji, support will be provided in preparing a financing strategy for their respective national development plans, as well as technical advice on institutional arrangements and governance mechanisms to advance the INFF process.

### Scaling up long-term affordable financing for the SDGs

UN DESA worked to bring the Secretary-General’s SDG Stimulus front and centre in intergovernmental negotiations. With the aim to offset the challenging market conditions that many developing countries face, the Stimulus called for a significant increase in financing and investment in the SDGs by at least \$500 billion per year.

The Department helped feature the SDG Stimulus as one of 12 High Impact Initiatives of the SDG Summit with the potential to accelerate efforts towards



Ken Ofori-Atta, Minister for Finance and Economic Planning of Ghana, speaking at the SDG Stimulus session during the SDG Summit in September 2023. | UN DESA

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Financing challenges are at the heart of our inability to make sufficient progress on the SDGs.

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

”

just development transitions and SDG achievement. Ministers from both developed and developing countries, and representatives of multilateral development banks (MDBs), the private sector and other stakeholders gathered to discuss how to advance key tenets of the SDG Stimulus. Creation of a Leaders Group was announced by the Secretary-General to deliver clear steps to unlock the additional \$500 billion before the end of 2024.

## Mobilizing tax and domestic resources for the SDGs

Amid the economic and cost of living crisis, UN DESA helped countries in their efforts to raise domestic resources and align tax policies in support of the SDGs and climate action. Through its Secretarial role, the Department helped advance the work of the UN Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters on key topics including bilateral tax treaties, the taxation of the digitalized and globalized economy and the interaction of tax, trade and investment. This year the Committee released a *Handbook on the Taxation of Wealth*, along with guidance on transfer pricing for agricultural products and for the pharmaceutical industry. It also examined the role of carbon taxes and other measures in supporting the energy transition.

Responding to an increasing demand and growing need for training on complex tax topics, UN DESA also delivered a series of workshops – both virtual and



Participants of the UN Regional Workshop on the Taxation of Services, held on 4 – 8 December 2023 at UN ECA, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. | UN DESA

in-person – for tax officials from developing countries. These workshops built expertise in tax treaties, transfer pricing, and gender-responsive taxation, fostering collaboration among tax professionals from diverse backgrounds and regions, in support of SDG implementation.

### Promoting a framework for inclusive and effective international tax cooperation

Through the UN intergovernmental process on tax, Member States are working towards a legitimate, inclusive, and effective international tax system; one that responds to the needs, priorities, and capacities of all countries, and accelerates progress towards the SDGs. To this end, UN DESA supported the Ad Hoc Committee to Draft Terms of Reference for a United Nations Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation taking a holistic, sustainable development perspective that considers interactions with

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**This workshop has provided good guidance on how we should conduct our negotiations and update our treaty models/domestic law.**

**Participant of the UN Regional Workshop on the Taxation of Services**  
Held from 4–8 December 2023,  
in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

”

other important economic, social and environmental policy areas. International organizations, civil society, academia and business contributed to the Committee’s work throughout the process.



Participants of the first session of the Ad Hoc Committee to Draft Terms of Reference for a United Nations Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation, New York, August 2024. | UN DESA

“

We have to take fully into account the different realities, needs, priorities, and capacities that countries have. This is how we can make real progress towards an international tax system for sustainable development that works for all.

**Mr. Ramy Youssef**

Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee to Draft Terms of Reference for a UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation

”

### Building political momentum and commitments to finance development and climate

UN DESA delivered the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development in September 2023, which showcased new financing commitments, presented ambitious but achievable solutions for reforms, and provided momentum for a new SDG-aligned investment push at the highest political level. 17 Heads of State or Government, four Vice-Presidents and Deputy Prime Ministers, and over 50 Ministers and Vice-Ministers attended the High-level Dialogue, which considered ways to foster debt sustainability and strengthen the global financial safety net; promote inclusive and effective international tax cooperation and mobilize



Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, speaking at the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development in September 2023. | UN DESA

domestic resources; generate innovative approaches and partnerships to boost private finance for the SDGs; and scale up affordable and accessible international public financing for sustainable development. The Dialogue also served as an opportunity for some Member States to announce new pledges and actions to scale up development and climate finance.

### Preparing for the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development

Through its support to the 2024 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development in April 2024, UN DESA provided a launchpad for the preparatory process of the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4). Held under the theme “Embarking on

the path towards the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development”, the Forum was a milestone in advancing ambitious commitments that can be elevated to the highest political level. It provided opportunities for in-depth exchange between UN Ambassadors and Executive Directors of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group. Its outcome document advanced key financing issues, surpassing previous commitments on high priorities such as the SDG Stimulus, international tax cooperation and measures of sustainable development that go beyond gross domestic product (GDP).

The first session of the Preparatory Committee for FfD4 was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in July 2024. Around 800 participants, including 29 Ministers/Vice Ministers, representing over 100 countries joined the



UN Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed, at the opening of the first FfD4 Preparatory Committee on 22 July 2024 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. | ECA

session. Participants emphasized that addressing the myriad financing for development challenges will require rebuilding trust in global institutions and multilateralism through concerted actions. There was a shared understanding of the urgent need for reforming the IFA to unlock financing with speed and scale, as well as the rules and governance of international taxation, building a development-friendly debt architecture, creating fiscal space for investment in the SDGs and reforming international development cooperation.

### Mobilizing joint UN support to the G20 for rescuing the SDGs and IFA reform

UN DESA represented the UN at the first G20 Sherpa and Joint Sherpa and Finance Deputies meetings under the Brazilian G20 Presidency in December 2023, led by Under-Secretary-General Li Junhua in his capacity as UN G20 Sherpa.

During the meeting, the UN called on the G20 to step up efforts to 1) meet the targets endorsed by world leaders at the SDG Summit, including the SDG Stimulus; 2) take more ambitious climate actions, and 3) advance the reform of the IFA. The UN further invited the G20 to lead in the implementation of the SDG Stimulus. The G20 was urged to present concrete proposals on IFA reform, thereby injecting political impetus to the Summit of the Future. The UN also stressed the importance of inclusive AI governance and asked the Group to consider the work of the Secretary-General's High-level Advisory Board on AI.



UN system meeting convened by UN DESA Under-Secretary-General Li Junhua in Brasília, Brazil in December 2023 to coordinate contribution to the G20. | UN DESA

These calls resonated well with the priorities of G20 under the Brazilian Presidency. The Presidency is keen to capitalize on the synergy between the UN and G20 priorities in 2024, with the UN system to play a visible role in the work of the G20. Under-Secretary-General Li Junhua convened a meeting of eight participating UN organizations as well as the Resident Coordinator on the margins of the Sherpa meeting to coordinate positions and ensure that the UN speaks with one voice.

### Connecting private capital to the SDG investment ecosystem

Over \$60 billion in investment opportunities aligned to the SDGs have been presented through UN DESA's SDG Investment Fair platform since its inception. Considering the critical contribution of private capital in achieving the SDGs, the platform provides a valuable arena and accelerator for development financing and for building an "investment ecosystem" aligned to SDG impact.

The ninth edition of the Fair – held alongside the ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum – took place at UN Headquarters in New York on 23–25 April 2024. It connected government and private sector representatives from Bahrain, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Kyrgyzstan, Indonesia, Mauritania, Nepal, Pakistan, Serbia and Suriname with development finance institutions, investors, and UN finance experts. The Global Investors for Sustainable Development (GISD) Alliance also used the Fair to launch a new guidance report on thematic SDG bond issuance, while the Government of Serbia launched its "SDG Investment Map". Following the Fair, UN DESA organized a workshop for 18 countries to prepare bankable projects that could attract sustainable investment.

### Scaling up blended finance for sustainable development

UN DESA brought together key actors at the World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings for an interactive dialogue on scaling up blended finance transactions. The side event of the GISD Alliance "Scaling up private capital

mobilization through blended finance”, hosted by the UN Foundation, brought together key actors for an interactive dialogue with the objective of understanding challenges that hinder scaling up blended finance transactions and identifying solutions to spur actions. Experts from multilateral development banks, private sector, governments, and other relevant stakeholders, including UN DESA, discussed concrete examples of successful private capital mobilization in developing countries and cases where blended finance approaches have not produced the desired results.

### Presenting new guidance on sovereign bonds for countries and investors

In April 2024, the GISD Alliance, under the leadership of UN DESA and UNDP, launched the integrated guidance for countries considering SDG bonds and investors looking to scale up investments in sustainable development using these instruments. It considers the benefits, challenges, and lessons learned from recent issuances of sovereign SDG bonds by developing countries. It also presents key recommendations that



Discussion during the SDG Investment Fair in April 2024 on unlocking private capital in SIDS and LLDCs to meet the SDGs. | UN DESA

can be advanced by the UN and multilateral development banks, as well as by donor countries, governments, investors, and banks.

### Investing in forests to address the triple planetary crisis

While forests are central to the SDGs and play a critical role in addressing the interconnected crises facing our planet today, there is a significant financing gap in addressing the issues of deforestation and ecosystem degradation and to achieve the Global Forest Goals and related SDGs.

The Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN), managed by UN DESA, has been central to

bridging financing gaps for sustainable forest management. It supports countries and regions in developing forest financing strategies, identifying and overcoming barriers to financing mobilization. GFFFN also offers capacity-development for securing financing, assisting 13 countries and 2 subregions. Additionally, GFFFN offers up-to-date online databases on funding opportunities, and practical information and learning materials on how to access existing resources, as well as best practices in mobilizing financing. A new database tracking financing flows to forests will be launched by the end of 2024.

UN DESA is also co-leading a \$2 million medium-sized Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded project on strengthening the conservation of primary forests in collaboration with the International Union for



GISD Alliance launches guidance on sovereign SDG bonds in April 2024 in New York. | UN DESA

Conservation of Nature, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Griffith University. The project aims to raise the profile of primary

forests among UN Member States and other stakeholders and highlight the need to increase investment in their management and conservation.



Participants at a capacity-building workshop organized by UN DESA on Forest Landscape Restoration in Fiji. | UN DESA



# MAKING DATA COUNT

## ... for evidence-based decision-making

Robust and accessible data empower policymakers, researchers, and the public to make informed decisions and drive progress towards a more sustainable and equitable world.

## UN DESA...

- Offered comprehensive assessments on SDG progress and actionable recommendations to address global challenges through the [Sustainable Development Goals Report](#).
- Boosted partnerships and engagement with the launch of the UN Data Platform in collaboration with Google's Data Commons, fostering collaboration and data accessibility across the UN system.



UNDP PERU/MÓNICA SUÁREZ GALINDO

- Released new estimates and projections of the global population, with a focus on population trends of countries in special situations.
- Supported consensus agreement on a political declaration marking the 30th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development and committing to promote the availability of, and access to, high-quality, timely, relevant, disaggregated and reliable population data.
- Advanced gender equality initiatives, shed light on global gender disparities and advocated for inclusive

policies and actions through *The Gender Snapshot 2023* published in partnership with UN Women.

- Drove innovation in data usage by engaging a diverse global audience to generate innovative data-driven solutions for sustainable development challenges through the highly successful UN Datathon.
- Enhanced coordination and collaboration through the expansion of the Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians, facilitating knowledge-sharing and cooperation among data ecosystem stakeholders.

# 04

## MAKING DATA COUNT

High-quality data serves as the bedrock of effective policymaking and strategic action. Accurate, timely, and comprehensive data based on internationally agreed standards plays a vital role in identifying priorities and responding to interlinked global challenges. Data illuminates critical areas for intervention, ensuring that efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals are both targeted and effective. To support countries in addressing these challenges, UN DESA has a critical role in setting standards, as well as data collection and reporting to monitor and assess progress.

