High-level political forum on sustainable development
Convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council
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Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)
while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda
for Sustainable Development

Discussion papers on the theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, submitted by major groups and other stakeholders*

Note by the Secretariat

The present document is a compilation of the executive summaries of the position papers on the theme of the 2022 high-level political forum, “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, submitted by the various major groups and other relevant stakeholders that have autonomously established and maintained effective coordination mechanisms for participation in the high-level political forum on sustainable development, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/290. The full reports are posted on the website of the forum (https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf).

* The present document is a compilation of the summaries of the thematic papers submitted to the high-level political forum by the major groups and other stakeholders and does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.
I. **Women**

1. By the end of the Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals, the women major group hopes to reflect back on the moment as the time in which the world rebuilt from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic by abandoning austerity, competition and extractive, exploitative and patriarchal systems and replaced them with feminist, decolonialist ethics of care and abundance.

2. The women’s major group has a vision in which, by 2030, all can celebrate, protect and honour the full diversity of human life and the planet, with a special focus on fulfilling the human rights of women, girls and gender-diverse people.

3. The women’s major group sees a world that protects, defends and funds environmental and women’s human rights defenders – a landscape of flourishing feminist movements. The group envisions robust space for civil society to engage, decide, participate and demand justice and accountability in open and democratic processes.

4. The women’s major group has a vision of a world that recognizes and guarantees women’s bodily autonomy, freedom from violence and sexual and reproductive health as human rights – a world in which women’s bodies are their own.

5. The women’s major group sees a world in which girls excel in quality, inclusive and affordable education and training systems, in which they receive comprehensive sexuality, anti-colonial, climate justice and human rights education, and in which educational opportunities are lifelong.

6. The women’s major group has a vision of a new global economic paradigm that centres human rights, care and redistribution over unbridled growth, a paradigm in which there are fully funded, universal and gender-transformative social protection systems, living wages and decent work for all, high-quality care, health, education, water, sanitation and energy as public services, and in which women workers, whether in the formal or informal economy, have their rights to work and at work respected.

7. The women’s major group has a vision of a world which has rejected false solutions to the climate crisis, a world of climate justice with funding for grassroots gender-just climate solutions to climate-driven loss and damage, and climate reparations for the most affected communities. The group has a vision in which women, girls, gender-diverse people and indigenous peoples have sovereignty over their land, water, bodies and food systems.

8. The women’s major group has a vision of a world in which all countries have the fiscal space to guarantee public services rather than servicing excessive debt. The group sees a world that has eliminated illicit financial flows, enacted progressive tax systems and corporate regulation, and created trade agreements centred on the fulfilment of human rights rather than the exploitation and expropriation of resources and the prioritization of profit for the few.

9. The women’s major group has a vision of a world at peace, in which the resources that formerly sustained militarism have been diverted to support the fulfilment and enjoyment of human rights.

10. The women’s major group envisions a multilateralism centred on global solidarity and cooperation that welcomes the people, especially the most marginalized, into the halls of power and decision-making.

11. The women’s major group continues to participate in this space because it sees this just world so clearly and trusts their public partnerships and cross-movement
building to make this vision a reality. As Arundhati Roy stated, “another world is not only possible, she is on her way”.

II. Non-governmental organizations

12. In 2022, the world exists in a state of duality. There are countries in which many are vaccinated and COVID-19 no longer disrupts daily life; others lack access to vaccines, and the pandemic remains a dominant concern. Some enjoy peace and prosperity; others experience ongoing violence and instability. The high-level political forum enables us to address inequities and injustices, fostering cooperation inspired by what benefits us all. The non-governmental organizations major group is calling for global commitment to meaningful action, supported by engagement with civil society, evidence-based reporting and steadfast political will.

13. Sadly, the groups identified in the 2021 position paper by the non-governmental organizations major group, namely women, youth, older persons, indigenous peoples and those living with disabilities, remain the most at risk of being left behind. Significant concerns include the exploitation of women and girls, animals and the environment, regressive action on human rights, conflicts and threats to biodiversity.

14. The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the creation of online spaces for civil society, which should be maintained and expanded, as they have increased accessibility and participation in decision-making processes. However, virtual spaces are not a replacement for meaningful in-person participation and dialogue. Digital divides between rich and poor countries, and rural and remote communities, became more apparent during the pandemic.

15. The non-governmental organizations major group urges States to adopt broad inputs to voluntary national reviews as a source of good practices and opportunity for collaboration. Civil society, universities and local governments are well-positioned to facilitate scalable interventions with citizen participation and feedback.

16. The non-governmental organizations major group invites States to take the following steps to address the circumstances that have a negative impact on the progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

(a) Vaccine inequity: a global vaccine strategy that includes a system of intellectual property management, manufacturing and distribution and ensuring vaccines are equitably and globally available is required;

(b) Conflict and geopolitical instability: a call for the cessation of hostilities; ensuring political will and global commitment to securing high-quality, formal and informal education for all ages;

(c) Gender discrimination and violence: a call for the adoption and implementation of policies and, where appropriate, special measures aimed at eliminating gender-based discrimination and violence, including the recognition of sexual and reproductive health and rights for women in all their diversity;

(d) Accelerating climate impacts: building resilience and adaptation must be a high priority, with meaningful policy and financial commitment to the objectives of the Paris Agreement, particularly in coastal communities, small island developing States and remote communities, including through nature-based solutions that address multiple goals;

(e) Unequal access to green technologies: ensure global equity of access to technologies that impact health, education, employment, loss of biodiversity and sustainable development, recognizing that protectionist policies inevitably limit the
access of those most in need. Bridge the global North-South divide and address the historic, colonialist and systemic separation of donor and recipient nations.

17. Sustainable development must employ inclusive, systematic processes to overcome systemic inequalities and persistent poverty and support the newly recognized right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. The non-governmental organizations major group calls on Member States to use 2022 to achieve genuine, meaningful progress and ensure no one is left behind.

