Summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council of the High-level Political forum on Sustainable Development convened under the auspices of the Council at its 2022 session

#### Introduction

The high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) was convened in-person under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) from 5 to 15 July 2022 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. It included a three-day ministerial segment from 13 to 15 July 2022.

Six Heads of State and Government and more than 140 high-level speakers, including Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers and Vice Ministers participated in the Forum. There were 214 speakers with an official role in the programme, including keynote speakers, panelists, lead discussants, respondents and moderators, of which 105 were women and 109 men. They represented countries, the United Nations system and other international and regional organizations, and multiple stakeholders from around the world. Numerous participants from all walks of life intervened during the discussions or followed the meeting on-line.

The theme of the 2022 HLPF was "Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". With the year 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic has entered its third year. The pandemic has inflicted unprecedented human suffering and, with its combined social, economic, and health impact, has outpaced any other major crisis in recent history.

The HLPF took stock of the impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The HLPF also provided political leadership, guidance and policy recommendations on how to advance the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as an integral part of ensuring a sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery and building back better from the pandemic.

While recognizing the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the SDGs, the Forum undertook in-depth reviews of Sustainable Development Goals 4 on quality education, 5 on gender equality, 14 on life below water, 15 on life on land, and 17 on partnerships for the Goals. The Forum also considered the different impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic across all the SDGs and their interrelations.

The 2022 Secretary-General's report on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals showed that a confluence of cascading and interlinked crises, dominated by COVID-19, climate change, and conflicts, are creating spin-off impacts on poverty, food and nutrition, inequality, health, education, energy access, the environment, and peace and security. They are affecting all the SDGs and putting the 2030 Agenda in danger. There has been a reversal of years of progress in eradicating poverty and hunger, improving health and education, providing basic services, and much more. Hunger has further accelerated. Urgent action is

needed to regain the lost ground on the SDGs and deliver meaningful progress for people and the planet by 2030.

The Forum echoed this assessment and expressed concern regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The discussions underscored the grim international situation and the devastating impacts of COVID-19 and the Ukraine war, on the SDGs. At the same time, there was a continued optimism on the SDGs, which have kept their full power to inspire and galvanize action and their implementation. The Forum called for re-igniting the spirit of the SDGs and placing the 2030 Agenda at the center of recovery efforts from the pandemic. It is critical to apply the 2030 Agenda as the blueprint for overcoming the crises.

The Forum emphasized the need to leverage this unsettled period to realize the deep transformations needed to meet the SDGs. This includes overhauling social protection and education systems, revolutionizing approaches to agriculture and water management and accelerating the energy transition. There was hope that the digital transformation will lift progress towards the SDGs.

The Forum also called for new impetus to mobilize financial resources and redirect science and technology towards the SDGs, noting that this should go hand-in-hand with urgent reforms in international finance, debt and taxation architecture. Many also expressed the need to urgently step-up development cooperation, while addressing humanitarian needs.

The experiences of the 44 countries that presented voluntary national reviews (VNRs) added depth to the policy discussions. Many VNR countries highlighted policies and continued actions for a sustainable and resilient recovery and building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic as well as for integrating the SDGs into their policies, institutions and societies.

The Forum also launched preparations for the SDG Summit to be held in September 2023 to review and guide the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Participants emphasized that that the Summit can mark a turning point in the implementation of the SDGs.

Besides the sessions on the VNRs, the theme was discussed at various thematic panels, townhall meetings and discussions during the first days of the HLPF. A Ministerial Roundtable was convened on 14 July on *"Accelerating the achievement of the SDGs by 2030: Addressing on-going crises and overcoming challenges"*. Ministers and Vice Ministers of 42 countries addressed the Roundtable. There were also ministerial sessions on regional dimensions and on the outcome of the UN Environment Assembly. At the closing, the Forum adopted the Ministerial Declaration.

A large number of events were convened in the margins of the HLPF, including eight highlevel special events, 18 VNR Labs, 273 side events, of which 43 were in-person, and 11 exhibitions, demonstrating the Forum's continued strong convening power. Special efforts were also made to ensure that the HLPF be accessible to all people, including through the provision of Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) service, international sign language and an Easy Read programme.

#### Key messages and proposals

- 1) The impacts of the **COVID-19 pandemic, the conflict in Ukraine and climate change** are the main challenges setting back progress towards achieving the SDGs. Poverty and food insecurity, high national debt, limited access to energy, high inflation and natural disasters are also constraining recovery and implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- 2) At the same time, these multiple challenges offer an opportunity for **renewed multilateral action** and realizing the deep transformation needed for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- 3) Successfully implementing the 2030 Agenda and achieving a more resilient world will require strong global solidarity, scaled-up international and regional cooperation, increased development financing and the forging of innovative partnerships with multiple stakeholders to support national efforts.
- 4) Urgent action is needed to implement the commitments on climate change, including the **Paris Agreement and the Glasgow Climate Pact**, to keep alive the prospects of limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. This is key to helping build back better and greener from COVID-19.
- 5) **Countries in special situations** have been disproportionately affected by the multitude of current crises. The international community has a fundamental role to play in responding to the needs of these countries and c**reating an enabling environment** for them to overcome the impacts of COVID-19 and other shocks and move to a track towards the Sustainable Development Goals.
- 6) There is an urgent need to better understand the specific challenges faced by **countries in special situations** as well as the structural gaps in which those challenges are rooted. A **Multidimensional Vulnerability Index** has the potential to contribute to a more useful, efficient and effective allocation of global financial flows in a manner that is beneficial to all developing countries.
- 7) Engaging **local authorities** and communities is likewise essential for an inclusive implementation of the 2030 Agenda with the aim of leaving no one behind.
- 8) There is a need for collective action by all stakeholders to ensure the inclusion of vulnerable groups and marginalized communities in efforts and initiatives to build back better. Women and young people have a key role to play in achieving sustainable development and should be fully empowered and involved in decision-making processes.
- 9) **Education is a human right,** a common public good, an investment in social inclusion and economic development and a foundation for achieving all SDGs.
- 10) The forthcoming **Transforming Education Summit** presents an opportunity for addressing the issues that currently hinder the achievement of SDG 4, including

identifying innovative financial means for education and reaching commitments by countries to accelerate the recovery of the sector from the effects of the pandemic.