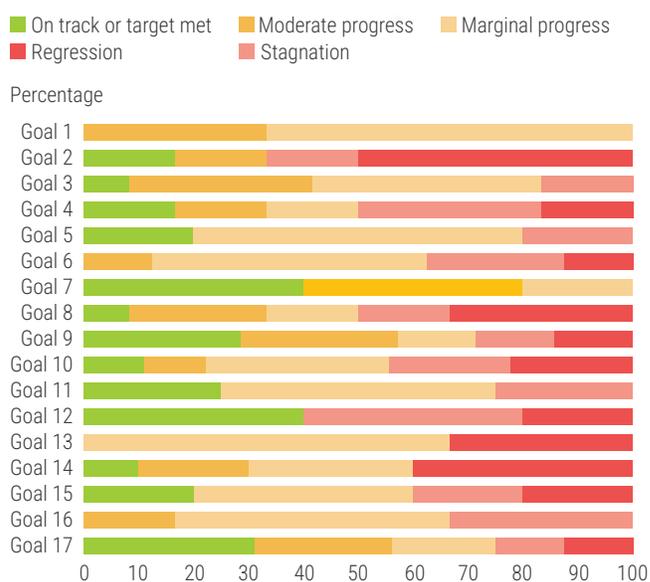


### Introducing the new UN Data Platform

The new UN Data Platform signifies a pivotal advancement in leveraging data for global progress. A collaborative effort between UN DESA and Google's Data Commons, it empowers policymakers, researchers, and the public, leveraging cutting-edge technology to provide easy access to authoritative data and information across the UN system. The Platform directly responds to the Secretary-General's Data Strategy and is informed by the Roadmap for Innovating UN Data and Statistics. Serving as a centralized hub for accessing official data and statistics collected by the entire UN system, this transformative initiative underscores the UN commitment to data-driven solutions. To showcase the Platform, UN DESA organized the UN 2.0 Week side event "Bringing Together UN System Data in One Place: Introducing the New UN Data Platform" in April 2024. The first phase of the project, "UN Data Commons for the SDGs," was launched at the 2023 SDG Summit and

the UN Data Platform has since expanded to include WHO data, with plans for further integration of data across the UN system.

### Progress assessment for the 17 Goals based on assessed targets, by Goal





Press Conference with the Secretary-General on Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024. | UN PHOTO/ESKINDER DEBEBE

As the central coordinator of the global SDG indicator framework and monitoring process, UN DESA continued to deliver data, analysis and monitoring tools to inform the latest SDG progress, enabling policymakers and stakeholders to identify areas for targeted policy interventions.

In June 2024, UN DESA launched the *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024*, detailing the significant challenges the world is facing in making substantial strides towards achieving the SDGs based on the latest data and estimates. It features areas with setbacks while also showcasing where tangible progress has been made, for instance, in reducing global child mortality, preventing HIV infection, and access to energy and mobile broadband. The report also highlights where action must accelerate, particularly in critical areas undermining SDG progress – climate

change, peace and security, and inequalities among and between countries.

Considerable progress has been made in improving internationally comparable data for SDG monitoring. In 2016, when the global indicator framework for the Goals and associated targets was initially adopted, only about one-third of indicators had good data coverage (that is, data were available for more than 50 per cent of countries), and 39 per cent of the indicators lacked internationally established methodologies or standards. As of June 2024, 68 per cent of indicators have good data coverage. Since 2020, all 231 indicators have had well-established and internationally agreed methodologies. Reliable trend data are available for 51 per cent of the indicators (at least two data points since 2015) in more than half of all countries.

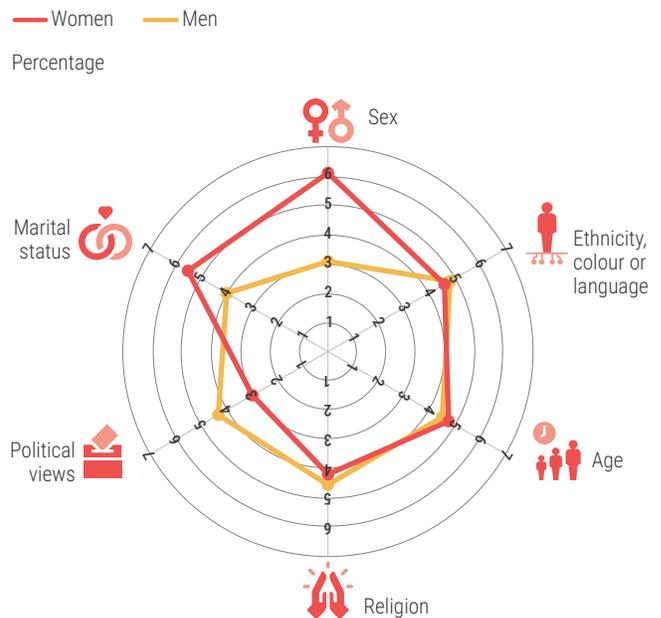
## Commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

UN DESA supported a gathering of Chief Statisticians from close to 100 countries at the 55th session of the Statistical Commission in March 2024, which celebrated the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics by ECOSOC and its 10th anniversary as a General Assembly resolution. At the Commission, discussions focused on fundamental principles of official statistics, national accounts, SDG indicators, social statistics, data science, climate change statistics, environmental-economic accounting, economic statistics, and many more topics. UN DESA also supported over 50 side events in conjunction with the Commission, both in person and online. Topics included data collection methodologies, gender statistics and women’s empowerment; SDG monitoring; environmental statistics and indicators; statistical capacity-building; population and housing censuses; digital transformation and data innovation; data governance and privacy; as well as statistical literacy and education.

### Shedding light on global gender disparities and challenges towards gender equality

UN DESA and UN Women jointly published *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2023*, highlighting alarming gaps in gender equality and women’s well-being, with an estimated additional \$360 billion per year needed to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment. The report provided a comprehensive overview of global gender disparities and identifies key challenges hindering progress towards gender equality, including conflict, climate change, resistance to equality, and inadequate investment. It also sheds light on the often-overlooked needs of older women, emphasizing the importance of inclusivity in gender equality initiatives. The report urged policymakers to dismantle discriminatory laws, address the climate crisis, and ensure fair representation of

### Proportion of the population experiencing discrimination, by selected grounds and sex, 2015–2022



Source: United Nations, 2023

women in leadership roles. It emphasized the pivotal roles older women play in sustainable development and calls for commitment to promote their well-being, financial security, and protection from violence. These insights underscore the need for comprehensive solutions to achieve gender equality globally.

### Taking stock of gender statistics on care economy in Africa

UN DESA provided an opportunity to take stock of and learn good practices in gender statistics and data management in Africa at the 9th United Nations Global Forum on Gender Statistics in August 2023 in Johannesburg, organized in collaboration with Statistics South Africa. Under the theme “Measuring what we value - gender statistics for an informed care economy”, the forum discussions focused on gender equality and the care economy; unpaid work and time use; violence



9th Global Forum on Gender Statistics, Johannesburg, South Africa. | STATISTICS SOUTH AFRICA

against women and girls; legal identity and gender equality; and ways to improve data and evidence on the growing challenges and opportunities offered by the care economy, including gender mainstreaming efforts of the National Statistics Systems. The forum brought together 240 in-person participants (both producers and users of gender statistics) from national and international statistical offices, other government agencies, international organizations, academia, civil society, and the donor community. Panellists and audience members strategized on how to make the best out of existing data, including by mainstreaming a gender lens into existing data processes, climate change statistics, and business and trade statistics.



### Using innovative data solutions to tackle local sustainable development challenges

Following the success of the past three Hackathons, UN DESA hosted the UN Datathon 2023 in November, in which participants used data to tackle local

sustainable development challenges. Held synchronously online and in Uruguay alongside satellite venues in the United Arab Emirates, China, Rwanda, Australia, and Switzerland, the event attracted significant global interest, with registrations from more than 500 teams worldwide. Nearly 2,000 participants from 110 countries signed up to take part. More than 50 online and on-site mentors from all over the world guided the participants during the Datathon journey. Under the theme “SDG localization – the need for local responses and monitoring to achieve the SDGs”, Datathon participants unveiled hundreds of innovative solutions, including data models, interactive dashboards, algorithms, data maps, and other inventive data solutions. The Ghana Statistical Service Data Science Team won the event with an entry that suggested localizing SDG indicators by leveraging both census data and non-traditional data sources. The event was organized in partnership with the United Nations Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics, partnered with the UN Major Group for Children and Youth, Uruguay’s National Institute of Statistics, and the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data.



The Ghana Statistical Service wins the 2023 UN Datathon. | JOYNEWS



## Growth in the Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians

In 2023, the Global Network of Data Officers and Statisticians – launched by UN DESA in October 2020 – grew to more than 3,100 members from over 180 countries and territories. The network provides capacity-building and encourages collaboration among peers and organizations working in different areas of statistics, data, and geospatial information. Since its launch, it has played a key role in improving the coordination within and among national statistical systems, United Nations country teams, and international and regional organizations. 50 per cent of the network’s members come from national statistical offices and governments, and 41 per cent from the UN System and other international organizations. During 2023, 15 Global Network webinars were organized on the platform, attracting 1,870 participants

worldwide. Currently, there are 18 active topic-specific groups, with six new groups created during 2023.



## Spotlighting population trends for countries in special situations

UN DESA delivered its first ever in-depth examination of population trends and outlook for countries in special situations. The report *Population Prospects of Countries in Special Situations*, launched in January 2024, compares population dynamics in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS and related implications for sustainable development. Diverse trends – with youthful populations in LDCs and LLDCs for decades to come, compared to rapid population ageing in most SIDS and some Asian LDCs and LLDCs – will influence policy policies. Country case studies in the report help identify critical policy responses to population issues, while gaps in data



Young girl at the beach, Solomon Islands. | WORLD BANK/ALETA MORIARTY

availability add uncertainty in population estimates and projections. The report notes that international migration adds complexity to the demographic realities faced by countries and stresses that advancing gender equality improves the lives of women and increases opportunities for sustained economic growth.

Drawing on the report, UN DESA also hosted a dynamic Global Policy Dialogue on the demographic outlook for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), on the last day of the fourth International Conference on SIDS (SIDS4) in Antigua and Barbuda and online. The dialogue took stock of the challenges and opportunities posed to these island nations by demographic shifts, including ageing populations, youth migration, and changing family structures. Experts from UN DESA and other SIDS stakeholders drew inspiration from the new



Speakers at the UN DESA Global Policy Dialogue on "The Demographic Prospects of SIDS" at SIDS4 discuss ways to address ageing, migration and changing demographics in small islands. | UN DESA



Speakers participate in the CPD opening and UN General Assembly commemorative session. | UN DESA

Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) agreed by the international community at the Conference and explored the complex demographic picture for SIDS.