III. Local authorities

18. In the midst of the current interconnected crises, the importance of the role of local and regional governments as providers and protectors of their communities has never been clearer. Essential services such as health and education should be strengthened through local and regional sustainable policymaking, to guarantee a world for all.

19. The role of local and regional governments in education as hubs of learning and innovation is critical to accessible, safe and supporting environments which foster equality and opportunity.

20. Fostering gender equality and the participation of local feminist women leaders in decision-making is core to the democratic process and to enabling governance with empathy, responding to communities’ diverse needs and aspirations. Involving vulnerable groups in governance, in particular older persons, migrants and persons with disabilities, will contribute to employment that works for all.

21. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals depends on localization processes that take into consideration big and intermediary cities, towns, regions and territories, which are essential to alternative models of production and consumption and achieving a green, resilient and inclusive world.

22. Climate action must be reinforced by changes in the relationship of humankind with ecosystems: through a change in economic models based on circular economy principles and a shift towards caring systems, through culture as the motor for social cohesion and sustainable development.

23. City and regional diplomacy is the transformative diplomacy that local and regional governments bring to the table in times of crisis. Decentralized cooperation is integral to enhancing the ability to achieve the Goals and transform systems.

24. The issues addressed in the New Urban Agenda are as necessary now as they were in 2016 and should be at the heart of global efforts. Housing, health care and public services are the work of local and regional governments and are critical to achieving the New Urban Agenda as an accelerator of other universal development agendas.

25. Local and regional governments reiterate their commitment to fostering the development of voluntary local reviews and voluntary subnational reviews with full support of local and regional governments and their associations, promoting ownership, increasing local and regional government participation in national coordination mechanisms, and achieving the Goals.

26. Ahead of the review of Goal 14 and the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030), the local authorities major group highlights the crucial role of multilevel governance and multi-stakeholder collaboration to strengthen the science-policy interface and the need to strengthen the capacities of local and regional governments in building sustainable management models.
27. To secure adequate financing and revenue streams for better planning and investment to achieve the Goals, fiscal architecture must be rethought to empower local and regional governments.

28. The local authorities major group calls for a renewed, more inclusive, multilateral system based on ownership, co-creation, strategic partnerships in priority sectors and peace in which local and regional governments are fully engaged. The group calls for a strong international community and updated United Nations system that reflects current contexts, engaging local and regional governments and their associations in all stages of decision-making processes to achieve the global agendas and increase transparency and accountability.

IV. Workers and trade unions

Trade unions and the call for a new social contract

29. The human cost of the COVID-19 pandemic is staggering. The world has lost the equivalent of 255 million full-time jobs in 2020; an additional 130 million jobs were lost or at risk in 2021, and global unemployment is projected to stand at 207 million in 2022. Violations of labour rights are increasing worldwide, while more than half of the world still lacks any social protection coverage, and some 2 billion informal workers struggle on a daily basis to survive.

30. In this context, trade unions are calling for a new social contract globally, rooted in a gender-transformative agenda and based on:

(a) Jobs: investment in decent and climate-friendly jobs, with a just transition;

(b) Rights: the promise of the International Labour Organization Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, of rights and protections for all workers, irrespective of employment arrangements and including occupational health and safety;

(c) Wages: minimum living wages and equal pay, established through statutory processes or collective bargaining;

(d) Social protection for all, with a global social protection fund for the poorest countries;

(e) Equality of income, gender and race, including a world of work free from gender-based violence and harassment;

(f) Inclusion: a rights-based development model realized through the Sustainable Development Goals and multilateral reform.

31. Key demands with respect to the Sustainable Development Goals under review at the 2022 high-level political forum are the following:

(a) Goal 4:

(i) Recognize the universal entitlement to lifelong learning in order to leave no one behind in digital and climate transitions;

(ii) Invest in resilient, high-quality public education and lifelong learning systems, including high-quality climate change education, and ensure teachers are trained, qualified and supported;

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1 See https://www.ituc-csi.org/new-social-contract-five-demands.
(b) Goal 5:
(i) Invest in the care economy, which has great potential for climate-friendly job creation and helps women to regain their place in the labour force;
(ii) End the gender pay gap;
(iii) End discrimination, gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work;
(c) Goals 14 and 15:
Invest in decent and climate-friendly jobs that enable a decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation and that are based on gender-responsive just transition measures;
(d) Goal 17:
Build a renewed multilateralism based on social dialogue to redress the uneven distribution of power and wealth at the international level.

Centrality of Sustainable Development Goal 8 in building forward better

32. Sustainable Development Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth is key for a human-centred recovery. Indeed, with its targets on jobs, workers’ rights, decent work, social protection, inclusive growth and environmental preservation, Goal 8 provides strong leverage for other goals, including goals under review in the 2022 high-level political forum. For example, good performance in relation to Goal 8 is positively correlated with a higher female share of employment in managerial positions (indicator 5.5.2 of the Goals) and with higher secondary education enrolment (indicator 4.1.1 of the Goals).

33. For that reason, trade unions call for recovery and resilience driven by Goal 8 and why they support related United Nations processes, such as the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for a Just Transition. The Goals provide a needed pathway, which can only be realized with full employment and decent work.

V. Education and academia stakeholder group

Quality education and lifelong learning for all: a sustainable response to crises

34. Armed conflicts, climate change and the ongoing pandemic have caused a huge interruption in the educational process around the globe, with an insurmountable loss to children’s schooling, leaving millions of various groups of learners outside of the processes of formal and non-formal education. The individual, social and economic consequences are dramatic, and some of them have yet to be seen. A new report published by the World Bank, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund states that this generation of students now risks losing $17 trillion in lifetime earnings in present value, or about 14 per cent of today’s global gross domestic product, as a result of school closures related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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35. The pandemic has also exposed deep-rooted vulnerabilities and structural problems that exacerbated the consequences of the pandemic and that affect vulnerable groups in particular, depriving them of their right to education. Women and girls belong to the most affected group, whose educational losses have had detrimental effects on other areas of life and work, but affected groups also include older people and people living in poverty. Increasing privatization and the decrease in financing for education are aspects that continue to aggravate the full realization of the right to education of these communities, in addition to the onslaught of public debt and the absence, in many countries, of tax justice.