- 11) **Digitalization in education and learning,** together with efforts to close the digital divide and ensure equal access to quality education, are priority areas for action.
- 12) In 2022, no country in the world has achieved **gender equality**. The 2030 Agenda cannot be achieved without a central focus on women and girls.
- 13) Women and girls face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination worldwide. COVID-19 and its socio-economic impacts disproportionately affected women and widened gender inequalities across the globe. This includes rising rates of extreme poverty, access to education and decent work and the rise of unpaid care work and gender-based violence.
- 14) The pandemic provides an opportunity for change to build back better, realizing a more **gender-equal society**, including through gender-responsive policies and budgeting, prioritization of decent work and equal pay for women, and increasing women's participation in politics, senior management and decision-making.
- 15) There is no green economy without a **sustainable blue economy.** Oceans touch every aspect of humans' lives and billions of people depend on oceans for their livelihoods.
- 16) The **UN Ocean Conference Political Declaration** reenergized commitment for action towards accelerated implementation of SDG 14 through partnerships and collaboration. The political momentum generated by the Ocean Conference needs to be seized, including by putting in place more effective global ocean governance mechanisms and policies towards a healthy and productive ocean for all.
- 17) The **sustainable management of terrestrial ecosystems**, such as forests and land, are fundamental for sustainability, a sustainable recovery from the global COVID-19 pandemic, and for nature-based solutions to the triple planetary crises of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss.
- 18) A coherent and synergetic agenda on terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity must embrace inclusive "**whole of government**" and "whole of society" approaches along with multi-stakeholder collaboration to effectively address global deforestation, land degradation, biodiversity loss, poverty eradication, food insecurity and climate change.
- 19) The **post-2020 global biodiversity framework** needs to be ambitious so as to put the world on a path to recovery from biodiversity loss, including through effective monitoring and delivery of means of implementation.
- 20) An **increase in flows of public and private finance** is needed to bridge the financing gap and deliver on the promise of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. **Reforms in the**

**international finance, debt and taxation architecture** must be urgently pursued with all countries and stakeholders taking an active and equal role.

- 21) Addressing challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and reducing greenhouse gas emissions have demonstrated the critical role that **science, technology and digital innovation** can play in achieving sustainable development.
- 22) International cooperation is vital in the financing, development and deployment of science and technology and for **closing the digital divide**. Support for science-based responses, enhanced access to technology and improved digital literacy through a STI roadmap are critical for harnessing the full potential of science, technology and information (STI). "STI roadmaps" can be an important instrument to guide national action.
- 23) The **rule of law** has a critical role to play in the achievement of sustainable development through its impacts on people's lives and through the provision of just and transparent conditions for investment, trade and application of digital technology, including dispute resolution.
- 24) **Public, private and civil society partnerships and multistakeholder coalitions** are critical for achieving the SDGs, including through mobilizing a wide range of resources and financing for development. The focus of investment through partnerships should go beyond value for money to include **value for society and value for future generations** to ensure sustainable and inclusive development.
- 25) The **2023 SDG Summit** provides an important opportunity to renew the commitment to the 2030 Agenda and focus on implementation and actions to accelerate the SDGs, building on the outcomes of other intergovernmental processes. The preparatory process leading up to the Summit needs to be **participatory and inclusiv**e.

# **Ministerial Declaration**

The 2022 HLPF adopted a Ministerial Declaration (E/HLPF/20-22/L.1) that gives a strong recommitment to the 2030 Agenda and rescuing the SDGs as our roadmap out of the crises. The Declaration provides guidance on the 2022 theme, addressing the impact of COVID-19 on the 2030 Agenda and action to recover better while accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. It commends the 44 countries that presented national voluntary reviews and encourages all countries to use the key finding of the VNRs and the sharing of locally driven development approaches and pathway to accelerate actions to implement the 2030 Agenda.

The Declaration provides an assessment of SDG progress. It also gives guidance on the Goals that were under review – SDGs 4 on quality education, 5 on gender equality, 14 on life below water, 15 on life on land, and 17 on partnerships for the Goals, providing recommendations for advancing their implementation and achievement. It also addresses several priority issues related to sustainable development and SDG achievement.

The Declaration also provides a road map for the way forward. It calls for a renewed global commitment to sustainable development and reaffirms the centrality of multilateralism and international cooperation and solidarity, with the United Nations at its core. It gives guidance and specific recommendations for advancing sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda. The Declaration concludes by encouraging ambitious and action-oriented outcomes for upcoming major events and by giving guidance for the preparation of the September 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit so that the Summit will mark the beginning of a new phase of accelerated progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

# Opening

The opening of the 2022 HLPF included welcoming remarks by the President of ECOSOC and keynote addresses by the Deputy Secretary-General, the ECOSOC Vice-President (Thailand), Mr. Nicholas Stern, Professor of Economics and Government and Chair of the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at the London School of Economics, the Director-General of FAO, the Managing Director of Development Policy and Partnerships of the World Bank, 2014 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Mr. Kailash Satyarthi, and SDG Advocate Ms. Valentina Munoz Rabanal.

In his opening remarks, the President of ECOSOC stated that the COVD-19 pandemic had clearly slowed implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The pandemic has served as a wake-up call to address fundamental long-standing problems that have impeded SDG progress and left people behind. An opportunity has now presented itself to build back better using the 2030 Agenda as a blueprint.

The Deputy Secretary-General summarized the main messages from the 2022 Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), which clearly indicate the impacts of COVID-19 on the SDGs but also some successful advances and examples of progress in several areas. The pandemic is continuing in many countries, but many have also begun to introduce innovative policies to build back better. Yet deep transitions and global solidarity continue to be needed to get on track to achieve the SDGs.

The Vice-President of ECOSOC (Thailand) shared key messages from the ECOSOC Coordination Segment and the ECOSOC subsidiary bodies on recovering from the pandemic while realizing the SDGs. They included calls for ensuring equality, promoting empowerment of all people including the most vulnerable, pursuing a sustainable recovery, building synergies across the SDGs and pursuing climate change and gender equality across the board. A well-coordinated UN architecture equipped to help achieve the SDGs was seen as critical. All components of ECOSOC and the UN system should work seamlessly together.