### Reaffirming the importance of population and development to fulfil the vision of the 2030 Agenda

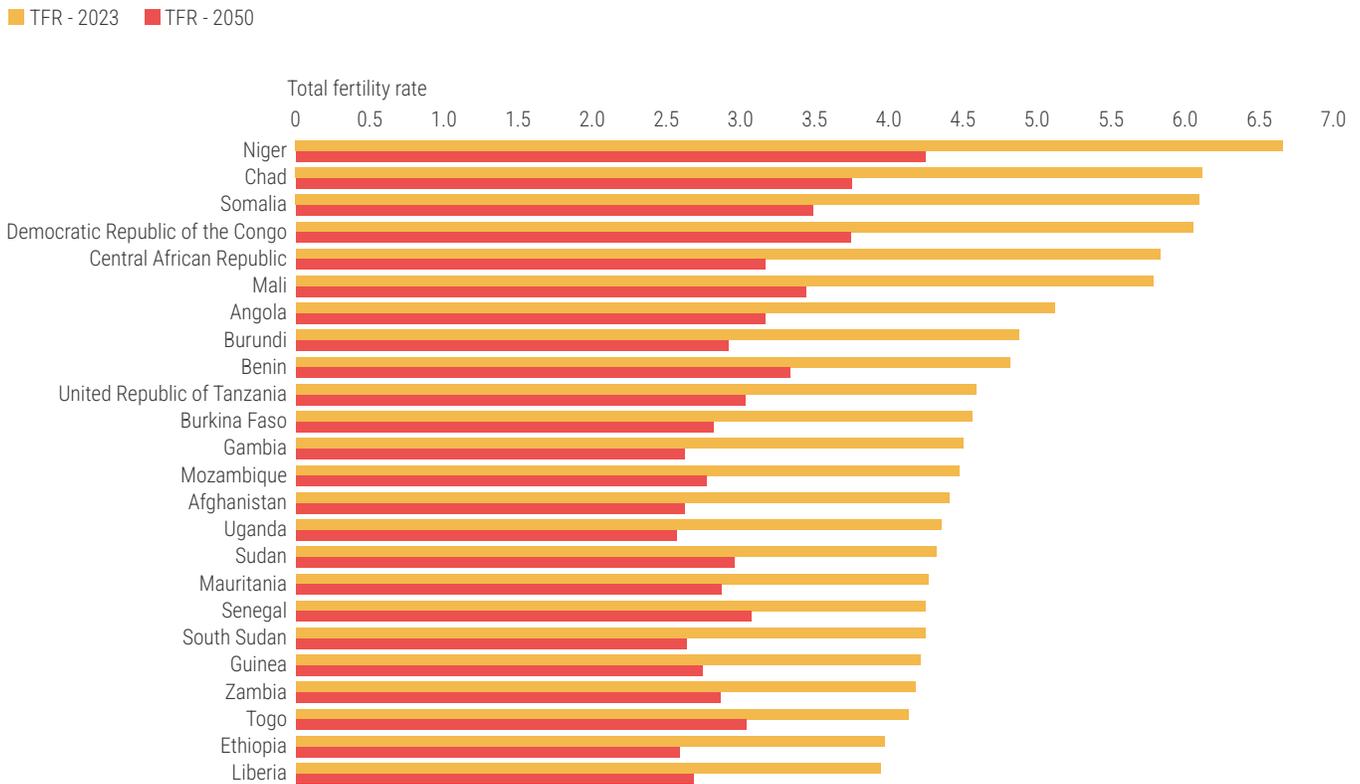
UN DESA supported Member States in their unanimous adoption of a political declaration recognizing that, in a demographically diverse world, population dynamics, including differences in the pace of population growth or decline, changing population age structures, urbanization and international migration, will continue to shape the world for present and future generations. The declaration stressed that the full implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action is crucial to fulfil the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and that the two agendas are mutually reinforcing and must be boldly translated into effective action, while seeking to realize the human rights of all as well as gender equality and the empowerment of

all women and girls. The declaration was delivered at the opening of the 57th session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) in April 2024, on the 30th anniversary of the ICPD, where the President of the General Assembly also convened a commemorative session to mark the anniversary.

### Maximizing the demographic dividend to better prepare for population ageing in LDCs

UN DESA noted the progressive population ageing that has begun in LDCs and shared key recommendations for addressing the shift. While most LDCs are still in the early stages of the demographic transition, an accelerated pace of change is expected beyond mid-century according to the *World Population Ageing 2023: Challenges and opportunities of population ageing in the least developed countries* report, released in December 2023. Most LDCs still have an opportunity to experience a multi-decade period with a rising share of working-age population, which can boost the rate

### Total fertility rates of countries at the early stage of the demographic transition, 2023 and 2050



Source: World Population Ageing 2023: Challenges and opportunities of population ageing in the least developed countries.

of economic growth on a per capita basis. However, to harness the demographic dividend, LDCs need to put in place enabling policies in education, health, employment, economic reform and good governance, and thereby develop economically before their populations become much older. Three case studies (Angola, Bangladesh and Rwanda) in the report provide insights into the challenges and opportunities that arise at various stages of the demographic transition.

### Training countries in best practices for population projections

Population projections are an essential tool for understanding future population age structures and for

guiding potential policy responses. Countries of the Asia-Pacific region, for instance, are currently experiencing substantial demographic shifts, and population ageing is a paramount concern for many governments. UN DESA, in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific regional office of UNFPA and the U.S. Census Bureau, held a capacity-building workshop in Bangkok, Thailand, in November 2023, to train government officials from the region in population estimation and projection, after years of COVID-19-related disruptions. Participants included 31 officials from national statistical offices and planning ministries from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Timor Leste.



18th Annual Meeting of the Internet Governance Forum

October 8 (Sun) - 12 (Thu), 2019

## STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE AND CAPACITIES OF NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

### **... to improve people's lives**

By fostering innovation and promoting accountability, UN DESA helped Member States ensure that governance systems are inclusive and responsive to the needs of all, particularly those in vulnerable situations. These efforts throughout the year better equip public institutions to meet current and future challenges, accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

# Internet Governance Forum

2023



## UN DESA...

- Built capacity of Member States to implement the 11 Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development, promoting new mindsets, innovation in public institutions, and accountability through budget credibility and external audits.
- Brought together stakeholders to discuss the critical role of SDG 16 in accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and worked towards empowering women as leaders in public institutions.
- Advanced digital government transformation, cooperation, and digital inclusion worldwide, leveraging digital technologies to build capacities of public servants to implement the SDGs.
- Worked with schools of public administration to equip public servants with the capacities to implement the SDGs, including by strengthening institutional arrangements for policy coherence, and capacities for climate action and disaster risk reduction.
- Developed governance capacities of Member States on the UN 2.0 “Quintet of Change”, including strategic foresight, behavioural sciences and mindset change, innovation in public service delivery, data governance, and digital government.

# 05

## STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE AND CAPACITIES OF NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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*With only six years left to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, effective governance is more crucial than ever for achieving the SDGs. By assisting Member States in advancing effective, accountable and inclusive public institutions, including through innovation, digital government and digital transformation, UN DESA has helped to promote people's well-being, especially those at risk of being left behind.*

### **Promoting digital government transformation and digital data governance**

UN DESA showcased the connection between e-government and the SDGs, demonstrating how e-government can support effective governance for sustainable development, in its *2024 UN E-Government Survey*. By evaluating e-government services at both national and local levels, the Survey helps governments identify strengths and those areas that need improvement. A key component of the Survey is the “Local Online Service Index” (LOSI) methodology, which aims to enhance e-government services by assessing local government portals. Greece, India, and Uzbekistan completed their LOSI assessments in 2023, with ongoing projects in Mozambique, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia expected to conclude in 2024.

UN DESA helped countries to combat digital divides through a series of online national and local e-government toolkits. The national toolkit offers a strategic

planning roadmap, while the local toolkit provides detailed guidance for local authorities to create user-friendly online platforms that promote citizen-centric services.

UN DESA and ESCAP also collaborated on the “Frontier Technology Experimentation and Regulatory Sandboxes in Asia” project. As part of the project, Bangladesh launched a regulatory sandbox to support small enterprises, while Kazakhstan introduced a Digital Energy Platform. The Maldives developed regulatory guidelines for FinTech and Central Bank Digital Currency, leading to the launch of a regulatory sandbox by the Maldives Monetary Authority.

### **Calling for global multistakeholder action on digital cooperation and bridging digital divides**

The importance of collective action to achieve an inclusive and equitable digital future was stressed at the 18th Internet Governance Forum (IGF), held in Kyoto, Japan



on 8–12 October 2023. The Forum drew over 6,000 in-person and 3,000 online participants – the most in its history. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida highlighted the forum’s theme, “The Internet We Want – Empowering All People”, as a commitment to creating an inclusive internet that benefits all and ensures a sustainable future for humanity. Discussions focused on digital public policy issues, including data governance, digital divides, and the environmental impacts of digital technologies, with a significant emphasis on artificial intelligence (AI). A key highlight was the discussion on the Global Digital Compact of the Summit of the Future and IGF’s role as a multistakeholder expertise source. The forum also addressed the upcoming twenty-year review of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20) in 2025.

### **Upholding SDG 16 as a compass for navigating intersecting crises**

The fifth SDG 16 Conference in May 2024 highlighted the catalytic effect that progress towards peace, justice and



Timea Suto from International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Business Action to Support the Information Society (BASIS) initiative, at the 18th IGF held in Kyoto, Japan on 8–12 October 2023. | UN DESA

strong institutions can have on addressing intersecting crises and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The high-level conference brought together stakeholders to review trends, challenges, and opportunities to accelerate action in all dimensions of SDG 16 and included the presentation of an updated Civil Society Declaration on SDG 16+. The key recommendations for supporting peace, justice, social inclusion, and effective institutions that emerged from the Conference served as an input to the review of SDG16 at the 2024 High-level Political Forum (HLPF). The conference was organized by UN DESA, the International Development Law Organization (IDLO), and the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations.

### Accelerating action for effective governance for sustainable development in Africa

UN DESA guided implementation of the principles of effective governance for sustainable development, which

were established by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) and endorsed by ECOSOC in 2018. The Department published guidance notes on subsidiarity and public sector workforce diversity. Several countries – including Egypt, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Sierra Leone, and South Africa – reported that these notes helped translate principles into action.

UN DESA and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) of the African Union have been engaged in collaborative activities to support countries to enhance governance capacities, using the principles of effective governance for sustainable development as a foundation for action. As a direct result, several regional and national follow-up efforts have taken place, including regional initiatives such as the 2024 composite of practical toolkits for the implementation of the principles of effective governance of SDGs and Agenda 2063 in Africa; and national activities such as in Sierra Leone, which conducted multi-stakeholder consultations to revamp their civil service in accordance with



President of the Republic of Italy, Sergio Mattarella (centre) at the opening of the SDG 16 Conference on 6 May 2024, together with (L-R) Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Maurizio Massari, Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations and Jan Beagle, Director-General of IDLO. | UN DESA

“

**My government is always committed to learn from best practices and emerging thinking and from the overall discussion and lesson of the workshop, it will further refine its interventions to prioritize SDGs and Africa Agenda 2063.**

**Bereket Fesehahatsion Tesfamariam**  
Division Head, Development Planning Division,  
Ministry of Planning and Development, Ethiopia

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UN DESA and APRM Workshop, 26–28 October 2023, Cape Town, South Africa. | UN DESA



Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, at the opening of the continental workshop on Strengthening Institutional Capacities in Africa for Effective Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063: Follow-up to the 2023 Summit in South Africa in October 2023. | APRM

the principles of effective governance. The African Union Assembly decision 874 (XXXVII) of February 2024 acknowledged the partnership with the UN and noted that it is imperative to implement critical continental programmes. These initiatives arise from the joint continental activity between the APRM and UN DESA, including four workshops held in South Africa (in Pretoria in 2019 and Cape Town in 2021, 2022 and 2023).

### **Bringing stakeholders together for effective governance for the SDGs in Asia-Pacific**

UN DESA brought together government representatives – including those in charge of public administration or overseeing public service management – at the 7th Regional Symposium on Effective Governance and Digital Transformation for Accelerating Progress towards the 2030 Agenda in the Republic of Korea, in October 2023. The Symposium focused on key accelerators for SDG implementation, including strategic foresight, digital data governance, local innovation and digital transformation, climate action, risk-informed governance, behavioural science, and civil servant mindset changes. It attracted over 350 in-person and close to 1,400 online attendees from 109 countries, including the eighth United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the

“  
**This Regional Symposium is an opportunity to concentrate minds on the challenge before us and to deepen our understanding of the role that good, effective governance can play in climate action.**

**H.E. Saber Chowdhury**  
Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change,  
Bangladesh, participant of the Regional Symposium  
in the Republic of Korea, October 2023

”

Minister of the Interior and Safety of the Republic of Korea. The symposium inspired capacity development requests from Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Rwanda.

### **Promoting accountability through budget credibility and external audits**

UN DESA provided expert support to Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs), given their role in the follow-up and review of the SDGs. For example, the Department collaborated with the Federal Court of Accounts of



The 7th Regional Symposium on Effective Governance and Digital Transformation for Accelerating Progress towards the 2030 Agenda, hosted by Republic of Korea on 17–19 October 2023. | UN DESA



Participants of the National Workshop on Risk-informed Governance and Decision-making for Circular Economy, Green Growth, Resilience and Climate Action in Mozambique, 4–6 September 2023. | UN DESA

Brazil on the development of the ClimateScanner tool, which aims to support SAIs to conduct assessments of national responses to climate change. The tool will be rolled out globally, with up to 100 SAIs expected to use it in 2024.