36. Reopening schools is therefore not enough for sustainable recovery and for the development of individual and social resilience in facing future crises. A new social contract for transformative education is needed that can repair injustices while transforming the future, as laid out in the UNESCO report entitled *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education*. It must be grounded in the understanding of education as a human right and as a public and common good, whereby Governments remain the main duty-bearers for the provision of education either by securing education for the most marginalized, or by coordinating and regulating the participation of other actors in education. Sustainable recovery requires focus on both schools and other educational institutions, as well as on lifelong learning opportunities at every age. It is necessary to create inclusive policies, tackle urgent problems, develop long-term strategies and increase investments in education and lifelong learning.

37. Furthermore, sustainable recovery requires not only adaptive education and learning, helping people to keep up with the changes in the environment, but transformative education and learning, including critical thinking and the development of values such as autonomy, emancipation, freedom, democracy and the agency of learners. In addition, although vocational education remains very important, illiteracy is still one of the most substantial problems facing humankind, and therefore curricula for the changing world must be based on literacy and include global active citizenship, peace education and education for sustainable development.

38. The education and academia stakeholder group strongly argues for actions built upon inclusive, equitable and high-quality learning opportunities and outcomes throughout the life course. This includes adult learning in all its many and creative manifestations, in work and life, whether formal or informal. Sustainable Development Goal 4 should therefore be implemented in all its facets, keeping in mind that adult education is the longest phase in the lifelong learning process, including because of demographic changes and the urgency around climate crises, which requires immediate educational action.

39. During the pandemic, technology helped to bridge the learning gap and reduce new “learning poverty”, introducing significant changes in the ways teaching and learning is organized and requiring new, digital skills. While technology can be a driver of progress in education, it can also create new barriers to access, make social or collective learning more challenging, widen existing social divides and create new ones. Therefore, inscribing access to the digital world as a new “human right” bears the risk of neglecting numerous groups of learners and areas of learning that require other methodologies. The problems of the world are not technological, but pedagogical, and therefore the challenges that the education sector must meet cannot be solved by digital tools, e-learning platforms and artificial intelligence. The right to education must not be replaced by the right to connectivity.
VI. Business and industry major group

40. The business and industry major group condemns in the strongest possible terms the illegal invasion of Ukraine. The war is causing catastrophic loss of life and trauma and has given rise to the displacement of millions of people. In addition to the tragic consequences for Ukrainians, the conflict and sanctions have disrupted global commerce, caused turbulence in energy access and security and continue to impact commodities, supply chains and jobs. The business and industry major group stands with the people of Ukraine and appeals for peace as soon as possible. The business and industry major group recall how Goal 16 on peace and security fundamentally underpins all sustainable development progress.

41. The business and industry major group recognizes and celebrates the strong united response by the United Nations community, from General Assembly resolutions to humanitarian actions across the Organization, and is inspired by how businesses from all sectors and of all sizes are stepping forward to assist affected people who have fled the war and to support those who remain.

42. The theme of the 2022 high-level political forum is “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. However, alongside the continued pandemic crisis, the conflict in Ukraine and its fallout now pose further complications in prioritizing action on the Goals, at a time when progress towards the 2030 and 2050 objectives is already not on track.

43. These recent and ongoing tragic developments give particular urgency to the 2022 high-level political forum. Yet as daunting as these multiple crises appear today, the business and industry major group remains resolved to advance the Goals and calls on the international community to renew its resolve to advance them with the following:

   (a) Special attention to those areas in which setbacks in efforts to leave no one behind have been encountered and aggravated by the war in Ukraine and its impacts on social, environmental and economic factors;

   (b) A committed dedication to inclusive multilateralism that engages business and every societal partner working side by side with Governments and with one another.

44. The business and industry major group welcomes the recent report of the Secretary-General entitled “Our Common Agenda” (A/75/982), which serves as both an accelerator for action by Governments and all societal partners on the Goals and as a vision for innovation in activities and the inclusion of business and other stakeholders in the process set out in the report. The group sees Our Common Agenda as a valuable addition to the global commitment to the practical inclusive multilateralism that is so essential to delivering on the Goals.

45. With respect to Goal 4, on education, the business community needs a talented and a skilled workforce as a prerequisite to creating more decent jobs. Therefore, business remains committed to engaging and building partnerships with the United Nations and ILO on skills, upskilling and reskilling programmes. Public-private partnerships are key in this area, as educational systems and programmes require input from all partners: employers, educational institutions, government and workers. Many companies and employer federations are engaged and have established numerous partnerships to ensure that young and older workers are trained for the jobs of the future.
46. With respect to Goal 5, on gender equality, ensuring gender equality and a diverse workforce in businesses leads to positive effects across the organization, including for the bottom line. To do this successfully, a concerted effort from business owners and leaders must be made to break down historic and cultural barriers, including unconscious biases. Businesses are embracing new policies and procedures that ensure a diverse and inclusive workforce. Businesses remain engaged in the various United Nations entities in engaging in projects and programmes that promote gender equality and inclusive diverse workforces.

47. With respect to Goals 14 and 15, on biodiversity on land and water, the private sector has a critical role to play in advancing the biodiversity agenda in the context of the 2030 Agenda. Companies are already taking action to integrate biodiversity considerations into their strategies, operations, innovations and investments, but much more must be done to leverage and amplify the energy, capabilities and expertise of the business community and scale up its actions as a driver for positive change. The Convention on Biological Diversity and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework should encourage businesses to build upon their experience and expertise and incentivize even more businesses to embed biodiversity values into their decision-making processes and products.