The Head of FAO stated that the pandemic and the war in Ukraine underlined the need to implement sustainable agriculture and food systems, which can be supported by the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub. The 2021 UN Food Systems Summit has inspired countries to realize the value of agrifood systems transformations as a key SDG accelerator.

The World Bank emphasized its commitment to green and blue development, including the reduction of fisheries subsidies and the negotiation of a global instrument on plastic pollution.

Speakers stressed that an additional US\$ 1.3 trillion by 2025 and an additional US\$ 3.5 trillion by 2030 would be required for climate action in emerging and developing country economies, a challenge that would be considerable but feasible.

The increase in child labourers and the loss of access to education by children were strongly condemned. There were also strong calls for increased financing for social protection, the improvement of the situation and skills of teachers, and implementing school feeding programs. It was also emphasized that women's rights are reversed in times of crises and that access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services is an important component of SDG3.

The opening concluded with a music video performance by the musical group "aespa" that highlighted the need to prioritize SDG implementation and sustainability.

# **Thematic reviews**

# **Building back better and advancing the SDGs (Town Hall)**

**Participants reaffirmed their commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,** which was seen as instrumental for addressing the multiple and interlinked global crises the world was facing today, including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, increasing debt levels and the impact of the conflict in Ukraine and wars elsewhere. These crises required renewed commitments to multilateralism, enhanced global cooperation and stronger global solidarity. **Bold, coordinated and urgent global action** was needed to also address the food, energy, liquidity and climate change crises, including through sustainable and innovative financing.

Countries highlighted the many negative impacts of COVID-19. The pandemic has exposed inequities between and within countries, particularly in terms of equitable access to vaccines, tests and treatments, requiring a comprehensive and coordinated response. It has also revealed the interlinkages between health, animals and the environment, pointing to biodiversity and nature-based solutions as essential for building back better. To enhance pandemic preparedness and response in the future, **a strengthened global health architecture** should be promoted under the lead and coordination of WHO.

Speakers emphasized the urgency of addressing structural barriers to sustainable development, including those related to the global economic and financial architecture and macroeconomic policies, through **debt relief** and promotion of a **new, sustainable debt architecture**. Increases in development financing, debt restructuring and forgiveness, especially for LDCs, and domestic resource mobilization were seen as important components of building back better.

LDCs called for **increased development financing**, as only a very small percentage of the total funds available for financing is currently used LDCs. They also called for an **urgent debt restructuring and forgiveness** for needy countries, especially the least developed countries.

The vulnerability of SIDS was raised, including their vulnerability to climate change and to the impacts of external shocks. Global solutions are required but with **approaches tailored to the specific needs of a country, group of countries or region**. SIDS also emphasized the need to be fully included in international decision-making.

Middle-Income Countries (MICs) called for a better understanding of the challenges they faced and the root causes of those challenges. They also called for the development of indicators that went **beyond Gross Domestic Product** as a measure of progress. They stressed that a **Multidimensional Vulnerability Index** had the potential to measure the complexities of sustainable development in a more comprehensive manner, as well as to contribute to a more useful, efficient and effective allocation of global financial flows in a manner beneficial to all developing countries. To address these issues further, it was suggested that the President of ECOSOC include a **dedicated session for MICs** in the programme of the 2023 High-Level Political Forum.

Women and girls had been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. An estimated 11 million girls might never return to school. The empowerment of women and girls, through education, entry into the workforce, reduction of the burden of domestic work, access to sexual reproductive and health services, and participation at all levels of society, especially in leadership positions, was seen as essential for economic development as well as the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the realization of human rights. It was noted that GDP per capita would be much higher if there were gender equality. To better identify and meet the needs of women and girls, governments needed to **collect and analyze disaggregated data**.

Participants underlined the importance of **meaningful participation of youth in decisionmaking processes.** National youth strategies need to be co-owned and co-created by youth. The active participation and engagement of youth generated enormous gains for society. Participants also noted the need to give special attention to migrants, whose vulnerabilities have been exacerbated by the pandemic, as well as to other groups, including LGBTI.

# **SDGs in focus**

# SDG 4 Quality education and interlinkages with other SDGs

The Forum noted that COVID-19 affected students in all countries. The pandemic has had serious consequences on education, with children out of school, particularly in middle- and lower-income countries, and for girls, with an increase in unwanted pregnancies, child marriages and increased school dropouts in some parts of the world. Recovering from the setbacks and achieving SDG4 by the target date may be challenging for many countries.

The pandemic exacerbated inequalities among countries and within societies. While the use of digital technologies allowed rapid responses by many education systems, the pandemic demonstrated that the **digital divide** created exclusions and was a major factor in education and learning outcomes. The gap between public and private education that exists in many countries should also be closed to enhance equity. At the same time, participants were of the view that the **digitalization of education**, which accelerated throughout the pandemic, presented the new reality in education and should be viewed as a promising opportunity. Digitalization was expected to continue and expand, and countries needed to invest in enhancing online access for their citizens.

Speakers emphasized that to recover from the pandemic, countries must recognize that education was not a stand-alone issue but must be integrated across national and local policies and measures to achieve the SDGs. Quality education served many civic purposes and was the cornerstone of a well informed and engaged citizenry who can actively contribute to sustainable development. **Girls' education and return to school must be a priority** since education was a critical pathway towards a better future for women and girls. Education in, and for, sustainable development needed to be promoted at all levels to raise individuals' awareness of the consequences of their actions for people and planet.

The **Transforming Education Summit** provided an important opportunity to galvanize support for achieving SDG 4 and to generate political will for greater investments in education, stronger support for teachers and an inclusive approach to decision-making in education.

# SDG 5 Gender equality and interlinkages with other SDGs

The Forum agreed that gender equality was essential for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda as a whole. None of its 17 goals could be achieved without respecting women's human rights and ensuring their full participation. The COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected women and girls and reversed progress towards the achievement of SDG 5 by causing dramatic increases in gender-based violence, child marriages and care-giving responsibilities. Speakers noted that women's economic security was also heavily impacted, with female-run small and informal businesses often hardest hit by the pandemic. In Europe and the Central Asia region, 22% of women lost their jobs, and another 50% were forced to reduce their working hours.

The pandemic continues to pose a great risk to gender equality and economic recovery, if women are unable to re-enter the workforce or if they remain in low-pay, low-skills jobs. As a consequence of structural gender inequalities, women often lack access to credit and digital technologies. During the pandemic, this meant women and girls had fewer opportunities to participate in remote work or learning.