The Department, along with the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI), also brought together over 200 participants from 80 SAIs to exchange experiences conducting climate-related audits at the 26th joint UN/INTOSAI Symposium in April 2024 in Vienna, Austria. The Symposium featured a special session on auditing climate change action in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

### **Developing institutions' capacities for climate action and disaster risk reduction**

UN DESA helped build capacities of public institutions to deliver climate action through a series of workshops and training courses including through online training courses on “Risk-informed Governance and Innovative Technology for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience” and on “Effective National to Local Public Governance for SDG Implementation”, launched in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. UN DESA also collaborated with the Ministry of Land and Environment of Mozambique, the RCO, and UNDP in Mozambique to organize a National Workshop

on “Risk-informed Governance and Decision-making for Circular Economy, Green Growth, Resilience and Climate Action in Mozambique”. The workshop resulted in a roadmap to design resilient, bankable, and circular economy projects able to access funding opportunities from development finance institutions.



UN DESA showcased FutureGov – one of 12 High Impact Initiatives (HIIs) aimed at scaling up SDG solutions – during the 2023 SDG Action Weekend. A partnership between UN DESA, UNDP, a coalition of eight countries including Ecuador, Georgia, Italy, Panama, Romania, Rwanda, Singapore, and the UAE, along with the World Bank and the European Commission, FutureGov aims to support Member States to transform their public sectors. It focuses on building public sector skillsets to create adaptable and resilient institutions using a shared toolbox; shifting mindsets towards systems thinking and foresight to enhance governance and inclusive service delivery; leveraging digital and data tools; and enabling broader innovation within public sectors by fostering a supportive environment for impactful change. A follow-up dialogue between the Group of Friends of FutureGov and CEPA took place on 16 April 2024 to facilitate collaboration among stakeholders and drive public sector innovation towards SDG progress.

UN DESA also supported the digital transformation of public services in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Guatemala by training municipal and national officials. In Bolivia, over 45 officials were trained to analyse institutional arrangements and design transformation roadmaps using specialized toolkits. The training included examples from UNICEF to localize the SDGs. In Ecuador, more than 50 officials were trained at the request of the President’s Office and the Ministry of Telecommunications, focusing on digital transformation and collaboration among 17

government agencies. This included a six-month online Training of Trainers (ToT) programme and hybrid sessions. In Guatemala, a six-month ToT programme was conducted in collaboration with the National Institute of Public Administration, leading to the integration of innovative public service delivery methods into the national curriculum. Across all three countries, trainings emphasized inclusiveness, expert presentations, interactive dialogues, and the development of concrete action plans.

### Enhancing public servants' governance capacities to advance the UN 2.0 "Quintet of Change"

UN DESA is modernizing the standards of excellence for public administration education to align them with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in partnership with the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration. The new standards – last updated in 2008 – incorporate insights aligned with SDG 16, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable education and effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions.

The revision process involves contributions from over 1,500 individuals, including schools, institutes, academia, and various organizations across the globe.

UN DESA enhances the governance capacities of Member States by focusing on cutting-edge issues in public administration in its webinar series on "Effective Governance and the Quintet of Change for SDG Implementation". Spanning six webinars throughout 2024, the series covers changing mindsets in public institutions, innovation and digital government, strategic foresight, transparency and accountability, inclusivity, and localization of the SDGs. Each webinar features expert presentations, case studies, and real-world examples, offering participants practical insights and actionable strategies to enhance governance practices and advance SDG implementation.

The Department is also enhancing public sector capacities to engage people in vulnerable situations in policy processes through an e-learning course. The course promotes government innovation for social inclusion, offering strategies and national experiences. Available



Winners of the 2024 UN Public Service Awards at the awards ceremony on 26 June 2024 in the Republic of Korea. | UN DESA

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**[The workshop] made me realize how I can contribute to small actions in my department to cater towards improving gender equality which will finally lead to achieving gender equality in public administration.**

**Participant of the “Promoting the presence and leadership of women within public institutions at the national and local levels” workshop**  
Bhutan in October 2023

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Workshop on “Promoting the presence and leadership of women within public institutions at the national and local levels” in October 2023 in Bhutan. | UN DESA

in 2024 on the UN DESA Digital Learning Centre, the self-paced course on “Government Innovation for Social Inclusion of People in Vulnerable Situations” is free and includes accessibility features.

### **Celebrating excellence in public service and promoting innovation as a key driver for transformation**

UN DESA continues to recognize excellence in public service, through the United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA), which celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2023. The revamped 2024 UNPSA programme was launched with three categories: innovation in public institutions, gender-responsive public service, and tackling climate change. The programme received nearly 400 applications from 73 countries, predominantly from developing countries. Winners were announced at the United Nations Public Service Forum in Incheon, Republic of Korea, held in June 2024. The forum – on “Fostering Innovation amid Global Challenges: A Public Sector Perspective” – attracted over 500 participants and included workshops on artificial intelligence, empowering women leaders, engaging young public servants, and strengthening institutions for climate action.

### **Empowering women as leaders in public institutions**

UN DESA assisted several countries to identify and address gender gaps in public administration. Capacity-development modules were developed in partnership with Bhutan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Mauritius, and Senegal, which were based on national and international reviews of practice to promote women leadership in public administration. Capacity development workshops were conducted in October and November 2023, laying the groundwork for national action plans to promote women’s advancement in public sector leadership. Draft action plans were developed with UN DESA’s support and validated nationally. Peer review workshops were held in Thailand and Mauritius in April and June 2024, involving countries from Africa and Asia-Pacific, including SIDS. These sessions promoted a community of practice to enhance gender-responsive strategies. In June 2024, a global workshop in the Republic of Korea further shared insights and lessons from these gender equality action plans.



# ENDING THE WAR ON NATURE

## **... by ensuring synergistic and integrated policymaking and action globally**

In 2023–2024, UN DESA continued to work with Member States and other stakeholders to build capacities and partnerships, accelerating cross-sectoral implementation of global commitments on energy, climate, forests, the ocean, and water. These efforts support the 2030 Agenda and accelerate progress towards the SDGs.



UN DESA

## UN DESA...

- Fostered stronger connections between the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, by hosting more than 80 panel discussions at the SDG Pavilion at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28).
- Supported the Global Stocktaking on SDG 7, with regional consultations and a Call to Action for universal access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy services by 2030.
- Led the preparatory process for the 2025 UN Ocean Conference, including a workshop on the Communities of Ocean Action to exchange best practices.
- Helped Member States build capacity to restore forest landscapes and conduct a midterm review of the International Arrangement on Forests, charting the course to achieve the Global Forest Goals.
- Supported implementation of the Water Action Agenda commitments, through a follow-up survey and progress report in the lead up to the UN 2026 Water Conference.
- Explored the role of families as educators, consumers, and advocates in climate action, offering recommendations for local and national levels.

# 06

## ENDING THE WAR ON NATURE

*The world faces cascading and interlinked environmental crises of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, affecting every sector and society at all levels. This triple planetary crisis emphasizes the critical role of nature in underpinning sustainable development in all its dimensions. UN DESA promotes a coherent approach to address many of the pressing global challenges that will accelerate progress towards the SDGs. The Department addresses the drivers of the war against nature, advocating for a holistic and comprehensive approach to global energy transitions and sustainable use and management of ecosystems such as the ocean, freshwater, and forests, among others.*

### Global stocktaking on SDG 7 and a call to action

UN DESA brought together governments, the UN system, and civil society including youth organizations, to accelerate implementation of SDG 7 by 2030 and beyond. The outcome was a call to action urging all stakeholders to step up action towards universal access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy services by 2030; accelerate global energy transitions and actions towards net zero emission energy systems; scale up finance and investment for developing countries; ensure that no one is left behind; and follow up on the UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All, including through a UN conference on energy. The Global Stocktaking was convened in collaboration with UN-Energy, supported the President of the General Assembly to mark the completion of the UN Decade, in April 2024. UN DESA conducted regional and thematic consultations in preparation of the Stocktaking, meeting experts and collecting written inputs from Member States through an online survey.



### Showcasing solutions and collaborations on climate and SDG synergy

The groundbreaking [\*First Global Report on Climate and SDG Synergies\*](#) was launched in September 2023 by UN DESA and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The report was prepared by the Expert Group on Climate and SDG Synergy – 14 renowned experts from diverse thematic and geographic backgrounds – and serves as a valuable tool for policymakers to advance synergies between climate action and the SDGs. Building on the findings of the first global report, a new 2024 edition was launched during a special event at the HLPF in July 2024. This new report provides a roadmap for policymakers with concrete recommendations on realizing synergistic climate and SDG actions on the ground.

To accelerate action and build new partnerships, UN DESA hosted its fifth SDG Pavilion during COP28 in



Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Li Junhua speaks at the Global Stocktaking on SDG 7. | UN DESA

Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Organized in collaboration with UNFCCC and DGC, this space hosted more than 80 panel discussions and fireside chats by more than 120 multi-stakeholder partners, including UN entities, Member States, academia, and youth groups. The Pavilion inauguration was attended by Dennis Francis, President of General Assembly; Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs; and Daniele Violetti, Senior Director for Programmes Coordination at UNFCCC; and concluded with a heartfelt call to action from young representatives.

UN DESA also emphasized the importance of linking the climate and SDG agendas in various intergovernmental initiatives. In March 2024, the Expert Group Meeting on SDG 13 was co-convened by UN DESA and UNFCCC in Tokyo, hosted by the Ministry of the

Environment of Japan. More than 60 experts gathered to examine progress and contribute to the SDG 13 thematic review during the HLPF in July. UN DESA, with the UNFCCC, also hosted a side event during the 60th meeting of the Subsidiary Bodies in Bonn, Germany, in June, launching four thematic reports that inform the final 2024 edition of the Global Synergy Report. Meanwhile, UN DESA continued to support preparations for the Summit of the Future, COP29, and COP30, driving action and collaboration for the SDGs and addressing climate-related challenges. To build momentum for these upcoming events, UN DESA and UNFCCC organized the fifth Global Conference on Synergizing the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, in September 2024 in Rio de Janeiro, hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil.



Speakers discuss primary forests at the "Climate & Canopy: Amplifying Action for SDG 13 & 15 through Primary Forest Conservation" event at the SDG Pavilion. | UN DESA

## Advancing towards the next milestone for global ocean action

The ocean plays a fundamental role in addressing the triple planetary crisis, promoting food security, poverty eradication, gender equality, and economic growth. UN DESA leverages interlinkages among the SDGs and promotes synergies between different intergovernmental processes to help safeguard our ocean.

UN DESA supported Member States in their call for a third Ocean Conference in 2025 to galvanize global ocean action and build on the outcomes of the previous two Ocean Conferences, the SDG Summit, the fourth International Conference on SIDS, the Summit of the Future, and recent climate and biodiversity COPs. As the secretariat of the Ocean Conference, UN DESA is leading the analytical work in support of the Preparatory Meeting of the 2025 Conference, with a transparent and inclusive approach involving extensive

consultations with Member States, UN system representatives and other stakeholders.

UN DESA has been engaging actively with governments and stakeholders to ensure previous voluntary commitments and pledges are translated into tangible results towards SDG 14. The Department organized a workshop in Incheon, Republic of Korea, in October 2023, bringing together past hosts of the UN Ocean Conference with the co-hosts of the 2025 Conference, France and Costa Rica, along with voluntary commitment holders and the Communities of Ocean Action, to exchange best practices and key challenges.

## Accelerating water actions leading to the UN 2026 Water Conference

After the historic UN 2023 Water Conference, UN DESA supported Member States and relevant stakeholders to

follow up on the Water Action Agenda commitments, as well as achieving SDG 6 and other water-related goals and targets. UN DESA conducted the first follow-up survey on the Water Action Agenda and issued its progress report, *Mapping and Progress of the UN 2023 Water Conference Water Action Agenda*. The report identified gaps and challenges that commitment holders were facing, including financing and creating an enabling environment, nominated good practices and lessons learned, and presented the overall progress of the Water Action Agenda.