48. With respect to Goal 17, on partnerships, as stated at this year’s Economic and Social Council partnership forum, businesses encourage the strengthening and upscaling of the enabling frameworks and institutional architecture needed to advance multi-stakeholder partnerships involving business. It will be critical to co-create effective partnerships and strive for measurable positive outcomes via those partnerships to advance a sustainable recovery that leaves no one behind. The business and industry major group welcomes the findings in Our Common Agenda indicating that recovering sustainably requires a stronger-than-ever commitment to multi-stakeholder engagement and partnership in inclusive intergovernmental deliberations.

49. The science-policy-business and society interface is vital to cooperation on research and development, the tracking of progress and impact, and the development and deployment of innovation. In particular, the private sector must be a meaningful partner in building back better, contributing not just funding, but innovation, expertise, technology, fresh ideas and diverse perspectives from business and employers, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, who are so crucial to economic growth at the local level. The business and industry major looks forward to this year’s multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Goals, at which it will hold two side events to highlight the essential role of private sector innovation in advancing the Goals and opportunities proposed in Our Common Agenda.

50. The business and industry major group urges Member States and the United Nations development system to substantively engage with representatives of business groups and employer federations in the preparation of voluntary national reviews. Doing so would ensure that programming more effectively reflects the reality on the ground and leverages the valuable perspectives and contributions of the private sector, including small and medium-sized enterprises, to tackle the most pressing issues.

51. The business and industry major group recommends that the 2022 high-level political forum prioritize and support the following:

   (a) Cross-sectoral partnership and cooperation with business, including at the national (through resident coordinators and working closely with national Governments) and regional levels, not only in relation to investment and finance, but across the entire gamut of the Goals;
(b) As public health circumstances permit, a return to in-person meetings, with a search for ways to conduct meetings that truly enhance the substantive engagement of business and other stakeholders and that recognize the distinct role of business;

c) New and concrete engagement mechanisms, institutional infrastructure and opportunities for the United Nations system, Governments, businesses and other stakeholders to come together on achieving the Goals.

52. The business and industry major group looks forward to engaging with Member States, the United Nations system and all other stakeholders at the 2022 high-level political forum at this critical time. While there are substantial challenges ahead and the uncertainty is real, we should all maintain a focus on advancing solutions through inclusive multilateralism, including at this year’s climate and biodiversity conferences of the parties, the twelfth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, the United Nations summit on transforming education and, next year, at the rescheduled fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

53. Strengthening international cooperation and collective effort towards the Goals, despite current stresses on the multilateral system, requires unwavering political will and institutional innovation, building on the recommendations in Our Common Agenda. The business and industry major group stands ready to do its part.

VII. Persons with disabilities

54. The stakeholder group of persons with disabilities recommends the following to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities, recognizing the important interaction with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected persons with disabilities. Governments and the United Nations system should act to ensure the rights and participation of persons with disabilities in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. Throughout the road to 2030, progress on accessibility and inclusion should continue to advance.

Inclusive education

55. Persons with disabilities continue to be denied their right to education as a result of complex and interlinking barriers. The stakeholder group of persons with disabilities recommends the creation of national policies and legal systems in some places and the strengthening of these systems in others to ensure access to quality and inclusive education for all learners, with particular attention to learners with disabilities. The principles of universal design for learning should be upheld throughout education systems by adapting teaching methods and learning environments to the diversity of learners with disabilities through assistive technologies and devices that are accessible to and inclusive of all learners.

Gender equality

56. Lack of inclusion and limited access to equal opportunities result in the marginalization of women and girls with disabilities. They are also left behind and excluded by inadequate services and support systems. Governments should promote gender and disability awareness-raising and adequately train health workers and other service providers to provide non-discriminatory, gender-responsive services, respecting personal autonomy.
Life on land

57. Persons with disabilities are among those most impacted by climate change, natural disasters and environmental degradation because of pre-existing marginalization, discrimination and barriers to emergency information, relief services, transport, shelter and more.Governments and United Nations systems should ensure the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation as part of longer-term sustainable development.

Partnerships

58. Governments should support multi-stakeholder partnerships working with persons with disabilities, following the human rights model, to increase the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. International cooperation must align its objectives with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Statisticians must start collecting disability data and inform policymakers, who, in collaboration with organizations of persons with disabilities and in line with the Convention, must enact new evidence-based regulations and laws to ensure the inclusion and equal participation of persons with disabilities in society.

VIII. Volunteer groups

59. In its resolution 75/233, on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, the General Assembly recognized that volunteerism could be a powerful and cross-cutting means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. More than 1 billion people annually take the time to volunteer, and the past year has seen the continued implementation of the document entitled “Call to action: volunteering in the decade of action” and, through General Assembly resolution 76/131, the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Volunteers programme and the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers.

60. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized how volunteers as agents of change provide practical action that builds hope and resilience, improves lives and strengthens communities’ ownership of their own development. During the past two years, volunteers have innovated to engage with individuals online to meet community needs and to exercise leadership roles on the front line in national responses and recovery, playing critical roles in addressing the consequences of COVID-19 and mitigating its socioeconomic impacts.

61. Member States must fulfil their commitments, made under the plan of action on volunteering for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (see A/76/137) and the ministerial declaration of the 2021 high-level political forum (E/HLS/2021/1), to the meaningful participation and involvement of volunteers in partnerships and to the encouragement, expressed by the General Assembly in resolution 75/233, to promote the conducive environment for volunteerism and volunteers to enhance the sustainability of development results.
Recommendations

National strategies

62. Volunteers build bridges by brokering relationships between communities and state authorities and other development stakeholders. The volunteer groups ask Member States:

(a) To integrate volunteering in policies and national development strategies and in their voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum to create a more enabling environment for volunteering;

(b) To engage as partners and advocates for policies supporting an enabling environment for volunteering;

(c) To explore national and global partnerships and collaboration to leverage efforts towards supporting and promoting volunteering;

(d) To build coalitions and networks for learning and shared action on developing and enabling environment for volunteering.