Participants were of the view that in order to build a **gender-equitable recovery from COVID-19**, the needs of women and girls must be addressed more comprehensively including by a) recognizing and prioritizing the needs of women and girls; b) pursuing

measures to build and expand **gender equality into national social protection and economic recovery programmes/plans**; c) implementing **gender-responsive budgeting** to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources; d) strengthening **data collection** and analysis systems that can better identify and address challenges or gaps in the well-being of women and girls; and e) many participants called for guaranteeing universal access to the full spectrum of **sexual and reproductive health services**, including contraception and access to safe abortions.

In addition, participants observed that **women's access to decent work** must be given priority, including through the expansion of flexible working schedules, recognizing unpaid care and domestic work, accessible childcare, and decent pay for women. Governments should also implement quotas and other measures to **increase women's participation in politics** and higher management levels of organizations. Laws and policies that discriminate against women and girls need to be repealed. **Laws that address sexual and gender-based violence** and harmful practices need to be passed and enforced. Women advocates and human rights defenders also require legal and other protections.

# SDG 14 Life below water and interlinkages with other SDGs

The Forum noted the successful outcome of the **2022 UN Ocean Conference** which resulted in the adoption of a political declaration. The declarations reaffirmed a strong commitment to conserve and sustainably use the ocean, seas and marine resources, and called for greater ambition to urgently improve the health, productivity, sustainable use and resilience of the ocean and its ecosystems. The Ocean Conference came on the heels of the **WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies**, which marked a major step forward for ocean sustainability by prohibiting harmful fisheries subsidies, which are a key factor in the widespread depletion of the world's fish stocks. Earlier this year, UNEA also agreed to develop a **legally binding agreement on plastic pollution**.

Another positive development was the recent pledge of close to USD \$1 billion in philanthropic finance made at the UN Ocean Conference, as mobilizing adequate funding for SDG14 has been challenging. However, significant investment gaps remain and scaling-up "blue finance" was critical, requiring urgent and transparent action. Holding a **sustainable blue economy investment forum** was seen as a promising initiative to mobilize additional resources. Expanding the collection of ocean data and carrying out ocean mappings are areas considered in need of investment.

Participants stressed that there is a need to seize the political momentum generated by the successful conclusion of the UN Ocean Conference. Ocean actions should be informed and guided by ocean science and engage local communities, including indigenous communities, along with multilateral partnerships between and within the Global North and Global South, and multiple stakeholders. Civil society and youth engagement are especially critical for advocacy and for driving change at the local level. However, **geographic, age and gender disparities in ocean science** remain and need to be addressed and overcome.

Participants recognized that there is **no green economy without a sustainable blue economy.** Oceans touch every aspect of humans' lives. A sustainable blue economy is key for global food security but is facing a myriad of interlinked challenges, including illegal fishing, over-fishing, and plastic pollution. Advanced ocean technologies could help researchers predict how climate change and human activity may potentially affect marine ecosystems and fishery migrations. Ocean policies must focus not just on corrective actions but also on precautionary and structural policy solutions. These include the prohibition of certain subsidies, transparency reporting requirements, and better fishery management.

Empowered with today's ocean knowledge, evidence, technology, and the human capacity to apply science to act urgently and better deliver on ocean actions and environment goals, there is an opportunity for world leaders to **put in place more effective global ocean governance mechanisms and policies towards a healthy and productive ocean for all.** 

# SDG 15 Life on Land and interlinkages with other SDGs

The Forum highlighted the need for a coherent and synergetic agenda on terrestrial ecosystems (land and forests) and biodiversity, one that embraces inclusive "whole of government" and "whole of society" approaches along with multi-stakeholder collaboration, in order to effectively address global deforestation, land degradation, biodiversity loss, poverty eradication, food insecurity and climate change. The human-nature relationship needs to be fundamentally reshaped in order to address the growing crises of ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss which are being exacerbated by the impacts of climate change and the global pandemic.

Speakers and participants underscored the critical need to ensure and promote **sound data and scientific information** on the value of nature and ecosystem services, as well as **accountability frameworks** to monitor commitments, actions and finance. Actions need to be taken in close partnership with non-state actors, including the private sector, to address the drivers of nature and habitat loss, particularly unsustainable consumption and production patterns, and to decouple economic growth from unsustainable use of natural resources.

In this context, many speakers and participants called for an **ambitious**, **holistic**, **pragmatic**, **transformative post-2020 global biodiversity framework** that included measurable targets for the conservation, management and restoration of terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity, and monitoring and accountability frameworks to keep track of commitments and actions. The critical importance of forests and the stewardship role and land tenure rights of **indigenous peoples** and local communities was also stressed, particularly for ecosystem restoration and preservation of the cultural and spiritual values of nature through local and traditional knowledge.

Speakers noted the critical need **for scaling up financing, capacity building, education, access to information and technological transfer** for local communities, particularly in developing countries, to support actions to conserve, restore and sustainably manage terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity, including through promoting sustainable consumption and production practices, transitioning to circular economies, and access to clean energy. A "**business case for nature**" needs to be made to eliminate and reform subsidies that lead to ecosystem and biodiversity loss, and to overhaul financial and regulatory rules and systems to provide positive incentives and finance to support ecosystem restoration and regenerative economies.

### SDG 17 Means of implementation and interlinkages with other SDGs

#### Financing a robust crisis response and investing in the SDGs

The Forum observed that the compounded effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine, coupled with the looming debt crisis and rising inflation, posed threats of an unprecedented global economic downturn.

Speakers noted that **strong institutions** are needed to anchor development efforts, facilitate agile responses to external forces and build resilience towards future shocks and vulnerabilities. However, the per-capita cost of setting up institutions, especially in SIDS and LDCs, is very high, requiring more **concessional financing** to countries in need to help them establish and strengthen their institutions.

Participants recognized that private sector finance, while crucial, was on its own not sufficient to deliver on the commitments of the 2030 Agenda. There is a need for more **innovative financing mechanisms, tools and instruments to incentivize the private sector**. Multilateral, regional and national development banks are well placed to mobilize public funds, as well as catalyze more private finance flows towards sustainable development. Developed countries must honour their commitment to direct 0.7% of their gross national income towards official development aid.