UN DESA, together with UN-Water, also developed the first-ever UN system-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation in consultation with Member States. The strategy, launched by the Secretary-General at the SDG 6 and Water Action Agenda Special Event during the 2024 HLPF, aims to enhance the coordination and delivery of water priorities across the UN system.



### Strengthening the science-policy interface through GSDR dissemination

Building on the launch of the 2023 quadrennial *Global Sustainable Development Report* (GSDR) written by the Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, UN DESA brought together a wide range



Delegates participate in the 19th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests in New York. | UN DESA

of stakeholders to explore how the report could mobilize SDG acceleration in different regions and national contexts through a series of regional launches and operationalization workshops held in the Republic of Korea, South Africa and Brazil. The workshops strengthened the science-policy-society interface in support of science-based transitions towards the SDGs.

### Supporting accelerated actions to halt and reverse deforestation by 2030

The 2024 UN Forum on Forests (UNFF19), supported by UN DESA, culminated in a high-level segment declaration and an omnibus resolution calling for actions across 10 key areas of the International Arrangement on Forests, as well as the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for 2025–2028. More than 400 representatives from Member States—including 19 Ministers and Vice Ministers responsible for forests—the UN system and other stakeholders participated in the Forum, which served as a midterm review of the International Arrangement on Forests. Participants exchanged ideas on how to strengthen interlinkages between forests and the SDGs under review at the 2024 HLPF and support implementation of the Rio Conventions. In doing so, participants also highlighted key emerging issues that need to be addressed urgently, such as wildfires, energy and livelihoods, and mobilizing increased financing for forests.

### Building capacity to restore forest landscapes

To address the underlying drivers of deforestation and ecosystem degradation, UN DESA started a capacity-building initiative on integrated forest landscape restoration in selected developing countries, including Malawi, Fiji, and Viet Nam. The project applies and adapts methodologies, tools and training programmes developed by UN DESA for integrated forest landscape restoration and sustainable forest management. UN DESA supports participating countries in developing a national integrated forest landscape strategy, together with financing options.



Participants hear a presentation at the Capacity-building Workshop on Forest Landscape Restoration in Viet Nam. | UN DESA

To foster synergies with global efforts, UN DESA and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) are jointly developing open access e-learning courses on Integrated Forest Landscape Restoration. UN DESA has also been supporting a regional initiative for the establishment of a decade of afforestation and reforestation and an International Conference on Afforestation and Restoration, held in July 2024 in the Republic of Congo.

and the Paris Agreement. They highlighted the opportunities of the declaration of the Second Summit of the Three Basins, and the Belem Declaration, stressing the importance to accelerate forest-based climate actions, particularly through increasing forest finance and capacity-building for developing countries.

### Exploring the role of families in climate action

UN DESA explored the role of families in climate action as educators, consumers, and advocates through an expert group meeting as part of the 30th anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2024, and the observance of the International Day of Families on “Families and Climate Change” on 15 May 2024. Participants recommended that as educators, families can foster environmentally-friendly behaviours among family members, and advocate for the inclusion of climate change in school curricula throughout the child’s life. Likewise, as consumers, families can support renewable energy-based patterns of production, voting



### Accelerating forest-based climate actions for sustainable development

At COP28 in November 2023, UN DESA focused attention on forests through a series of high-impact events. These events brought together senior officials of Member States, heads and principals of member organizations from the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, and other stakeholders in support of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests and its Global Forest Goals, the SDGs,



Panelists discuss ways to halt and reverse deforestation at a high-level dialogue at COP28 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. | UN DESA

with their wallets for environmentally friendly products and services. Lastly, as advocates, the participants emphasized that families can demand public policies that endorse and support renewable energy usage and

sustainable physical environments in their communities and beyond. They can also demand family impact assessments of policies and practices linked to climate change.



# FRAMING THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT

## ... with resilience and preparedness

UN DESA delivered strategic foresight, focusing on long-term intergenerational thinking and strengthening the capacities of countries and the multilateral system. By providing innovative tools, policy recommendations, and fostering multilateral cooperation, UN DESA worked to build resilience and preparedness for future challenges.



UNICEF/FRANK DEJONGH

## UN DESA...

- Supported Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to plan and implement national sustainable development strategies that build resilience.
- Enhanced policymakers' capacity to use strategic foresight and systems thinking for sustainable development planning.
- Highlighted the impact of recurrent crises on social development and calling for global action, through the World Social Report 2024.
- Advanced evidence-based action on the SDGs through the UN Economist Network.
- Fostered meaningful youth engagement in global policymaking and ensured youth as the agents of change for digital transformation and climate action.
- Strengthened UN DESA's internal capacities to support Member States through enhancement of a digital learning hub, development policy seminars and data-driven intergovernmental support systems.

# 07

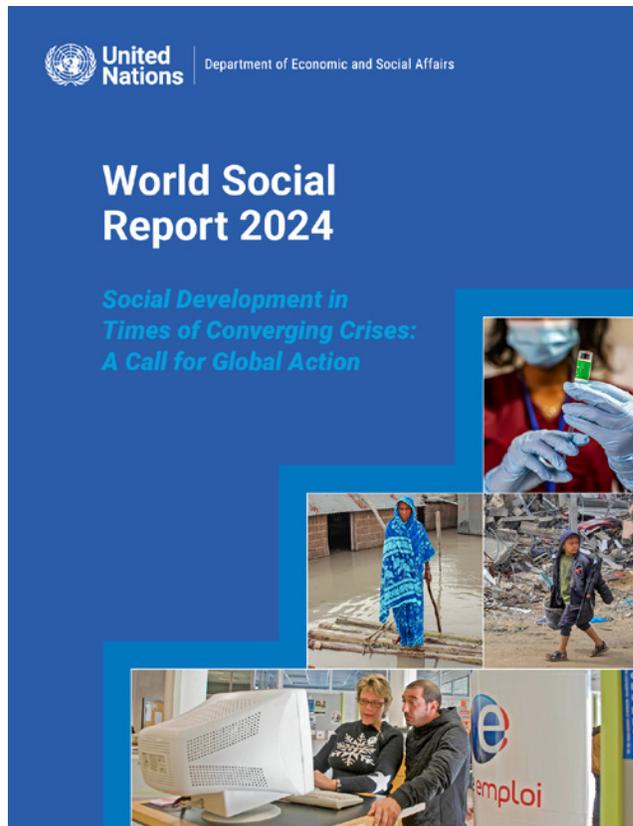
## FRAMING THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT

*As the world navigates complex and interconnected challenges, UN DESA's focus on forecasting, foresight, and long-term intergenerational thinking is critical for advancing sustainable development. In 2023–2024, UN DESA's efforts aimed at strengthening the underlying capacities of countries and the multilateral system, as well as the future generations to address present and future challenges.*

### Calling for global action on social development in times of converging crises

Emphasizing the need for coherent national action and enhanced multilateral support to build resilience, UN DESA published the [World Social Report 2024](#) on the impact of recurrent crises on social development. UN DESA organized a side event during the High-level Political Forum, in partnership with the Permanent Mission of Samoa to the United Nations, which brought together high-level representatives and experts from Member States, international organizations, academia, NGOs and civil society to discuss the key messages of the report. Following this event, there was a special briefing to Member States in the ECOSOC Chamber.

The report highlights the importance of eradicating poverty, strengthening social protection, and fostering innovative insurance mechanisms. Amid a confluence of shocks and crises, less than a fifth of the SDG targets are on track. This serves as a wake-up call, signaling the need for extensive changes along different fronts to achieve social development. While national-level



efforts for achieving social goals remain vital, they must be complemented by international support and global actions. Such joint actions can greatly reduce the impact of recurrent crises on social development and preserve valuable resources for its further advancement.

## Developing national recovery and sustainable development strategies for SIDS

UN DESA supported several Small Island Developing States to plan and implement national sustainable development strategies and build resilience in response to crises, developing longer-term approaches to sustainable development and mobilizing climate finance. The project empowered government officials and national stakeholders in Mauritius, Seychelles, Guinea-Bissau, and Jamaica to conduct integrated policy and strategy assessments, including the valuation of ecosystem services for national planning and pandemic recovery. It aims to improve evidence-based decision-making by presenting scenarios and pathways for sustainable development.



Capacity building workshop in Mauritius. | UN DESA

In Mauritius, UN DESA also developed capacities for integrated strategic planning and institutional arrangements for policy coherence. The initiative has enhanced knowledge among participants to apply systems thinking in SDG implementation. The Government of Mauritius has requested further support to build capacities in systems thinking for policy coherence and strategic foresight through “Maurice Strategie” – a new entity fostering evidence-based dialogue between the private sector, public sector, and civil society organizations.



Participants at the World Social Report 2024 side event at HLPF 2024. | UN DESA



Speakers at the Global Policy Dialogue on “The Economic Prospects of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)” at the fourth International Conference on SIDS in Antigua and Barbuda, May 2024. | UN DESA



## Advancing the SDGs through evidence-based research and analysis

Convened by UN DESA, the UN Economist Network (UNEN) conducted research and organized events to assist Member States in shaping policies relevant to the SDGs. Throughout the year, UNEN prepared and disseminated policy research on the informal economy, taxation, and migration, presenting evidence-based actions to help accelerate the SDGs. UNEN organized a virtual HLPF side-event on the topic of “How can economists in UN system address the most pressing challenges of the day?”. The event was chaired by Assistant Secretary-General Navid Hanif, with a keynote address by Ms. Mariana Mazzucato, professor in the Economics of Innovation and Public Value at University College London, and member of the UN High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs (HLAB). UNEN also examined ways to strengthen strategic engagements between the UN and international financial institutions at the country level. The network facilitates collaboration among UN system experts on issues relevant to sustainable development, fostering a cross-cutting approach to actionable research and policy analysis.

## Projecting global population trends

The 2024 volume of UN DESA’s *World Population Prospects* report projected that the world’s population will peak in the mid-2080s, growing over the next sixty years from 8.2 billion people in 2024 to around 10.3 billion in the mid-2080s, and then will return to around 10.2 billion by the end of the century. The size of the world’s population in 2100 is now expected to be six per cent lower—or 700 million fewer—than anticipated a decade ago. The report also offered policy recommendations to prepare countries for a population size, age structure, and spatial distribution that may differ appreciably from that of their recent past.



## Empowering capacity-development programmes

UN DESA expanded its digital learning hub to further provide client-focused, adaptable, and effective e-learning opportunities for Member States and other stakeholders, driving transformative change and supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This initiative continues the commitment outlined in the Secretary-General’s Strategy on New Technologies, reinforcing UN support for governmental capacity building, and aligns with the UN 2.0 framework and the “Quintet of Change”.

The Digital Learning Centre hub serves as a substantial adjunct to UN DESA’s capacity development work. Covering a wide array of topics such as tax treaties, digital government, disaster risk reduction, and social inclusion, the available UN DESA courses address diverse and critical areas of public sector innovation and governance. The e-learning courses are designed either to supplement traditional, in-person training sessions or to function as standalone educational offerings. UN DESA monitors best practices, scales innovative approaches, and fosters a user-friendly experience. To date, over 5,700 individuals from 185 Member States have taken advantage of the learning opportunities offered by the hub, collectively earning more than 2,400 certificates across 47 different courses.



Assistant Secretary-General Navid Hanif presents the World Population Prospects 2024 report to the press in New York, in July 2024. | UN DESA

### Bringing the voices of development experts to build capacities

UN DESA brought new insights to the forefront and engaged in cutting-edge reflections with experts from across the UN system and academia through its Development Policy Seminars. Topics in the series included reforming the multilateral development banks system, rethinking public debt sustainability assessment for the SDGs, policy choices for the future of work in developing countries, and using AI to generate synthetic data for SDG monitoring.