Inclusive diversity

63. Volunteering offers diverse paths to civic participation, but gaps in volunteer practices and aspirations across countries and regions remain. The volunteer groups ask Member States:

(a) To build on experiences of promoting volunteering among youth and extend these opportunities to all demographic groups, especially through virtual and hybrid volunteer opportunities;

(b) To recognize, work with and support community-led volunteering systems and informal volunteers, involving them as equal partners in the volunteering space;

(c) To address barriers to volunteering faced by marginalized groups, ensuring that all volunteers are valued and supported as partners in social change;

(d) To address gender-related volunteering disparities and inequalities, as the disproportionate burden of care falls on women around the world.

Measuring success

64. Volunteering enables people from all walks of life to shape and own the development in their communities. The volunteer groups ask Member States:

(a) To invest in volunteer data and research on and measurements of the scope of volunteer work for the Sustainable Development Goals by accelerating investment in measuring the scale of volunteering;

(b) To increase support for the collection of evidence and statistics on volunteer work\(^3\) and the economic and social contributions of volunteers, in addition to the stories about the impact of volunteers and the transformational process on their own lives;

(c) To support a wider range of evidence-based, quality volunteering practices, knowledge sharing and scaling up of ways to address barriers to volunteering for marginalized groups;

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\(^3\) See https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/volunteer-work/.
IX. Ageing

65. As the global population of older persons grows dramatically, so does ageism and age discrimination; the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated this. While some older persons require specialized care, most are active and are vital contributors to their families, communities and society. The socioeconomic and political contributions of women and men over the age of 60 have not yet been, but must be, fully recognized and included in building back better from the global pandemic while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

66. Essential for this is a fully age-inclusive path for recovery and the Sustainable Development Goals; universally applied age-inclusive legislation and policies; an international human rights legal instrument to protect the rights of older persons; and policies that support a just society for all people of all ages, everywhere.

Key messages

67. The following key messages can be made:

(a) Access to education and lifelong learning with a life course perspective and which includes those beyond the age of 60 to ensure national economic growth, inclusion, healthy ageing and independence;

(b) Priority should be given to the intersection of gender and age discrimination, to ensure gender equality;

(c) Urgent action and legal remedies are needed to end and prevent gender-based violence and abuse for all people across the life course;

(d) The stakeholder group on ageing calls for the comprehensive collection and use of age-related data and age disaggregated analysis on older age, the lack of which impedes the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;

(e) There is a need for policy actions and public/private partnerships for an age-inclusive society, leaving no one behind.

Recommendations for Member States

68. Members States should put in place education policies and programmes that:

(a) Guarantee affordable access and opportunities for lifelong learning for all those beyond retirement age who depend on employment to survive and for those who lack basic literacy;

(b) Provide digital, financial and vocational training and retraining for older persons to assure both opportunities for socioeconomic development and autonomy and independence in older age;

(c) Expand affordable Internet coverage for all to increase access to lifelong learning for older persons through partnerships with industry and civil society;

(d) Put in place non-digital education for older people to manage their health, upgrade work skills, and meaningful participation in civic and cultural life.

69. Member States should invest in gender equality by:

(a) Recognizing the lifelong impacts of structural gendered and age discrimination, which deprives older women of employment, a secure income,
ownership of property, access to appropriate health services and the right to social protection and to independence;

(b) Ensuring policies and awareness campaigns on elder abuse integrate a gender perspective;

(c) Using and collecting life course data on abuse, neglect, financial exploitation and femicides and report on risk factors involving older women in all settings, including in care homes;

(d) Acknowledging and acting on how COVID-19 has exposed disregard for the rights of older persons and in particular its impact on older women, who represent the majority of the world’s old and oldest-old persons.

70. Member States should address systemic issues:

(a) To ensure timely and reliable data on age, disaggregated by ages 49 through 100 and beyond, as the bedrock of Sustainable Development Goal policy;

(b) To encourage multi-stakeholder and age-inclusive engagement everywhere to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

X. Asia-Pacific regional civil society organization engagement

71. Civil society organizations in the Asia-Pacific region maintain that the world is still experiencing major global crises and, unless structural reasons and systemic barriers are addressed, building back better from the pandemic will be a pipe dream. Inequality, emissions and hunger have been rising consistently, and civic space, democratic freedoms and the participation of the civil society organizations have been declining since the 2030 Agenda was adopted. The rate of poverty reduction has been declining. Efforts towards a sustainable recovery have failed people, and more than one third of humanity have yet to receive a first shot of the vaccine. The pandemic has highlighted in a stark manner the structural fault lines of the region’s economy, governance and society. The circumstances demand an unprecedented response for recovery from the pandemic and expedited implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through stronger, inclusive and cooperative multilateralism and national efforts.

72. According to the publication entitled Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2022: Widening Disparities amid COVID-19, recently released by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Goals will not be achieved in the region before 2072 at the current pace. No subregion or country is in a position to achieve the Goals by 2030 at the current pace. There is continued regression on Goals on sustainable consumption and production (Goal 12) and climate action (Goal 13), and many more Goals show a trend of regression or lack of progress. The 2030 Agenda is a failed promise for girls in rural areas, women, refugees, people with disabilities and race, caste and ethnic groups who are at the bottom of the pyramid.

73. The majority of the countries in the region have witnessed unsustainable, mounting sovereign debts, increased illicit financial flows and shrinking official development assistance and access to trade, thereby losing fiscal and policy space, and are struggling to achieve recovery. The onerous trade agreements with provisions such as investor-State dispute settlement mechanisms are further bleeding States dry with impunity. As a result of the crisis, natural resources have been increasingly corporatized and hegemonized through a slew of neoliberal policies and the dilution of environmental and social safeguards. Social protection has been further weakened, and women’s unpaid care work has increased substantially. Job scarcity has further
consolidated the exploitation of labour. For many millions, the advent of the decade of action signals a false dawn.

74. The region is also on the receiving end of the runaway climate crisis and disasters, rapid biodiversity loss and air and plastic pollution. Asia accounts for one third of weather, climate and water-related disasters, and nearly half of the deaths and one third of economic losses incurred from such disasters from 1970 to 2019. A large majority of the population in the region is dependent on climate-sensitive sectors. The Asia-Pacific region is the richest in the world in biodiversity. However, according to recent projections, 42 per cent of biodiversity in South-East Asia may be lost by end of the century, and at least half of them will constitute a global extinction. East Asia, the Pacific and South Asia are the most polluted subregions, accounting for 2 million pollution-related deaths every year. Small island developing States and especially Pacific countries also bear the brunt of plastic pollution, even though they contribute negligibly to such pollution, through altered marine ecosystems and economy, reduced income from oceans and microplastic pollution. Civil society organizations in the Asia-Pacific region are concerned that these regional priorities never figure in the high-level political discussions in the high-level political forum and that there are no commensurate efforts in the 2030 Agenda to address these urgent concerns.

75. While resources for making a sustainable and resilient comeback from the crisis are scarce, the region is also witnessing increased militarization and an ever-looming threat of war. Many countries are in perpetually militarized states and engage in wanton violations of human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples and marginalized populations and deploy patriarchy as a political tool. The aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has the effect of legitimizing the possession of nuclear weapons as a deterrent, and the presence of eight nuclear powers in the region, with extremely low thresholds for the use of nuclear weapons, does not bode well for peace. Countries in the region align themselves with rival imperialist groups, and increased geopolitical tensions cast dark shadows over the achievement of lasting peace, the eradication of poverty and hunger, and sustainability in the region. The establishment of peace remains a sine qua non for achieving the 2030 Agenda in the region.

76. The voluntary national review process must extend beyond capitals and become more inclusive through participation by a broad range of stakeholders, including affected and marginalized populations. The high-level political forum must ensure that Member States understand the importance of having national and regional processes. Despite the fact that the majority of countries have already presented their voluntary national reviews, the peer learning function of the reviews remains unfulfilled, as countries only discuss their best efforts, glossing over critical challenges, failures and policy gaps. As we are moving towards the third cycle of the voluntary national reviews, the “national” character of the reviews must take centre stage.

77. The ministerial declaration has largely failed to meet the aspirations of the people by remaining traditional and lacking in ambition rather than calling for transformative change and outcome-oriented actions. Member States have questioned settled concepts and agreed language on fundamental issues of human rights, child rights and gender empowerment and are perceived to be divided when more ambitious efforts are called for.

XI. Africa regional mechanism for major groups and other stakeholders

78. As the world struggles to recover from a complex crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, Africa has the opportunity to better identify the challenges that
hinder its real development in an increasingly changing global situation. Climate, geopolitical, economic, political, social and mental changes are an unavoidable reality that calls for a different continental environment, with a change of paradigm in many – and perhaps all – areas of life, as a gauge of a successful pan-Africanism.

79. Upon reflection, the way to build forward better while maintaining a green, inclusive and resilient Africa with a view to achieving the 2030 Agenda and, more importantly, the Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, should go beyond mere discussions and embrace concrete and urgent actions, as a follow-up to a serious review of all of Africa’s achievements and failures.

80. Success in the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development (2021–2030) must therefore be achieved through a clear, unequivocal pan-African rationale, beginning with this first step in 2022, through which the Africa regional mechanism engages in an in-depth assessment of how far the continent has come with respect to education, gender equality, the conservation of marine resources, forest and biodiversity protection and the global partnership for sustainable finance for development.

81. Africa should focus on identifying ambitious strategies and policy actions, not just to build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic and dramatically scale up implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 in the period from 2021 to 2030, but above all to find and pave its own path toward development, relying on its intrinsic values and potential. The continent should have enough resources to invest in sustainable development as a vision through identifying sustainable development challenges for Africa; mapping African resources and assets (both natural and human), with a clear identification of the comparative advantages of each nation; redefining African interests in global cooperation based on the expectations of African citizens; and assessing African achievements with a view to sorting and choosing factors for progress that extend beyond traditional beliefs. This should be done after an acknowledgement of all related weaknesses, including in: (a) Agenda 2063; (b) the African Continental Free Trade Area; (c) the financial and monetary reserves that exist in many African countries while others lack the minimum necessary resources; (d) human resources capital (including the diaspora, veterans and elders) that has been built for years and must only be well-allocated; (e) nurturing African participation in global spaces based on well-profiled African interest; and (f) taking reasonable risks for the future on the basis of self-reliance.

82. Moreover, certain issues should be given the utmost attention, including the following: (a) engaging in a new style of international financing cooperation based on alignment with Africans’ needs and expectations and positive capitalization on African natural resources to strengthen the continent’s negotiation position; and (b) developing a new collaboration paradigm between civil society, the private sector and Governments to advance the national interests of all countries.

XII. Communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent

83. Communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent represent over 260 million people who are among the most marginalized and excluded in terms of political, social, cultural and economic development. Referred to, among other names, as Dalits, Haratine, Malinke, Roma, Sinti, gypsies and Quilombola, the community faces high poverty and intergenerational discrimination and violence. This precludes them from enjoying their rights, entitlements and meaningful participation in public life.
84. A disproportionately large proportion of such communities are landless or small and marginal landholders, earning their livelihoods in the informal and unorganized sector. They are agricultural labourers, sanitation workers, plantation workers, factory workers, domestic help, sweepers, waste collectors and street vendors, among others. Many lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns.

85. The COVID-19 pandemic caused an additional layer of discrimination on pre-existing social hierarchies. The multidimensional impact of COVID-19 ranges from poverty, hunger, unemployment, denial of and limitations to access to health-care services, increased incidents of violence against women and girls, stigmatization and much more. Restricted transportation, limited supply chains, impeded access to rations, discrimination in food distribution and restricted access to water, hygiene products and sanitation facilities were among the many issues that affected the communities. Health care was denied, along with other services and goods, with the rationale that they were COVID-19 vectors.

86. With education facilities remaining closed and most teaching occurring online, those living in remote areas with limited or no access to Internet facilities suffered irrevocable harm. Furthermore, investing in phones and laptops during this time was rendered impossible owing to prohibitive prices.

87. While it is not possible to fully gauge the long-term effects of the pandemic, it can be said that it has reversed several years of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals in many countries. As countries begin to rebuild, the motto of “leave no one behind” must be examined in all earnestness. As for the communities themselves, without targeted long-term recovery initiatives, their sociopolitical-economic position is likely to deteriorate.

Recommendations

88. Governments must recognize and record the population of communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent, in a manner that disaggregates data by gender, age, disability and income status.

89. Governments must collect and report on, in a disaggregated fashion, COVID-19 cases, including hospitalizations, recovery, deaths and vaccinations among these communities, as modelled by the United States racial data transparency, to document public health challenges for different groups towards tailored policy measures.

90. Governments must enhance financial commitments to ensure women’s health, education, long-term recovery plans for income generation and security for informal sector workers, and social protection of communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent in low-income and lower-middle-income countries.

91. Policy and legislation to address exclusion, discrimination and violence against these communities during disasters, including epidemics and pandemics, must be enacted.

92. Governments must support the strengthening of labour organizations and associations (trade unions) that monitor labour standards and wages, especially in countries in which labour laws were relaxed after lockdowns or there is insufficient legal protection for workers, including women workers.

XIII. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons

93. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda was already falling behind when the COVID-19 pandemic began. Those left farthest behind, including lesbian, gay,
bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) populations, saw their vulnerabilities being amplified and the lack of protection of their human rights being unveiled in this crisis. While harmful to all, COVID-19 has been especially taxing on marginalized populations. As the world seeks to build back better, it is critical that they are at the centre of all decision-making, implementation and evaluation processes.

94. Around the globe, LGBTI populations experience stigma, discrimination, violence and other human rights violations based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics and face high barriers in accessing development opportunities and services. LGBTI populations who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination owing to their gender, age, race, ethnicity, ability, class, caste, socioeconomic status, migration status and other factors that drive exclusion are even more marginalized.

95. Numerous pandemic responses undermined the rule of law and violated human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic principles, or were discriminatory. This has increased social and political inequalities and reinforced barriers in access to education, employment, health care, food and shelter, aggravating the pre-existing vulnerabilities and human rights violations faced by LGBTI populations.

96. LGBTI populations must be centred in the implementation and revision of all Sustainable Development Goals, especially within the cross-cutting issue of Goal 5, to achieve gender equality, as there is no gender equality without the full inclusion of LGBTI populations.

97. Punitive laws and policies which exacerbate inequalities continue to exist. These include those laws that criminalize consensual same-sex behaviour between adults, diverse gender expression and HIV status non-disclosure, exposure or transmission, and which inhibit access to comprehensive education on sexuality that includes sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.

98. Urgent responses are required from States and other stakeholders to end the criminalization and pathologization of LGBTI populations, to ban sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts, to decrease barriers to accessing human development and to create and implement public policies, laws and programmes that include and address the needs of LGBTI populations and guarantee they are not left behind. Further, laws that limit the ability of LGBTI civil society organizations to legally register and exercise their freedom of association and expression, and laws that penalize LGBTI human rights defenders should be amended.

99. The theme of the 2022 high-level political forum, “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, gives Member States and all stakeholders the opportunity to include LGBTI populations and end hetero- and cis-normative patriarchal structures in their rebuilding and development initiatives. The LGBTI stakeholder group calls on all stakeholders to collect disaggregated, safe and secure data on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics and use it to guide their efforts to achieve an inclusive fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda. The stakeholder group for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons calls for Member States to guarantee that all are free from violence and discrimination and can equally exercise their rights in order to promote a sustainable and resilient recovery and build back better.

XIV. Financing for Development

100. The humanitarian and economic crisis triggered by the pandemic has magnified inequalities within and between countries, with unpaid domestic and care work
subsidizing the global economy. The financing for development major group urgently calls for the following systemic solutions to address the broken global economic architecture:

(a) The organization of the next follow-up conference to the International Conference on Financing for Development (“Monterrey plus 20”). There is an urgent necessity to democratically establish a new global economic architecture that works for peoples and planet through such a conference;

(b) Debt cancellation and the establishment of a sovereign debt workout mechanism at the United Nations to address unsustainable and illegitimate debt. It is evident that current ad hoc international initiatives to address debt resolution are insufficient and systemic solutions are vital to avoid devastating impacts, especially on developing countries;

(c) A United Nations tax convention to address tax havens, tax abuse by multinational corporations and other illicit financial flows, to be developed through a universal, intergovernmental process at the United Nations. Unless the failures of the international tax system are urgently addressed, countries around the world will continue to lose billions of dollars because of illicit financial flows;

(d) A moratorium on investor-State dispute settlement cases, the removal of all investor-State dispute settlement provisions from bilateral investment treaties and trade agreements, and the non-implementation of current trade and investment commitments, including intellectual property rights rules under the Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS agreement) and “TRIPS-plus” agreements wherever those are in conflict with public policy objectives, during the pandemic;

(e) A review of the development outcomes of public-private partnerships, blended finance and other financing mechanisms established to promote a “private finance first” approach to infrastructure and public services. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided a stark reminder of the importance of universal, timely, affordable, gender-responsive, high-quality and accessible public services, as well as sustainable infrastructure;

(f) Accelerated implementation of the official development assistance commitments to fulfil and exceed the 0.7 per cent target for such assistance in the form of unconditional grants. As the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda focus on the future, it is vital that the longstanding commitments to delivering international development assistance, including ensuring quality and effectiveness, are realized and secure commitments to make up for the shortfall in unfulfilled targets of the past years in addition to future targets for official development assistance flows;

(g) An assessment of the systemic risks posed by unregulated or inadequately regulated financial sector instruments and actors. This includes regulation and supervision of credit rating agencies, a global regulatory framework for the asset management industry, and a global agreement on the importance of capital account management;

(h) A global technology assessment mechanism at the United Nations. As the United Nations, Governments and institutions grapple with the governance of digital technologies, there is an urgent need for transparent and inclusive deliberations on the current and potential impacts of those technologies on the environment, the labour market, tax policy, livelihoods and society;

(i) Measures to ensure fiscal space and scale up international cooperation for decent jobs creation and universal social protection in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and ILO standards. The pandemic illustrates the importance of
ensuring adequate fiscal space to support the extension of social protection systems and offer universal coverage with social protection floors in line with ILO standards.

**XV. Scientific and technological community**

101. Two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, the world finds itself at an inflection point more than at any other time since the end of the Second World War, threatened not only by dangerous systemic risks due to climate change and other related environmental crises, but also by the harrowing impacts of the Russian Federation-Ukraine war. At a time when international cooperation is essential to solving the most pressing problems of interdependent societies, the ongoing conflict is threatening to derail all global efforts to tackle those problems and to achieve a resilient, just and sustainable world for everyone. The scientific and technological community major group expresses its deep dismay and concerns regarding the military confrontation, which is something that no country and community in the world can afford.

102. Despite the pandemic being a systemic event, responses by most Governments are still largely focused on health measures and offer insufficient measures to remedy the broader impacts on societies. While current policy measures are focused on addressing the immediate crisis and on the short-term consequences, decisions taken today will influence the long-term pandemic outcomes, and a longer-term perspective is crucial. The pandemic is first and foremost a global crisis, and well-thought-out national strategies to address COVID-19 must be accompanied by international collaboration and solidarity.

103. Despite a growing and shared concern about the convergence of environmental tipping points, environmental degradation is accelerating. The unprecedented mobilization of Governments to respond to COVID-19 does not appear to have greatly served the cause of sustainability, despite repeated pledges on creating a green and sustainable recovery.

104. The impact of the systemic risk of COVID-19 also highlights the urgent need to better understand systemic risks to oceans and to prepare responses to future crises which threaten the stability of the climate. Major shifts in the state of the oceans will far exceed the social and economic consequences of the pandemic. In 2022, Governments must urgently take significant collective action to protect and revitalize the oceans.

105. Long-term recovery from COVID-19 must include the restoration of ecosystems and a transformation of humankind’s relationship to nature in ways that are just and sustainable. Scientific research on the dynamic and multifaceted relationship between people and nature should be placed at the centre of decision-making and policymaking to inform restoration activities and alternative pathways for development in harmony with nature.

106. The COVID-19 pandemic sparked a global learning crisis, as almost all countries severely restricted in-person access to education during the course of the pandemic. The detrimental impacts on education are an enduring legacy of the pandemic. Future entrants into the labour force will have an educational deficit which will, in turn, have significant negative impacts upon future productivity. Policies to mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic on education should therefore be very high on the agenda of policymakers everywhere.

107. With the pandemic still unfolding and extreme weather- and climate-related events increasing, a much stronger and more nimble partnership between science, policy and practitioners is required to address rapidly evolving situations with multiple drivers and varied impacts at the national and local scales. There is an urgent
need to commit to supporting the development of scientific capacities in all parts of
the world, to advocate for open science policies and practices, and to increase
international, interdisciplinary scientific collaboration if the world is to achieve the
Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

XVI. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030

108. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that inherent vulnerabilities related
to the social aspects of systemic risk are meant to be addressed thoughtfully within
all-of-society approaches, in order to prevent further negative impacts in
development, especially among marginalized groups. In this sense, the core concept
of resilience, prioritized in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–
2030, has become progressively integral to timely compliance with the goals set out
in the 2030 Agenda.

109. Through four priorities and eight objectives, the Sendai Framework provides
guidance to appropriately link disaster risk reduction to the Sustainable Development
Goals. The means of approach proposed in the Sendai Framework therefore constitute
valuable resources through which to build holistic resilience.

110. As the dynamics posed by multi-hazard and systemic risk scenarios increase in
complexity owing to the global context of uncertainty created by the COVID-19
pandemic, current ongoing hazards and the international efforts to overcome the
unprecedented challenges and risk-informed strategies are found to be crucial in the
paradigm shift towards the building back better agenda. Therefore, the Sendai
Framework stakeholders promote inclusive and cross-sectoral collaborations to
reinforce the importance of disaster risk reduction for sustainable development.

111. Given that local socioeconomic inequalities have a profound effect on the
management of the materialization of risk, contextualized solutions that take into
consideration constituencies in extreme situations of vulnerability are required to
integrate multi-hazard disaster risk management public policies and strategies.
Decentralizing resource allocation to align it with the conditions and vulnerabilities
present in a community is the main tested way to build resilience under the values of
the pledge to “leave no one behind” and ensures the collective fulfilment of local needs.

112. Recognized as the main United Nations platform on sustainable development,
the high-level political forum plays a key role in guaranteeing risk-informed advances
in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and implementation of the Goals. As a
result of the consensus within the elements that constitute the Sendai Framework
stakeholders mechanism, the stakeholders group proposes the following overarching
appeals to be prioritized at the 2022 high-level political forum:

(a) Recognition of systemic risk and risk-informed strategies as core elements
in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals;

(b) Following the four priorities of the Sendai Framework to establish resilient
constituencies and drive the paradigm shift towards active systemic risk assessment;

(c) Cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder collaboration to adequately address the
challenges ahead represented by systemic multi-hazard risks;

(d) Decentralization of resources as a means to provide vulnerability-based
assistance;

(e) Application of contextualized solutions that convey local needs in terms
of socioeconomic contexts and vulnerabilities.