There was agreement on the need for **SDR (Special Drawing Rights) reallocation** to improve fiscal space in developing countries in need. There was also a call for a new SDR issuance to inject liquidity into developing countries to aid recovery from the crises and advance progress towards achievement of the SDGs. For example, ECA's Liquidity and Sustainability Facility served as a model initiative aimed at providing liquidity support to improve fiscal standing in African countries.

There was consensus on the need to reinvigorate cooperation and effective partnership building amongst all stakeholders involved in financing for development. Members of civil society reiterated their call for a 4<sup>th</sup> Financing for Development conference and the establishment of a UN-led international convention on tax matters, to embed democratization in decision-making into the international financing ecosystem.

Mobilizing and sharing science, technology and innovation (STI) for an SDG driven recovery

Participants emphasized the need for **improved access to STI** to ensure equitable and inclusive development. There was agreement that deployment of technology should take into account the needs of vulnerable members of society, including older persons, to ensure leaving no one behind. The development of vaccines and therapeutics for COVID-19 amply demonstrated the role of STI in accelerating sustainable development. However, addressing **inequities** in access to vaccines and therapeutics was seen as vital for an equitable and inclusive recovery from the pandemic.

To be better prepared for, and more resilient to, future crises, there is a need to establish a **strong science-policy interface and invest in education**. Several speakers called for strengthened international cooperation in trade and financing STI development and deployment, including the **establishment of scientific coalitions** involving governments, intergovernmental organisations, the private sector, civil society and South-South cooperation. The UN needs to be further strengthened to fulfil its STI related mandates.

Participants also called for policies that support the development and deployment of STI, including the use of digital technology, to improve access to information. To take full advantage of developments in STI, there is a need to **invest in digital literacy and education**, especially for youth. Participants emphasized the need to **address the digital divide** and to improve access to STIs by local communities. They also stressed that biotechnology is one of our most powerful tools for reaching the SDGs. Technology development and deployment should be transparent. Some underscored that it should provide legal protection of ideas and innovations as well as prevent the expropriation of indigenous knowledge.

# Capacity development and partnerships to maximize the benefits of science, technology and knowledge for sustainable development

Speakers emphasized the role of the **rule of law** in providing a just and fair enabling environment for investment and trade. This also includes providing a transparent framework for deployment of digital and other technologies and innovations. Participants also highlighted the important role of **public-private and civil society partnerships and multistakeholder coalitions** in mobilizing resources and investing in the social and physical infrastructure necessary for the effective uptake and application of STIs.

Public-private partnerships are also critical for countries in vulnerable situations for mobilizing financial resources for the implementation of the SDGs. However, there is a need for governments to recognize that different forms of partnerships have different implications. In establishing partnerships, the partners should look beyond value for money to also focus on value for society and value for future generations.

Some speakers emphasized the need to enhance the understanding of the **interlinkages among the SDGs** and use of the SDG framework to enhance policy coherence and coordination. This also requires governments and other stakeholders to establish partnerships with the scientific community. The **science-policy interface** should be strengthened to make science-based decisions and accelerate the deployment and uptake of new technologies and innovations

Speakers also emphasized the need for partnerships with local communities and indigenous peoples, youth and other vulnerable groups. This included making "**leaving no-one behind**" a central pillar of policy making and development.

# International solidarity and cooperation

# Small Island Developing States: Building back better in vulnerable situations

Speakers noted that the disproportionate impact of multiple external shocks, the most recent being COVID-19, compounded by the impacts of climate change have exacerbated the existing vulnerabilities of SIDS. The shocks have, *inter alia*, directly affected their productive capacities, disrupted educational activities, widened income and gender inequalities, and increased food and energy insecurity issues. All of these effects have resulted in low competitiveness and a reduced scope for SIDS to achieve many of the sustainable development goals by 2030.

There was general support for the **elaboration of the Multi-Dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI)**. Panel members and many participants agreed that an MVI must be universal, should capture the vulnerabilities of all developing states, use available and comparable data and distinguish between exogenous and inherited factors. Many countries underscored the importance of an MVI as a tool to ensure concrete action to address vulnerability and improving long-term sustainability for SIDS. They emphasized the need to **incorporate the MVI into the development system, including multilateral agencies and international financial institutions**.

Countries also emphasized the importance of **placing vulnerability at the core of the design and implementation of development support and programmes** to ensure their efficiency. The session also highlighted the vulnerability of indigenous people, women and children with special conditions located in SIDS. Recommendations were made to engage these groups in the consultative processes on the MVI.

The session also touched upon other factors that support the overall sustainable development of SIDS, including food security, support to the agriculture sector, providing COVID-19 vaccine as a global public good and avoiding additional burdens from unilateral economic sanctions. A few countries also emphasized the importance of **deploying innovative financing instruments** to tackle climate change and disaster risk and vulnerability.

# African countries, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries: Ensuring equal access to vaccines and resources in the poorest countries

The discussion highlighted the low proportion of the population in Africa and in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) who has been vaccinated in comparison with developed countries due to accessibility issues, as medical supply chains can be and often are extremely fragile. COVID-19 regulations and restrictions have disproportionately affected disadvantaged groups in society, such as persons with disabilities and women and girls in vulnerable situations. The need for social inclusion is more important than ever, as is the engagement of the youth in these efforts. Speakers called for **inclusive vaccine information and access to funding** as key components of building back better.

It was underlined that due to the stressors created from climate change, debt sustainability and other impediments to development, the LDCs and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) have a limited capacity to respond to internal and global shocks and need various forms of economic and financial support. **Access to technologies** was seen as key for capacity building.

There is also a need to **further involve the private sector in development efforts**, **facilitate access to capital and promote public-private partnerships**. Speakers stressed the important role of SMEs, which are often a backbone of the economies of developing countries, and therefore loans for SMEs are needed to enhance their potential. Such loans can be accessed through hybrid financing programs, such as those of the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF). Achievements made in the context of the pandemic in this field should be sustained and expanded. **Empowering LDCs in global value chains** and **supporting open and fair-trade policies** were also deemed important.

Speakers stressed that the COVID-19 pandemic revealed a deep technological divide and inequalities among countries. Recognizing that SDG target 9c (affordable access to the Internet in Least Developed Countries by 2020) had not been achieved, it was noted that youth, who represents 60% of the population of LDCs, need to be the force of digital transformation in these countries and should therefore be a targeted beneficiary of development support.

International organizations and partners were encouraged to **assist LDCs to close the digital gap** by providing opportunities for technology transfer, including via South-South and triangular cooperation while drawing lessons learned from more developed nations. Some speakers called for **barriers to technological innovation to be reduced** and incentives offered under the umbrella of the World Trade Organization as well as for the TRIPs agreement to be adhered to. COVID-19 created opportunities to accelerate the process, and these opportunities should be seized and sustained.

#### Working towards the 2023 SDG Summit

Participants noted that while the SDGs remained the only way forward, progress has been insufficient and arrested or further hampered by ongoing crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war. Peace and security and climate change remain major challenges that urgently need to be tackled to create an enabling environment for the SDGs. In addition, changes to the political and economic landscape need to be taken into account,

while enhancing political and risk assessments, prevention and resilience-building measures and increased use of scientific evidence.

Recent HLPF reforms were welcomed and seen as valuable, yet more remains to be done to further strengthen the HLPF to deliver on its mandates. Despite some positive developments, there is an urgent need to depart from the status quo, stop working in silos and take radical action while taking into account the interlinkages among SDGs.

Participants agreed that the **SDG 2023 Summit should be engaging, inclusive and actionable**. It should result in a **succinct action plan** aimed at accelerating the implementation of the SDGs that is **easily understandable and implementable by all stakeholders while being based on accountability**.

It is crucial to identify how ongoing international processes could mutually reinforce each other to create synergies. For example, the **SDG Summit needs to be complementary to the Summit of the Future**, rather than competing with it.

**Concrete action and commitments** are required to keep stakeholders engaged, but this needs to be underpinned by sufficient means of implementation. In this context, an idea was raised to channel finances directly to subnational stakeholders. The adequate collection, use and sharing of data also remains a major challenge for many countries and needs to be urgently addressed.

Panellists noted that **civil society** has made major contributions to the intergovernmental process that resulted in the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. Going forward, a renewed people-centered approach and focus on leaving no one behind and hearing all voices, especially of the most vulnerable groups, such as the poor, indigenous peoples, and the youth, is vital while taking a human rights-based approach.

The **role of regional and local actors,** including cities, was emphasized in this context. Local community efforts, including by grassroots organizations, and implementation of nature-based solutions remains central and needs to be scaled up. The **role of civil society related to monitoring and accountability** was also raised, with a view to further amplify this role.

# **Regional and local approaches**

# **Messages from the regions**

Participants from all regions agreed that the post-pandemic recovery needs to be resilient, inclusive and sustainable. They all emphasized the importance of regional cooperation and enhanced multilateralism in accelerating the post-pandemic building back better effort.

Among the concerns shared across regions were the necessity to address climate change and **provide financial support for green reforms and transformation** as well as **increased investment in data and statistics** for evidence-based policies. Also critical was the need to

# develop education for resilience to future shocks and address gender inequality and gender-based violence.

The solutions explored were strengthening international cooperation in developing **financing for development**, including budgetary policies to support the **green economy**, innovative financing, developing **gender responsive reforms**, including the assurance of access to health care services, strengthening the **cooperation between data producers and data users** to ensure transparency and accountability and finally **scaling up financing for the private sector to tackle coastal and marine pollution**.

During the interventions, States supported the call for dialogues at the regional and local levels, stressing the need for a crosscutting-approach, multilateralism and increasing the availability of vaccines and the exchange of know-how as well as technology. The potential of regional cooperation for sharing knowledge and promoting common goals was emphasized.

# Acting at local level

Speakers agreed that **engaging local authorities is essential** to implement the 2030 Agenda and that the responsibilities of SDG implementation are shared between the national and local governments, the private sector, and civil society. However, the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have slowed down the process towards achieving the SDGs, increasing pre-existing inequalities.

In this context, **activities at the local level are key to leaving no one behind**, especially older persons, women and youth. Citizens' participation in the implementation of the SDGs produces better results. However, participants recognized that still too few people are aware of the 2030 Agenda and its impact on improved life conditions, and that efforts need to be done to further raise their awareness, including through capacity building activities.

Participants recognized that a vertical connection is needed to strengthen the implementation of the SDGs, with the **national government empowering, supporting, and working closely with the local authorities**. At the local level, all relevant stakeholders should be included in a holistic manner in the process, in particular local businesses, citizens, communities, and civil society.

Most of the initiatives undertaken at the local level are related to climate change, health, water and sanitation, poverty eradication, education, housing, public transportation, technology and digital transformation. Participants noted that the main challenges faced are the lack of sufficient funds and resources, the need for capacity building at local level, and the need for better coordination and cooperation with national government.

**Voluntary local reviews** (VLRs) have proved to be able to boost local actions to achieve the SDGs, foster the collection of timely, accurate and disaggregated data, ensure transparency and accountability of local authorities, and enable a systemic dialogue between the national government and the local authorities.

### Vision of civil society: Leaving no one behind in recovering better

Civil society has a key role in sustainable development and in achieving the SDGs and must be part of policy-making processes in an inclusive manner to ensure that no one is left behind. Collaboration between civil society organizations, local authorities, and national government is essential in tackling the SDGs and societal issues, such as discrimination and disparities around the world. The **engagement of stakeholders in the VNR process** is fundamental to achieving the SDGs in an inclusive manner. Smart **partnerships between local authorities and civil society** aimed at localizing SDGs ensure that no one is left behind.

Achieving the 2030 Agenda is unlikely given the trajectory that countries have experienced during the pandemic. Vaccinations have made advancements world-wide, but Africa and low-income countries have less than 30% vaccination levels. There is an urgent need to move from a charity modality when addressing vaccination needs in these two groups of countries. Further, global debt programmes have not provided sufficient tangible relief for low-income countries.

High-income countries must re-evaluate their funding paradigms to prioritize development. Further, a **data-driven approach** to tackling the challenges posed by COVID-19 ensures transparency and accountability.

The war in Ukraine is harming progress in sustainable development and the SDGs. It has diverted funding away from sustainable development and has also led to 8 million refugees and 8 million internally displaced persons. The conflict is also linked to a rise in energy prices, a rise in food insecurity and food prices, poverty, and insecurity.

Vulnerabilities and inequalities have widened for marginalized groups, such as women, girls, the elderly, LGBTQ+, and others. For recovery programmes to succeed, they must address the societal stigmas that stall progress on SDG achievement by taking an **inclusive approach, engaging all in decision making**.

# HLPF Ministerial Segment (13-15 July)

#### Opening

The President of ECOSOC opened the ministerial segment by underlining the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the disproportionate effects on developing countries. Yet, despite the grim times, there is optimism for building back better through the 2030 Agenda. This unsettled period needs to be used for meaningful transformation.

The Secretary-General highlighted the cascading crises facing the world, such as the effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the fragile and uneven recovery from COVID-19, declining biodiversity and continuing discrimination against women and girls and gender-based violence. However, with concrete and urgent steps, things could be turned around, as the world has the knowledge, technology, and financial resources to reverse the trajectories that have led us off course in the realization of the 2030 Agenda.

The President of the General Assembly put forward five recommendations to build a more inclusive world in line with the 2030 Agenda, including investing in innovation, technology, and behavioral change; investing in actions to protect the most vulnerable, ensure resilient livelihoods and leverage the power of science and technology; push for reform measures in the international financial system; commit to address the situation of the most vulnerable countries; and renew the commitment to the sustainable development of Africa.

The President of Botswana highlighted several measures taken by his country to address the impact of the socio-economic and health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Noting the fiscal space constraints of many developing countries, he highlighted the recommendations of the Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2022. The President of Portugal noted how international cooperation proved that it is possible to change the course of events through collective commitment, as demonstrated by the achievements of the 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference held in Lisbon.

The Minister of Ecology and Environment of China, who is President of COP 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, called on the international community to reach consensus on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, setting goals and clear paths for future global biodiversity efforts. The Minister of State at the Cabinet of Office of the United Kingdom, who is President of COP 26 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, highlighted the interlinkages between climate, environment, energy, and security and informed that he would be convening the second Climate and Development Ministerial Meeting in the margins of the General Assembly.

The Executive Director of UN Women stressed the need to advance the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including through increasing investments, strengthening institutional capacity, increasing women's leadership and recognizing the voice and agency of all women and girls in shaping their future.

Youth representatives called for their increased meaningful participation in decision making and for a legally binding International Convention on the Rights of Young People. The session concluded with the performance by Sing for Hope, a children's singing group from New York City.

# Ministerial roundtable: "Accelerating the achievement of the SDGs by 2030: addressing on-going crises and overcoming challenges"

Ministers and other high-level representatives of 42 countries<sup>1</sup> addressed the High-Level Segment of ECOSOC and the Ministerial segment of the HLPF. Speakers focused on the major global challenges and what kind of actions and measures have been undertaken and will

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Kiribati, Iraq, Kirgizstan, China, Egypt, Austria, Romania, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Malta, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Morocco, Latvia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Malawi, Jamaica, The Kingdom of the Netherlands, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Guatemala, Spain, Liberia, Laos PDR, Nepal, Cambodia, Germany, Norway, Oman, Russian Federation, Papua New Guinea, Bangladesh, Georgia, Ethiopia, Venezuela, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Chad and India.

need to continue to be undertaken to address the crises, build back better and advance the SDGs.

Most speakers identified the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tension and climate change as the major challenges facing their countries. COVID-19 has negatively impacted the progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and fulfilment of the SDGs as priorities shifted towards the fight against the pandemic.

Speakers indicated that the conflict in Ukraine has increased the costs of oil, gas, food as well as fertilizer and other agricultural inputs. They warned against rising hunger and poverty due to the climbing prices and the reduction of agricultural outputs to the markets, which will put additional strain on developing countries. High inflation, supply chain disruption, high national debt and limited financing space, compounded by impacts of the triple planetary crisis, present major constraints for advancing the SDGs. A few countries also highlighted the additional burden they feel from prolonged humanitarian crises, the lingering impact from Ebola and chronic poverty.

Climate change and climate change-induced natural disasters also have a huge impact on countries, especially on SIDS, as climate change does not only pose a threat to economic, financial and human development, but also to the existence of several countries. Additionally, natural disasters may worsen the situation even further, resulting, for example, in losses in food crops and infrastructure.

To address these challenges and constraints, countries have adopted a number of measures that put recovery and SDGs at their core, and that intend to realign the countries' future with the 2030 Agenda. **Rapid national vaccination programmes** were referred to as a means to reduce mortality, hospitalizations and infections, and therefore also represent a tool to prevent economic losses. **Financial measures and stimulus packages** were adopted to prevent companies from going bankrupt and families from falling into poverty, as national recovery plans have been implemented. Many countries implemented **development plans to enhance public health systems, strengthen education systems and promote digital transformation and progress towards gender equality**. A few countries also reported increasing financing and external support to combat energy and food crisis.

Countries further elaborated on the recommended actions for addressing multiple challenges and advancing the achievement of SDGs. Some countries recommended **enhancing synergies between COVID-19 recovery, SDG implementation and climate actions**. Many countries called for a **coordinated global response to crises and reinforced multilateralism, international cooperation and partnerships**. References were made to important proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report on Our Common Agenda. A number of countries emphasized the need to **increase development financing** to support recovery and SDGs and some of them also requested a specialized fund for this purpose. Some speakers also highlighted actions to address climate challenges, such as **scaled-up investment** in clean energy, disaster and risk management, **mainstreaming** 

# biodiversity protection, reforestation and afforestation, and investment in the blue economy.

Many reiterated the need for engaging stakeholders, localizing SDGs, transitioning towards a green economy, minimizing the digital divide, increasing private sector investment in SDGs, reinforcing digital tools for SDG implementation and expanding the use of data and statistics to aid sustainable development.

# **Voluntary National Reviews**

At the 2022 HLPF, 44 countries conducted Voluntary National Reviews of their implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

Many countries underlined the relevance of the VNR process as a chance for stocktaking and identifying gaps in the national capacities to implement the SDGs. This became especially apparent for countries that had already conducted a VNR in the past and were therefore able to observe progress made since their previous VNR and also to evaluate the effectiveness of the steps taken to improve the process itself.

Despite the challenges brought forth by the COVID-19 pandemic and multiple crises, such as in food, energy and financing, countries remain committed to making progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and to continuing to mainstream the 2030 Agenda into their national development plans and policies.

The COVID-19 pandemic not only de-accelerated development progress, but also rolled it back by negatively influencing economic growth, employment, incomes, poverty and overall inequality, among others, affecting particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of society. Additional challenges arising from the consequences of the war in Ukraine, such as food insecurity and skyrocketing energy prices, have negated further progress on many socio-economic indicators.

Even though challenges remain in building back better, countries expressed determination to move forward on the implementation of the global goals as a key element of the pandemic recovery. In order to address, adapt, and recover from the current crises and get the SDGs back on track, countries are identifying priority areas as well as exploring new strategies to promote sustainable and inclusive development. Alignment of national policies and action plans with the SDGs and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as in sectoral and regional strategic plans, was regarded as a cornerstone for sustainable development.

Countries agreed that in order to build back better, measures to address the needs of vulnerable groups and to leave no one behind need to be implemented. The resilience of communities needs to be supported through long-term transformation in order to reduce inequality and the inherent threats of food insecurity and poverty that are induced by economic and financial shocks. Some countries made special mention of the role of women and youth, who were particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, in cross-cutting

policies and measures, especially in promoting their engagement, empowerment and employment.

Various countries pointed towards the need for investment in quality, inclusive and equitable education, that is critical to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly given setbacks to human capital development caused by the pandemic. The importance of a robust and flexible education system became very apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic, and most countries have made progress in their efforts to tackle early and high school education dropouts by implementing blended learning and by integrating digitalization into education. Further gains have been achieved in educational indicators, including gains in access, enrolment rates, and completion rates.

Countries also identified gender equality as a critical goal and presented measures to enhance women's empowerment and representation in decision-making and leadership. Although there have been gains in gender parity, there are still large inequality and income gaps between men and women. Some countries highlighted initiatives on fighting genderbased violence and supporting survivors thereof, while increasing efforts on reducing gender gaps in education. However, gender-based violence continues to be a pressing issue, also due to the setbacks in this area induced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Countries also addressed sustainable development challenges relating to a lack of institutional, human and technical capacity, induced by financing needs that have grown even larger in the wake of the pandemic and global crises. Multiple countries emphasized their continuing efforts to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and to build back better by mobilizing finance and building resilience in the face of growing challenges.

Presenting countries emphasized the urgency of accelerating measures to address climate change by including it and its consequences in economic analysis and planning of public finances. Given that the impacts of climate change are borderless, countries emphasized the importance of international agreements and cooperation, as well as asked for enhanced support to cope with the costs of climate change and its prevention. Further measures brought forward by presenting countries were the implementation of climate change indicators, as well as the adoption of initiatives and strategies for the adaptation to, and mitigation of, climate change-related events and its impacts and consequences.

Countries also emphasized their efforts to preserve life below water and life on land. Measures to protect the oceans while promoting the blue economy ranged from the creation and expansion of protected marine areas, investments in sustainable fishing, and protection of endangered species to policies and legal measures to address illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities. Regarding life on land, its protection and preservation is characterized by countries' efforts to maintain and increase forest coverage and mangrove planting, as well as initiatives for agro-forestry, greening and irrigation schemes.

Countries faced challenges of implementation due to insufficient resources and capacity. They stated that enhanced global partnerships, technical and financial cooperation should be further stressed in order to build back better and accelerate progress towards the SDGs. Inclusion in this context was emphasized, and special mention given to non-governmental stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, as well as indigenous people and the private sector.

Presenting countries highlighted their commitment to enhancing multi-stakeholder partnerships, which are not only a crucial part of building back better and recovering from the pandemic but are also a key component of progress and acceleration towards the achievement of the SDGs. Many countries emphasized that partnerships, at the local, national, and international levels are essential.

A frequently highlighted issue by a number of countries was the call to the international community to step up efforts to help developing countries bridge the large development finance gap. Financing for SDGs' implementation remains a challenge, especially for countries with limited fiscal space. The international community must support countries in need of assistance in advancing their national development priorities through increasing concessional funding and technical assistance, such as by implementing innovative forms of financing, including non-traditional donors and new financial instruments, in order to overcome vulnerabilities, reduce disaster risk and to build towards the 2030 Agenda. Regional and international cooperation also remains key in raising sufficient financial resources to be channeled towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The ongoing humanitarian crises must be urgently addressed but must not divert assistance away from development.

Countries also underlined the weight of their debt burden, which makes the efforts to enhance SDG progress a challenge. Countries called for international dialogue to discuss debt restructuring and relief. Some also called for international financial institutions to consider the relevance and applicability of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index. Countries also called for exploring the possibilities of technology transfer and overall technical support that could kickstart faster progress towards SDG achievements.

Some countries emphasized the challenges arising from the insufficient quality and lack of data, statistical systems and national capabilities, emphasizing that enhancing such systems helps drive the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs. These countries have recognized the need to invest more resources in statistical capacity and data collection, especially in those related to the SDG targets and indicators.

The importance of localizing the SDGs was mentioned by several countries who highlighted the mechanisms put in place to translate the goals in tangible progress at the local, provincial and city levels, thereby increasing ownership. The localization of the SDGs has allowed for development of feedback channels and assessment of implementation gaps by implementing public policies based on the needs and peculiarities of the provinces and municipalities, and therefore tailored for a higher rate of success.

# Annex: List of 2022 VNR countries

1. Andorra*	23. Kazakhstan*
2. Argentina**	24. Latvia*
3. Belarus*	25. Lesotho*
4. Botswana*	26. Liberia*
5. Cameroon*	27. Luxembourg*
6. Côte d'Ivoire*	28. Malawi*
7. Djibouti	29. Mali*
8. Dominica	30. Montenegro*
9. El Salvador*	31. Netherlands*
10. Equatorial Guinea	32. Pakistan*
11. Eritrea	33. Philippines**
12. Eswatini*	34. Sao Tome and Principe
13. Ethiopia*	35. Senegal*
14. Gabon	36. Somalia
15. Gambia*	37. Sri Lanka*
16. Ghana*	38. Sudan*
17. Greece*	39. Suriname
18. Grenada	40. Switzerland**
19. Guinea-Bissau	41. Togo***
20. Italy*	42. Tuvalu
21. Jamaica*	43. United Arab Emirates*
22. Jordan*	44. Uruguay***

11 first timers, 28 second timers\*, 3 third timers\*\*, 2 fourth timers\*\*\*