### Fostering meaningful youth engagement and empowering the voices of youth

UN DESA reinforced the ECOSOC Youth Forum's position as a vital platform for young people to engage in global policymaking, demonstrating the Department's commitment to inclusive and forward-thinking sustainable development practices. The 2024 Forum saw unprecedented participation with over 1,000 attendees, including 36 Ministers and 43 high-level Government representatives from 83 countries, as well as 92 youth delegates. It featured plenary sessions on



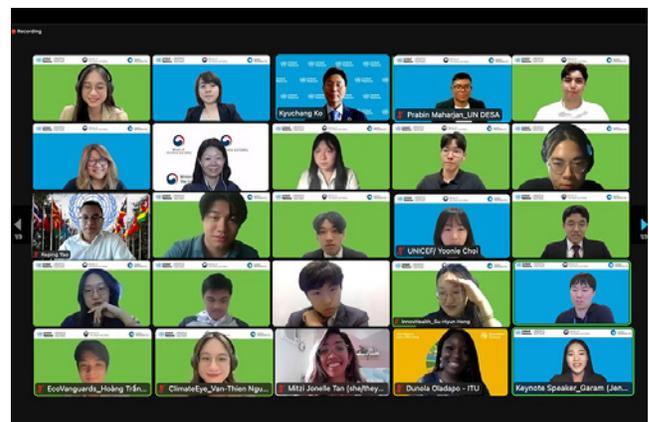
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/cdpmo/digital-learning-centre>

SDGs under HLPF review, discussions on cutting-edge topics like AI and sustainable cities, and six targeted regional breakout sessions. The Department facilitated crucial dialogues between youth and high-level officials, including sessions with the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, and other senior UN leadership. UN DESA’s work with the Forum culminated in a Presidential statement, set to inform HLPF and Summit of the Future deliberations, ensuring that youth perspectives directly influence global policy processes.

### Enabling youth as agents of change for digital transformation and climate action

UN DESA provided young people a platform to showcase innovative ideas to address global challenges at the 7th Youth Forum on SDG Implementation. In

collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS) and Incheon Metropolitan City of the Republic of Korea, the Youth Forum was held online under the theme, “Enabling Youth as Agents of Change for Digital Transformation and Inclusive Climate Action”. Over



Screenshot from 7th Youth Forum on SDG Implementation. | UN DESA



Participants of the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2024. | UN DESA

200 participants from all over the world discussed the role of young people in the age of digital transformation and as key players for climate action. The Forum also continued to run its annual speech contest, through the Ideas for Change Contest, which invited young people to develop innovative solutions.

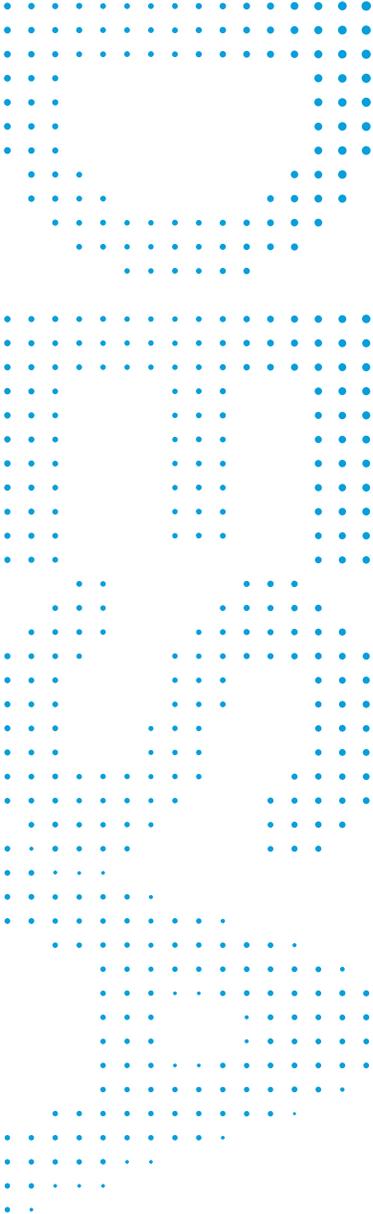
### Enhancing data-driven intergovernmental support

In the past year, UN DESA has enhanced its data-driven intergovernmental support. A newly established

Information Management Task Force aims to optimize work processes, improve information sharing and integration, and enhance collaboration for greater impact. The initiative emphasizes the use of data visualization and storytelling as effective communication and outreach tools for Member States and key partners. The Task Force's objectives include developing an online collaborative space to facilitate informed decision-making, providing upskilling opportunities through workshops and creating a supportive environment for digital skill development, and identifying methods to streamline visual elements in UN DESA's work. This comprehensive approach seeks to eliminate inefficiencies and boost the Department's overall effectiveness in supporting intergovernmental processes.



# ANNEXES



- UN DESA SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM
- UN DESA ORGANIZATION CHART
- KEY MILESTONES AND MOMENTS OF THE 78TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
- KEY MILESTONES AND MOMENTS OF THE 79TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY



**Mr. Li Junhua**  
Under-Secretary-General

Mr. Li Junhua took office as the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, effective 30 August 2022. He succeeds Mr. Liu Zhenmin, who served as Under-Secretary-General from July 2017 through July 2022.

As Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Li guides UN Secretariat support for the follow-up processes of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. He also oversees the substantive services to many inter-governmental processes, including the annual meetings of the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly, the meetings of the Economic and Social Council, including its Development Cooperation Forum, and the work of the subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC. In addition to intergovernmental processes, Mr. Li oversees DESA's policy analysis and capacity development work. He also serves as the Convenor of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, and advises the United Nations Secretary-General on all development-related issues, including climate change, internet governance, and financing for development.

Prior to joining UN DESA, Mr. Li served as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of China to Italy and San Marino. Prior to this, he was Director General of the Department of International Organizations and Conferences, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China (2013–2019). He has contributed to numerous meetings of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council, as well as other multilateral meetings including the G20, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM), BRICS etc.

Mr. Li began his career at the Foreign Affairs Ministry in 1985. Since then, he has served in various capacities, including as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of China to Myanmar (2010–2012), Deputy Director General of the Department of International Organizations and Conferences (2008–2010), Minister Counselor (Political), Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations (2003–2008), Division Director and Counselor in charge of UN General Assembly and Security Council Affairs (2001–2003), Second and First Secretary, Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations (1997–2001). Third and Second Secretary, the Department of International Organizations and Conferences (1992–1997) and Assistant to the Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok (1986–1992).

Mr. Li holds a Master's in International Public Policy, School of Advanced International Studies, John Hopkins University. Mr. Li is married.



## Mr. Navid Hanif

Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development

Mr. Navid Hanif was appointed as the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, effective 1 July 2022. As Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Hanif assists the Under-Secretary-General in the overall strategic guidance of the Department, with particular focus on ensuring the quality and value-added of its thought leadership and analytical work, its support to the broader UN development system and its support to countries in special situations.

Mr. Hanif has more than 30 years of experience in national and international civil service, encompassing analytical work, policymaking, programme planning, capacity development, multilateral diplomacy and extensive knowledge of the United Nations system. He first joined UN DESA in 2001 until 2003, serving as Senior Policy Adviser in the Division for Sustainable Development and member of the team for the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002.

He later joined the office of the Under-Secretary General for UN DESA and focused on departmental initiatives in various policy areas. He worked as the Chief of Policy Coordination Branch in the office for Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) support from 2004 to 2009. In 2005, he was sent on a special one-year assignment to work as a Principal Officer in the Office of the United Nations Secretary-General. He worked there as a member of the team for the 2005 World Summit. In 2010, he was appointed as Head of the newly established UN DESA Strategic Planning Unit. He later served as Director of the former Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, from 2012 to 2018 and as Director of the Financing for Sustainable Development Office from 2018–2022.

Mr. Hanif holds a Master's in International Political Economy, from Columbia University, New York and a Master's in English Literature from Government College, Lahore.



## Ms. Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo

Director, Secretariat of the United Nations  
Forum on Forests

Ms. Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo was appointed as Director of the Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests in 2022.

She has a wealth of experience in international development and 32 cumulative years managing complex initiatives across Africa, in Latin America, and Canada with a focus on the environment, community livelihood and gender equality. She has worked with a range of international organizations developing, managing or mobilizing resources.

Prior to her appointment in UN DESA, Ms. Biao, worked in the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Nairobi where she served for over six years as the Director and Regional Representative for Africa. She worked previously with Canadian Crossroads International as the Director of Programmes, has served the Canadian Centre for international Studies and Cooperation as the Regional Director for Africa, and has worked with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Regional Office for West Africa. She also worked for seven years with a private sector organization.

Ms. Biao has served in her native Benin as Minister of Environment and Nature Protection as well as Acting Minister of Family and the Child. As the first female forester in West Africa, Ms. Biao pioneered ground-breaking initiatives including participatory management of protected areas. She has won the Global Women's Leadership and Green Future Leadership Awards and was named Commander of the National Order of Merit.

Ms. Biao Koudenoukpo holds an M.Sc. in Forestry Economics and a Ph.D. in Public Policy and Administration from Walden University



## Mr. Charles Katoanga

Director, Division for Inclusive Social Development

Mr. Charles Katoanga leads the work of the Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD), which serves as the UN system focal point on youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, families, cooperatives, the social dimensions of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and sport for development and peace, and coordinates follow-up to the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. DISD is the substantive secretariat for the Commission for Social Development, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

He was appointed Director of the Division by the Secretary-General in September 2024, following a 24-year career in the United Nations Secretariat. Prior to his appointment, Mr. Katoanga was the Chief of Staff of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. He has served in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Department of Management.

Before joining the United Nations Secretariat, Mr. Katoanga worked for the Government of Fiji and the New Zealand Official Development Assistance bilateral programmes in Fiji and Tuvalu and its Pacific Regional programme.

Mr. Katoanga is a graduate of the University of the South Pacific and Santa Clara University as well as executive education programmes of the John F. Kennedy School of Government.



## Mr. Shantanu Mukherjee

Director, Economic Analysis and Policy Division

Mr. Shantanu Mukherjee was appointed Director of the UN DESA Economic Analysis and Policy Division in December 2022. In this position he oversees the Division's work on macroeconomic monitoring, modelling and forecasting; the economic analysis of emerging and long-run trends that relate to sustainable development; reviewing the development progress of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) including the secretariat support to the Committee on Development Policy (CDP); and the substantive support to the UN Economist Network (UNEN), as well as to economic policy related capacity building in developing countries.

Prior to this appointment he served as Chief of the Integrated Policy Analysis Branch in the Division for Sustainable Development Goals where his team led the work on integrated SDG analysis with a special focus on harnessing science and technology for the SDGs. In this capacity, he oversaw the Global Sustainable Development Report and the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, as well as the substantive back-stopping to the High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development.

He began his career in the UN system with the United Nations Development Programme, where he led the research team at the "Human Development Report Office". Prior to that, he led the MDG team in UNDP's Bureau for Development Policy where his work included both global policy analysis as well as support to national and local governments, including extensive collaboration with UN and other multi-lateral entities.

A micro-economist with interests in poverty, health and sustainability, Mr. Mukherjee began his career in his native India working on development policy and public finance as part of the national government.

Mr. Mukherjee earned a Ph.D. in Economics from Princeton University and holds advanced degrees in Public Policy, and in Physics.



## Mr. Stefan Schweinfest

Director, Statistics Division

Mr. Schweinfest joined the Statistics Division in 1989 and has served as the substantive secretary of two intergovernmental bodies, the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) since 2002, and the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UNGGIM) since 2011.

Mr. Schweinfest supported the work of the Statistical Commission and its Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) to develop the global indicator framework to monitor progress towards the SDGs. Under his leadership, the Statistics Division works on implementing this framework and ensuring countries receive capacity-building support to monitor progress towards the SDGs.

He played a key role in the negotiations leading to the 2011 ECOSOC resolution to establish UNGGIM and has actively involved himself with global geospatial information management since, including the negotiations leading to a second ECOSOC resolution in 2016 that strengthens and broadens the mandate of this Committee of Experts.

He studied Mathematical Economics at the Universities of Wuerzburg and Bonn in Germany. He holds a Diplome D'Etudes Approfondies (Masters equivalent) from the University of Paris in these fields. He also conducted postgraduate research at the London School of Economics.



## Ms. Shari Spiegel

Director, Financing for Sustainable Development Office

Ms. Shari Spiegel is the Director of the Financing for Sustainable Development Office within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. In this capacity, she oversees support for intergovernmental negotiations on financing issues, analytical work on financing for sustainable development, and the UN work on tax issues. She was previously Chief of the Policy Analysis and Development Branch of FSDO (UN DESA), where she was integral to the negotiations on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, launched the 60-agency Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development, and oversaw publication of the task force's annual Financing for Sustainable Development Report.

Ms. Spiegel has extensive private sector experience, including as a Principal at New Holland Capital (an advisor on alternative investments to APG, the Dutch Civil Servants Pension Fund), Director at Lazard LLC and the Senior Portfolio Manager in charge of emerging market debt and foreign exchange at Lazard Asset Management, and posts at Citibank and Drexel Burnham Lambert in fixed income research, cross-currency interest-rate-swap trading, and credit research. In the early 1990s, she co-founded and was Chief Executive Officer of Budapest Alapkezel, which launched the first domestic investment funds in Hungary.

Ms. Spiegel also served as the Executive Director of the Initiative for Policy Dialogue (IPD), a think-tank at Columbia University founded by Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz, which focuses on macroeconomics and economic development in developing countries. She has worked as a foreign adviser to the Hungarian Central Bank and as a consultant to the World Bank/International Finance Corporation. She is author and co-author of several books and articles on financial and capital markets, debt issues, macroeconomics, and development.

She has an MA in Economics from Princeton University and a BA in Economics and Applied Mathematics from Northwestern University.



## Ms. Lotta Tähtinen

Director, Office of Intergovernmental Support  
and Coordination for Sustainable Development

Ms. Lotta Tähtinen was appointed Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development (OISC) in 2024. She oversees and guides UN DESA's support to the Economic and Social Council, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

Prior to this, she served as the Chief of the Outreach and Partnerships Branch of the Division for Sustainable Development Goals in UN DESA. Here she led stakeholder and partnerships programmes and oversaw communication and outreach work, along with overall preparations for the annual ECOSOC Partnership Forum.

She has extensive experience in supporting major UN conferences and summits on sustainable development, including those on Small Island Developing States, the ocean, water and sustainable transport. She also supported the intergovernmental process that led to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs in 2015.

She began her career in UN DESA over 20 years ago in the former Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination (current OISC) and has also served in the UN Department for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management.

She holds a Master's degree in International Relations from the University of Tampere, Finland.



## Mr. John Wilmoth

Director, Population Division

Mr. Wilmoth joined as Director of the UN DESA Population Division in December 2013. He oversees the Department's support to the Commission on Population and Development and to intergovernmental discussions on international migration in follow-up to the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Under his leadership, the Population Division continues to upgrade its production of internationally comparable population data, which are essential inputs to the global monitoring of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Prior to his appointment as the Director of the Population Division, Mr. Wilmoth served as Professor in the Department of Demography of the University of California at Berkeley. He also served as a consultant to the World Health Organization and the World Bank from 2009 to 2012, leading the development of new global estimates of maternal mortality. He also served previously in the UN DESA Population Division as Chief of the Mortality Section from 2005 to 2007.

Mr. Wilmoth is a member of the Population Association of America and the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population and has served on the editorial boards of leading demographic journals. He is the author or co-author of more than 50 scientific papers examining various aspects of population dynamics and population issues, including the causes of the historical decline of human mortality, prospects for future trends in life expectancy, the impact of population ageing on public pension and healthcare systems, popular perceptions of population growth and its consequences, and methodologies for estimating and projecting demographic trends.

Mr. Wilmoth holds a joint Ph.D. in Statistics and Demography from Princeton University.



## Mr. Juwang Zhu

Director, Division for Public Institutions  
and Digital Government

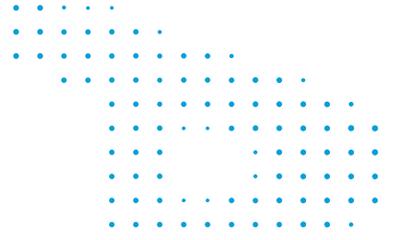
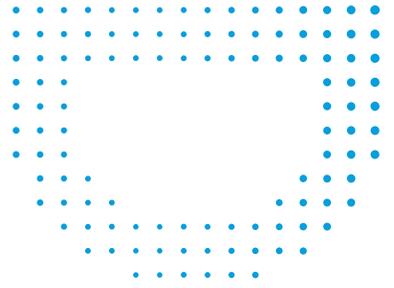
Acting Director, Division for Sustainable Development Goals

Mr. Juwang Zhu leads the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government in promoting inclusive, effective, accountable institutions that are well equipped to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 16. He also currently serves as Office-in-Charge of the global secretariat for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a focus on providing substantive support, integrated policy analysis, building multi-stakeholder partnerships and capacity-development in the thematic areas such as natural resources, water, energy, climate, ocean, transport, science and technology, as well as special concerns of Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

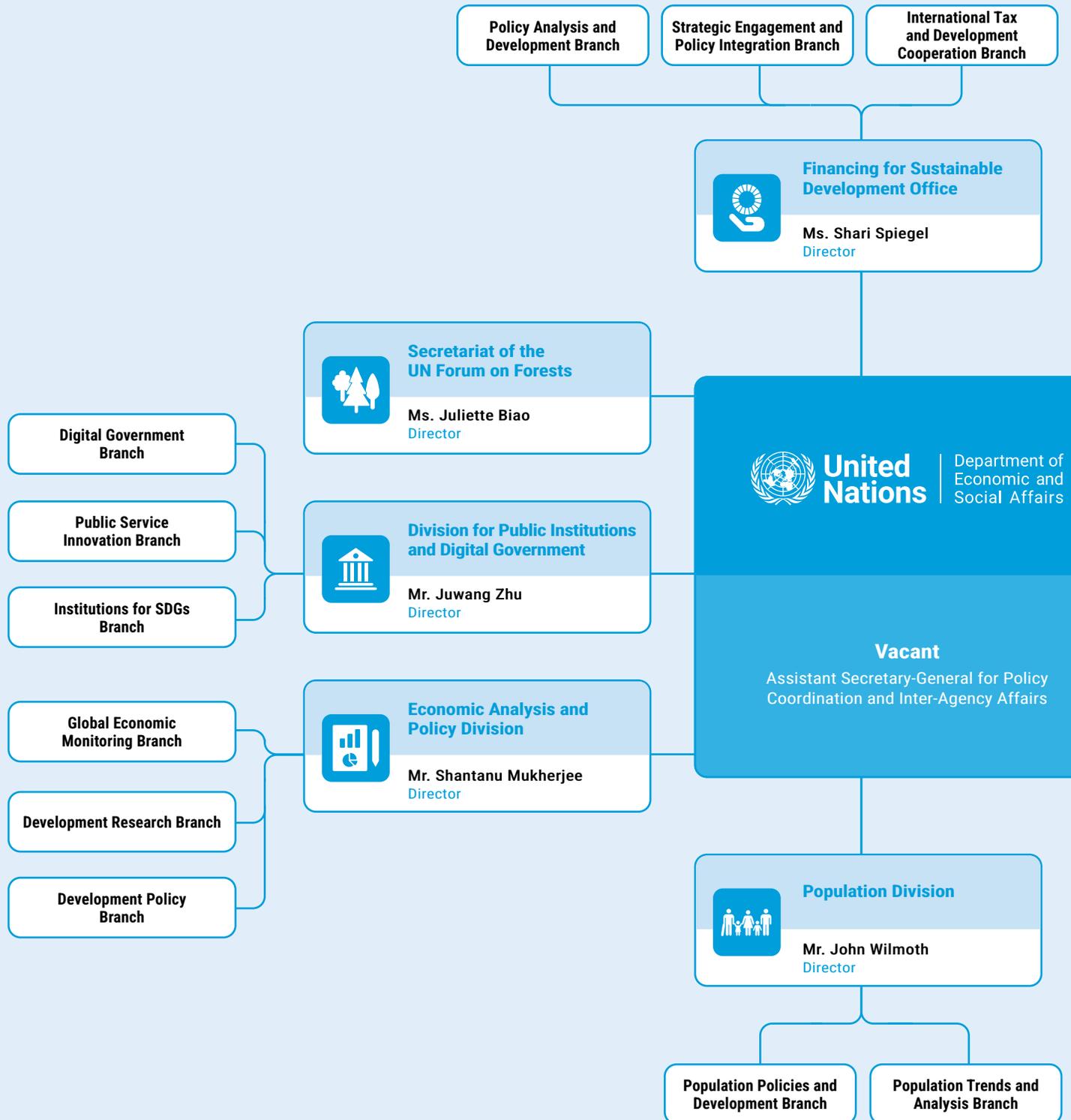
Prior to his current role, Mr. Zhu served as Chief of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General of UN DESA from 2008 to 2013. In that capacity he advised the Under-Secretary-General on policy and management issues and coordinated the Department's substantive advice to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General on development issues and on the restructuring of UN DESA's capacity-building programme.

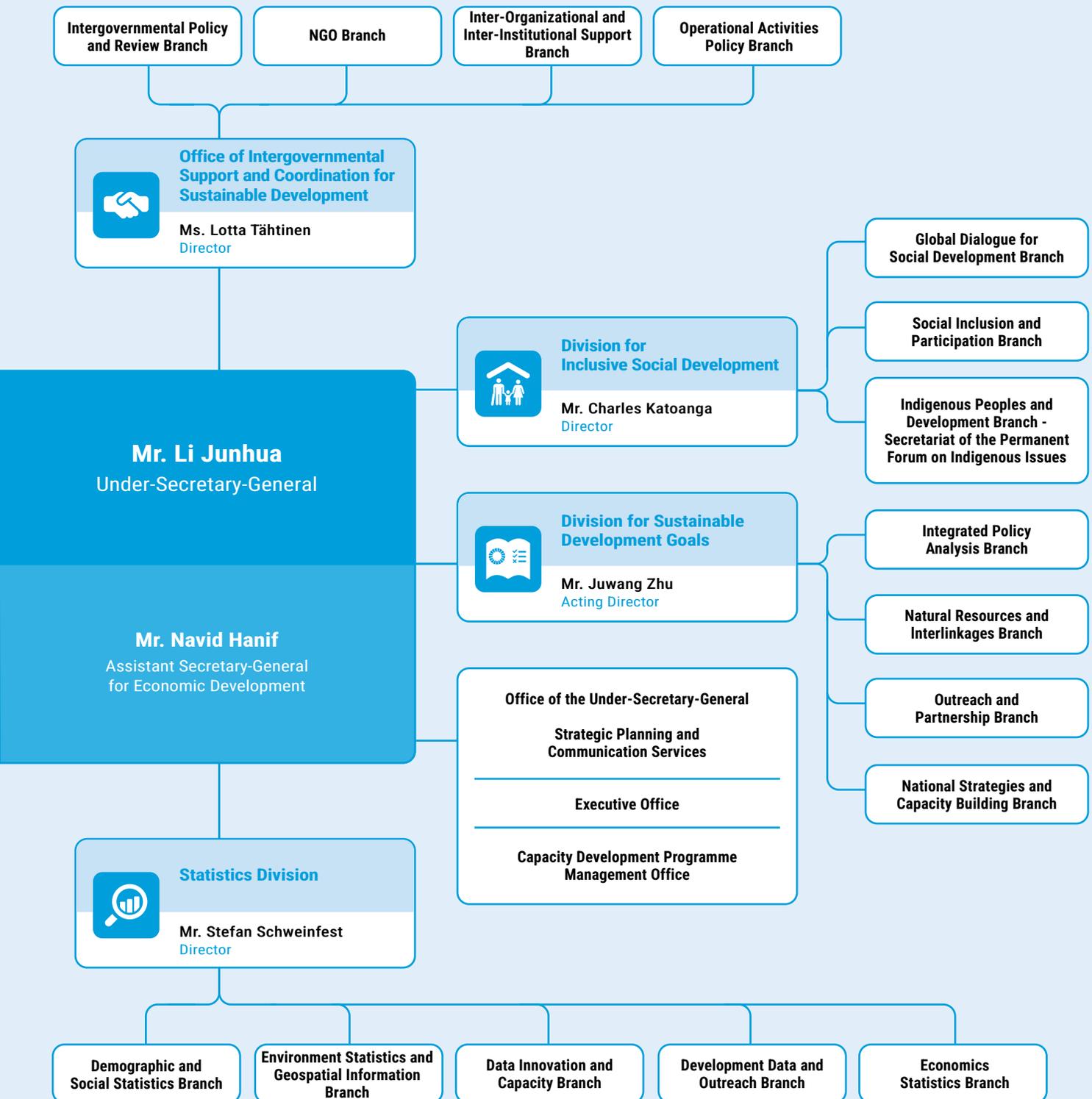
Mr. Zhu was Special Advisor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and assisted in coordinating support for the Conference. He also contributed to the Departmental support for Rio+20 follow-up. As Director of the Division for Sustainable Development Goals from 2016 to 2019, Mr. Zhu coordinated the Secretariat support for the HLPF, the UN Ocean Conference, and the Global Sustainable Transport Conference.

Mr. Zhu graduated from the Shanghai International Studies University in 1982 and did post-graduate studies in Beijing Foreign Studies University. He has an MSc in Financial Economics from University of London and an MA in International Relations from Webster University.



# UN DESA Organigramme





# UN DESA

## Key moments and milestones of the 78th General Assembly

DATE	KEY MOMENTS AND MILESTONES
<b>SEPTEMBER 2023</b>	
5	Opening of the 78th session of the General Assembly
7	Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2023
12	Global Sustainable Development Report 2023
13	First Global Report on Climate and SDGs Synergies
16-17	SDG Action Weekend
18	UN Private Sector Forum
18-19	SDG Summit
19-23, 26	General debate of the 78th session of the General Assembly
20	High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development
20	Climate Ambition Summit
21	Preparatory Ministerial Meeting for the Summit of the Future
28	Opening of the 78th session of the Third Committee of the General Assembly
<b>OCTOBER 2023</b>	
1	International Day of Older Persons
2	Opening of the 78th session of the Second Committee of the General Assembly
8-12	Internet Governance Forum
17	International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
17-20	Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters
24	UN Public Service Awards
27	Joint meeting of the Second Committee of the General Assembly with ECOSOC
31	World Cities Day
31	Fifth Annual Meeting of the GISD Alliance
<b>NOVEMBER 2023</b>	
9	World Public Sector Report 2023
19	World Toilet Day
26	World Sustainable Transport Day
30 Nov-12 Dec	SDG Pavilion at the 28th Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC (COP 28)
<b>DECEMBER 2023</b>	
3	International Day of Persons with Disabilities
18	International Migrants Day
20	International Human Solidarity Day
<b>JANUARY 2024</b>	
4	World Economic Situation and Prospects 2024
22-26	First Preparatory Committee Session for the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States
22-31	Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations
23-24	ECOSOC Special Meeting on the future of work
26	International Day of Clean Energy
30	ECOSOC Partnership Forum
31 Jan-1 Feb	ECOSOC Coordination Segment
<b>FEBRUARY 2024</b>	
5-14	Commission for Social Development
9	Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (cont'd)
20	World Day of Social Justice
27 Feb-1 Mar	Statistical Commission
<b>MARCH 2024</b>	
4-8	Committee for Development Policy
18	ECOSOC Special Meeting on International Cooperation in Tax Matters
19-22	Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters
21	International Day of Forests
21	World Down Syndrome Day
22	World Water Day
<b>APRIL 2024</b>	
1-5	Second Preparatory Committee Session for the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States
6	International Day of Sport for Development and Peace

<b>ECOSOC Functional Commission (Intergovernmental) [Supported by DESA]</b>	<b>ECOSOC Advisory Bodies (Experts) [Supported by DESA]</b>
	<b>Publication/Dataset Launch</b>
<b>High-level Intergovernmental Meeting</b>	<b>International Days</b>

DATE	KEY MOMENTS AND MILESTONES
<b>APRIL 2024</b>	
9	Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2024
15–19	Committee of Experts on Public Administration
15–26	Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
16–18	ECOSOC Youth Forum
19	Global Stocktaking on SDG7
22–25	ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development follow-up
23–25	SDG Investment Fair
26 Apr–8 May	First Session of the Ad Hoc Committee to draft Terms of Reference for a UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation
29 Apr–3 May	Commission on Population and Development
30	General Assembly and ECOSOC Thematic Event on El Niño 2023-2024
<b>MAY 2024</b>	
1–5	UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names
6–10	UN Forum on Forests
6	SDG 16 High-Level Conference
7	ECOSOC Special Meeting on Harnessing Artificial Intelligence for the SDGs
9–10	ECOSOC Multistakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (STI Forum)
14–16	ECOSOC Operational Activities for Development Segment
15	International Day of Families
16	World Economic Situation and Prospects as of mid-2024
20–22, 24	Open-ended Working Group on Ageing
27–30	Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States
<b>JUNE 2024</b>	
5–6	ECOSOC Management Segment
8	World Oceans Day
10	UN Disability and Development Report 2024
10–13	Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
10–14	International Conference on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics
15	World Elder Abuse Awareness Day
16	International Day of Family Remittances
23	UN Public Service Day
24	ECOSOC Meeting on the Transition from Relief to Development
24–26	UN Public Service Forum and Awards Ceremony
25–27	ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment
27	The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024
27	Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day
<b>JULY 2024</b>	
1	Joint Meeting of ECOSOC and the Peacebuilding Commission
2	Preparatory Meeting for the 2025 UN Ocean Conference
6	International Day of Cooperatives
8–17	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
9	Soft-Launch Event for the 2025 UN International Year of Cooperatives
11	World Population Prospects 2024
11	World Population Day
15	World Youth Skills Day
15–18	High-level Segment of ECOSOC, including the three-day ministerial segment of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
16	2024 Global Report on Climate and SDG Synergy
22–26	First Preparatory Committee Session for the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development
23–24	ECOSOC Management Segment
25	ECOSOC Organizational Session for 2025 Cycle (July 2024–July 2025)
29 Jul–16 Aug	Second Session of the Ad Hoc Committee to Draft Terms of Reference for a UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation
<b>AUGUST 2024</b>	
7–9	UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management
9	International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
12	International Youth Day

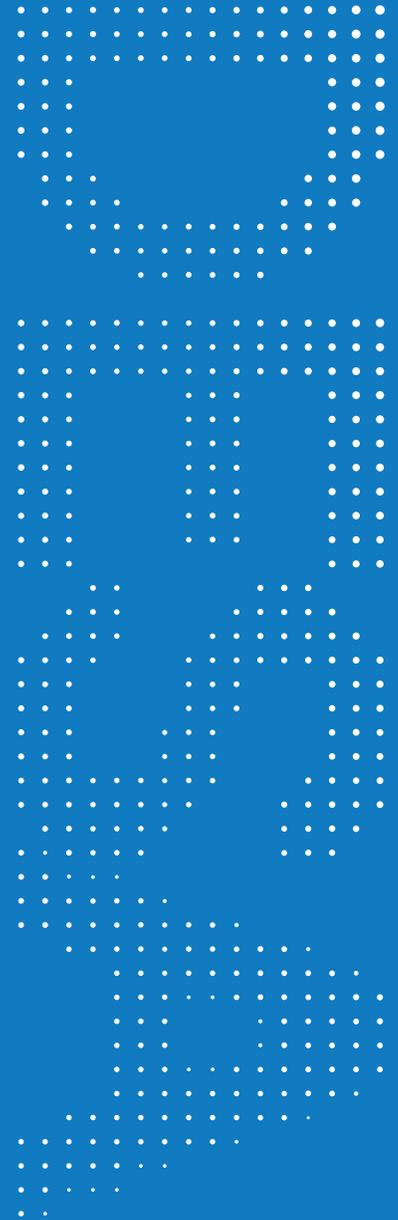
# UN DESA

## Key moments and milestones of the 79th General Assembly

DATE	KEY MOMENTS AND MILESTONES
<b>September 2024</b>	
5–6	Fifth Global Conference on Strengthening Synergies between 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement
10	Opening of the 79th session of the General Assembly
16	Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2024
17	UN E-Government Survey 2024
20–21	Summit of the Future Action Days
22–23	Summit of the Future
25–27	SDG7 Action Forum
24–28, 30	General debate of the 79th session of the General Assembly
<b>October 2024</b>	
1	International Day of Older Persons
3	Opening of the 79th session of the Third Committee of the General Assembly
7	Opening of the 79th session of the Second Committee of the General Assembly
8–10	High-level Forum on UN Global Geospatial Information Management
15–18	Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters
17	International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
17	World Social Report 2024
28	Intersessional Multi-stakeholder Hearing for the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development
31	World Cities Day
<b>November 2024</b>	
12–15	UN World Data Forum
11–22	SDG Pavilion at the 29th Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC (COP 29)
19	World Toilet Day
26	World Sustainable Transport Day
<b>December 2024</b>	
3	International Day of Persons with Disabilities
3–6	Second Preparatory Committee Session for the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development
15–19	Internet Governance Forum
18	International Migrants Day
20	International Human Solidarity Day
21	World Basketball Day
<b>January 2025</b>	
9 (TBC)	World Economic Situation and Prospects 2025
20–29	Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations
26	International Day of Clean Energy
<b>February 2025</b>	
5	ECOSOC Partnership Forum
6–7	ECOSOC Coordination Segment
7	Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (cont'd)
10–14	Commission for Social Development
10–14 (TBC)	Third Preparatory Committee Session for the fourth International Conference on Financing for Development
20	World Day of Social Justice
24–28	Committee for Development Policy
TBC	World Social Report 2025
<b>March 2025</b>	
4–7	Statistical Commission
12–13	Development Cooperation Forum
21	International Day of Forests
21	World Down Syndrome Day

<b>ECOSOC Functional Commission (Intergovernmental) [Supported by DESA]</b>	<b>ECOSOC Advisory Bodies (Experts) [Supported by DESA]</b>
	<b>Publication/Dataset Launch</b>
<b>High-level Intergovernmental Meeting</b>	<b>International Days</b>

DATE	KEY MOMENTS AND MILESTONES
<b>March 2025</b>	
22	World Water Day
24–27	Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters
28	ECOSOC Special Meeting on International Cooperation in Tax Matters
<b>April 2025</b>	
6	International Day of Sport for Development and Peace
7–11	Commission on Population and Development
7–11	Committee of Experts on Public Administration
15–17	ECOSOC Youth Forum
21 Apr–2 May	Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
<b>May 2025</b>	
5–9	UN Forum on Forests
7–8	Multistakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals (STI Forum)
15	International Day of Families
20–22	ECOSOC Operational Activities for Development Segment
28 Apr–2 May	UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names
15 (TBC)	World Economic Situation and Prospects as of mid-2025
<b>June 2025</b>	
8	World Oceans Day
9–13	UN Ocean Conference
10–11	ECOSOC Management Segment
10–12	Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
15	World Elder Abuse Awareness Day
16	International Day of Family Remittances
17	ECOSOC Meeting on the Transition from Relief to Development
18–20	ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment
23	UN Public Service Day
23–25	UN Public Service Forum
24–26 (TBC)	International Forum on Migration Statistics
27	Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day
30 Jun–3 Jul	Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development
<b>July 2025</b>	
5	International Day of Cooperatives
11	World Population Day
15	World Youth Skills Day
14–23	High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
21–24	High-level segment of ECOSOC, including the three-day ministerial segment of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
29–30	ECOSOC Management Segment
31	ECOSOC organizational session for 2026 Cycle (July 2025 - July 2026)
<b>August 2025</b>	
9	International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
12	International Youth Day



**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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**United Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs

