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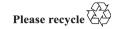10–19 July 2023

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*

Summary

The present document is a compilation of the executive summaries of the position papers on the theme of the high-level political forum "**Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels**" 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: hlpf.un.org/2023.

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*   The present document is a compilation of the executive 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.

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I. Women

1. Since we gathered last year, feminists and other movements have been protesting online and in the halls of power demanding accountability for rising inequalities and calling for urgent action for human rights, gender equality, social justice, peace, and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At this pivotal political moment halfway through the 2030 Agenda, the Women's Major Group stands in solidarity with these tireless movements and remains committed to amplifying their visions, demands, and actions.

2. Now is the time to focus on immediate action for the full implementation of the SDGs, before rushing to create new frameworks that override our existing agreements. Failure to achieve the SDGs - let alone make significant progress towards them - would be catastrophic for ourselves and our planet.

3. To avoid this catastrophe, we demand that governments match the political determination and persistence that feminists in all our diversity demonstrate every single day. Our resilience comes in the face of existential threats from underfunding, trivialization, anti-gender attacks and intimidation, criminalization, and violence. Our resistance is against the increasing attacks on our personhood and bodily autonomy and the double burden of care we carry, inaccessibility of our rights as a result of austerity and privatization, and appropriation and degradation of natural resources.

4. We call on governments to take the necessary steps to implement this critical, interlinked agenda as a matter of utmost urgency. We stress that these actions must be accompanied by strong accountability mechanisms in order to address the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated and to accelerate the faltering progress toward the achievement of the SDGs.

5. We insist upon the critical importance of both policy coherence in effective implementation of the SDGs and a cross cutting approach to centering reaching gender equality in the implementation of all the SDGs. Too often we see that governments disregard global agreements, including the SDGs, when we attempt to bring them back home.

6. We call on governments to reclaim their leadership from the private sector and other actors encouraging them to outsource, weaken, or abandon their human rights obligations.

7. We remind governments that an independent and fully funded civil society is a prerequisite for the development of policies that will enable us to live our lives in dignity and equality.

8. Sometimes the task ahead of us to achieve the SDGs feels daunting. The interlinked systems of oppressions that created the inequalities the 2030 Agenda should remedy continue to be upheld by

actions and policies that centralize power and wealth and uphold and strengthen the patriarchal, racist, colonial status quo.

9. And yet every day members of the WMG lead actions to dismantle these systems. We will never give up on ourselves, on gender equality and human rights of women, girls and gender diverse people, our planet, or this agenda. We demand that governments demonstrate that same commitment and determination. This is the *only* way to achieve the SDGs!

II. Non-governmental organizations

10. 2023 marks the halfway point of the Sustainable Development Agenda. This broad multilateral commitment reflects a laudable attempt to change the paradigm of financing and governance to achieve prosperity, peace, a sustainable world and well-being for people, environment and other living species.

11. A move toward inclusive and equitable policies would rectify historical wrongs that have placed humans, animals, and Mother Earth at risk. However, due to failures to address structural injustices and a hesitancy by many governments to take ambitious and transformative action, the world is not on track to implement Agenda 2030.

12. The UN Secretary-General has repeatedly called attention to the mutually reinforcing crises pushing the SDGs out of reach. The rise of undemocratic governments opposing human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, and the oppression of investigative journalism, civil society, Indigenous Peoples, and human and environmental rights defenders has undermined the basic objectives of the SDGs. The triple planetary crises of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss, in conjunction with rapid unplanned urbanization, threaten the wellbeing of current and future generations.

13. Besides insufficient efforts to implement the SDGs, Agenda 2030 must contend with an ongoing pandemic prolonged by vaccine inequality; the potential for future pandemics exacerbated by ecological overshoot and a failure to manage the relationship between humans, animals and nature; the crisis of yet another war threatening global efforts toward peace; and growing economic inequality around the globe.

In this context, we call for the following:

● SDG 6: A focus on drivers of water scarcity, accessibility and pollution with attention to finance, technology, equitable water rights, nature-based solutions, waste treatment, community leadership, women's participation, and Indigenous knowledge.

● SDG 7: A just, inclusive transition to affordable, clean, nature-sensitive renewable energy with financing for deploying green energy technologies globally, including LMICs.

● SDG 9: Green jobs, resilient infrastructure and inclusive, sustainable, accountable industrialization with special attention to vulnerable populations.

● SDG 11: Urban, social and environmental determinants of well-being, including safe, adequate, affordable, and sustainable food, housing, water and energy services; health services; and transportation.

● SDG 17: Commitment to achieving truly inclusive partnerships with NGOs, and cross-sectoral collaboration which eliminates silos and moves toward systemic solutions.

Looking towards the SDG Summit in September, we further call for:

● A six-year roadmap to SDG implementation by 2030, including milestones and a schedule of deliverables which ensure concrete commitments and financing.

● An action plan to move beyond GDP and transform our economic systems to serve the wellbeing of people and the planet, including a commitment to green economies with sustainable production and consumption, care and education at its heart.

● Development of a global framework to maintain ecological integrity, strengthen national and international environmental law and achieve all UNEA resolutions in a fully integrated manner, as well as the implementation of a One Health approach to safeguard against future pandemic risk.

● Inclusion of NGOs, including voices from the Global South, in truly intersectoral, inclusive partnerships.

● Leadership and commitment toward a post-2030 Agenda based on a culturally-sensitive, inclusive and fair negotiation process.

III.   Local authorities

14. Local public service provision has been at the forefront of policies caring for people and the planet, through water and sanitation, energy, housing, urban planning, climate protection, urban mobility, education, access to technology and health, amongst others. Local and regional governments (LRGs) are ready to scale up high impact localization service delivery and mobilize partnerships to close the gap, providing the next generation of service provision.

15. The delivery of and access to a next generation of services must be defined. Protecting the commons, fostering proximity and territorial cohesion, accessing technology, guaranteeing the right to the city, renewed cultural rights, countering the monetizing of care and acknowledging diverse and informal economies.

16. SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities allows us to care for people, planet and government and address the crises affecting humanity such as the housing, climate, and democracy crises. Beyond being just the SDG of cities, it invites us to balance urban centers with their territories and is an SDG for the world. Ensuring the achievement of SDG 11 is an enabler to address inequalities, foster sustainability and realize good governance and local democracy.

17. Addressing inequalities and their multidimensional roots is vital for a new social contract based on justice and democracy. This means guaranteeing the rights, needs and aspirations of the historically

marginalized and fostering gender equality and participation of local feminist leaders in decision-making.

18. LRGs have a critical role in securing water supply and sanitation. They must be included in water governance to ensure it is managed as a common good, protecting aquatic ecosystems, biodiversity, and fostering healthy lives.

19. Disaster risk-reduction and support to LRGs and actors on the ground must be a key priority to avoid humanitarian crises. This includes strengthening capacity for emergency governance, promoting community participation and ownership.

20. Changing our relationship with nature to address the climate crisis includes re-embedding urban systems within natural systems, transitioning from unsustainable resource extraction, fostering circular resource use, and protecting ecosystems through cultural and context-based approaches that engage communities.

21. High-impact partnerships, essential to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda in light of the SDG Summit and review of SDG 11, start from the ground up. LRGs, as protectors of communities, hubs of dialogue, co-creation and innovation, will continue engaging in inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships to leave no-one behind.

22. Achieving the SDGs will depend on revisiting financial architecture, securing adequate funding and direct revenue streams for LRGs. This means ensuring access to subnational financial engineering and intermediation to design innovative solutions and mobilize blended finance for increased resilience to emergencies.

23. Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs) are critical tools for policy-making going beyond monitoring, evidencing local initiatives, promoting ownership. They need concrete spaces within the HLPF, complementing Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).

24. Localization and SDG11, as the enabler for all SDGs, can support and strengthen the renewal of a multilateral system based on solidarity, trust, whole of government and society approaches, with an eye towards future generations.

IV. Workers and trade unions

25. The current multiple crises are taking a devastating toll on people and the planet, while they have exacerbated a decades-long trend in the erosion of workers' rights,[1] as well as a century-long decrease of the labour share of GDP.[2]

26. In this context, trade unions are calling for a **New Social Contract[3]**, rooted in a gender-transformative agenda, based on:

   o Jobs: investment in decent and climate-friendly jobs with just transition.
   o Rights: the promise of the ILO Centenary Declaration of rights and protections for all workers.

- o Wages: minimum living wages and equal pay, established through statutory processes or collective bargaining.
- o Social protection for all, with a Global Social Protection Fund for the poorest countries.
- o Equality of income, gender, and race.
- o Inclusion: a rights-based development model realised through the SDGs and multilateral reform.

Key Requests on the SDGs under review at HLPF 2023:

- SDG 6:
  i. Recognise the universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation as a human right.
  ii. Invest in public safe drinking water and sanitation services.
  iii. Invest in decent and climate-friendly jobs in water resources management and sanitation services and extend social protection coverage to those exposed to water insecurity.
  iv. Establish social dialogue mechanisms on water and sanitation management.
  v. Support a global treaty on plastic pollution as a key element to improve water quality.

- SDG 7:
  i. Recognise access to energy as a human right and ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services.
  ii. Promote the creation of decent and climate-friendly jobs in renewable energy.
  iii. End wasteful government subsidies to fossil fuel companies while ensuring protection of households against energy poverty.
  iv. Step up international climate finance to support the renewable energy production in developing countries and establish accountability mechanisms for sustainable investments.

- SDG 9:
  i. Increase public sector-led investments in infrastructure to meet development needs and support decent job creation.
  ii. Ensure that industrialisation is based on just transition, produces shared outcomes through minimum living wages, and is accompanied by gender-responsive life-long learning.
  iii. Support micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises and promote the formalisation of the informal economy.
  iv. Reduce dependency on foreign products in crucial sectors (food, energy, pharmaceutical, etc.).
  v. Ensure access to quality and affordable internet and proactive digitalisation policies aligned with labour rights.

- SDG 11:
  i. Promote sustainable cities, by accelerating the decarbonisation of urban transport, expanding access to decent housing and infrastructure for all, and investing in local and proximity quality public services.
  ii. Ensure urban resilience to extreme weather conditions and disasters.

- SDG 17: Build a renewed multilateralism based on social dialogue to redress the uneven distribution of power and wealth at international level.

Centrality of Sustainable Development Goal 8 and just transition at HLPF 2023

27. SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth is key for a human-centred, sustainable recovery. Indeed, with its targets on jobs, workers' rights, decent work, social protection, inclusive growth and environmental preservation, SDG 8 provides strong leverage for other goals, including goals under review in HLPF 2023.

28. That is why trade unions call for **SDG-8-driven recovery and resilience** and support UN-related processes, such as the UN **Global Accelerator** for Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions and the proposal for a World Social Summit in 2025. Midway to 2030, the SDGs are more relevant than ever. Only an inclusive multilateral system -with social partners on board- will pave the way to global resilience.

V. Education and academia stakeholder group

29. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented global school closures and the shutdown of many educational and learning opportunities. The effects have been felt worldwide, with children, youth, and adults experiencing setbacks in their learning, development, and well-being, as well as in their social safety nets.

30. After the first few waves of reflections, analysis, and attempts to build back better, there is a growing recognition that education cannot simply focus on recovery and passive adaptation. Nor should it only be about building resilience. Rather, the urgent need for transformative education has been highlighted as a way to support learners to take informed decisions and actions at the individual, community, and global levels, to be proactive and make substantial changes in the contexts that generate crises. This concept has gained traction as a potential solution to many of the challenges education is facing.

31. Health was not the only 'victim' of COVID-19 crises, there is also a decline in democracy and human rights. The world is witnessing an increase in authoritarianism, with a mere 13% of the global population currently living in liberal democracies, according to the latest V-Dem Institute Democracy Report. Declines in academic freedom have recently taken place in correlation with the increased move to autocracy, so the world needs policy framework and actions to protect academic freedom, as well as increased support for the citizenship education, education for peace and tolerance.

32. As we look to implement SDG 4, it is crucial to consider its linkages with other goals, including addressing systemic inequalities, to fully realize the potential of education as a transformative tool for achieving a sustainable and equitable future. This requires education that can boost knowledge, empower citizens, and build the skills needed in 21st-century workplaces, as well as increase environmental, financial, and digital literacy through lifelong learning. Additionally, financing for education must be expanded to ensure that the universal right to education is honored in practice, with special emphasis on the need to increase public funding for education and lifelong learning, especially for vulnerable groups.

33. However, previous crises have also highlighted deep-rooted social injustices, have further exacerbated pre-existing inequalities, both between people and countries, making their consequences even more critical for vulnerable groups who are deprived of the right to education, such as women and girls, elderly people, persons with disabilities, people living in emergency situations, and people living in dire material conditions. To address these disparities, we must promote inclusive and equitable quality learning opportunities and outcomes across the lifespan, including adult learning in all its many and creative manifestations, in work and life, formal, non-formal, and informal. We must strive to implement SDG4 in its all-embracing character, keeping in mind that adult education is the longest phase in the lifelong learning process. A "new social contract for education" (as UNECO calls it) must be built upon these principles, promoting lifelong learning for all and addressing systemic inequalities, to ensure a sustainable and equitable future for all.

VI. Business and industry major group

34. The Secretary General's report, Our Common Agenda, emphasizes working together to achieve the 2023 Agenda. The role of the private sector in partnering, collaborating, and delivering the SDGs is clearly highlighted, as is the potential of moving to practical and inclusive multilateralism for action.

35. As we reach the mid-point towards the 2030 Agenda, the international community is behind, and in some cases, off track, in meeting the SDGs. Over the next two years, all UN meetings should contribute to coherent and concerted efforts to progress implementation. All stakeholders agree that the scale and pace of action must expand and accelerate. Business has played a central role in many ways to advance the SDGs, but we need and are ready to do more. To this end, there is an urgent need to strengthen problem-solving dialogue between the private sector and the United Nations system at national, regional and global levels.

36. The UN Secretary-General has called for a Decade of Action to accelerate momentum on sustainable development to ensure that "no one is left behind." Recovering sustainably in the Decade of Action and Delivery will require an even stronger commitment to multi-stakeholder engagement and partnership through inclusive multilateralism. In particular, the private sector must be a meaningful partner in building back better – contributing funding, innovation, expertise, technology, fresh ideas, and diverse perspectives of business and employers, particularly SMEs.

37. The business community is an integral part of needed solutions and is ready share its know-how in science and technology, data management and impact, and most importantly, its plans for the next generation of innovations.

38. Business is committed to the SDGs because of the strong business case for doing so: companies cannot function successfully in a world rife with poverty and environmental crises. Indeed, the 2030 Agenda itself unlocks business opportunities and the potential for decent job creation.

39. Food Systems transformation is key to the advancement of many of the Sustainable Development Goals. Towards this end, the Private sector has made, and continues to make serious efforts towards

sustainable and resilient food systems. For these efforts to create lasting impact at scale, it is essential that Governments intensify collaboration with the Private Sector, and other stakeholders, to tackle the varying layers of disadvantages faced by rural and urban poor, including chronic poverty and hunger, lack of access to health care, lack of infrastructure and connectivity.

40. In the next 2 years, to bring forward what the PGA has termed solutions for sustainability, science and solidarity, we must build trust among stakeholders, be inclusive and most importantly, listen to the views of all.

    a) Private sector representatives seek greater inclusivity of business and continuing formal cooperation between private and public sectors. The potential of the private sector to work with governments, stakeholders and social partners across the international community to build a prosperous and sustainable global economy and deliver sustainability solutions holds significant potential to accelerate SDG delivery.

    b) Business underscores the importance of international solidarity to address inequities between countries and ensure the weakest and least developed nations get the necessary support to graduate sustainably. Governments must prioritize relevant and functional education to ensure a suitably equipped labour force, especially in an age of innovation and technology.

    c) Business calls on governments to create enabling environments for business that foster entrepreneurship, job creation, economic growth, access to education and sustainable development. Unemployment is the primary cause of poverty. Open, dynamic and inclusive labor markets are needed to empower people to thrive. Employment barriers must be removed, particularly for underrepresented groups in the labor market. Lack of quality functional education contributes to unemployment.

VII. Persons with disabilities

41. The Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities recommends the following to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 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 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 must advance.

42. Limited access to drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities and services disproportionately affects persons with disabilities. Governments should invest in and allocate financial resources to make water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities in households and in public settings accessible, prioritizing schools, workplaces, health facilities and communal facilities.

43. The main barriers affecting persons with disabilities' digital access and inclusion are accessibility and affordability of technology products, as well as digital literacy.[1] Governments should ensure that strategies, regulations and initiatives, including COVID-19 recovery plans related to the digital world include persons with disabilities.

44. Barriers to information and communications technologies and cultural attitudes, such as negative stereotyping and stigma, have contributed to the exclusion and marginalization of persons with disabilities in urban communities.[2] Governments should engage persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the design, implementation and monitoring urban programmes, policies and plans including disaster risk reduction and climate action planning. Processes and consultations should be accessible to persons with disabilities with adequate support available where necessary in the form of reasonable accommodation.

45. Climate resilience programmes and disaster risk reduction strategies and policies should make disability a core, cross-cutting theme and must be included in the implementation of the SDGs and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 so that they are both implemented in line with Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' Articles 11, 21 and 25.

46. 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. These should be aaccessible and inclusive consultations, and support access to funding and opportunities for organizations of persons with disabilities to strengthen their organizations and technical capacities to be able to engage meaningfully.

47. 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

48. Through volunteers, accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels

49. With more than one billion people volunteering annually, the world is recognising the power of volunteers, as highlighted in last year's Ministerial Declaration adopted by UN Member States on 15 July 2022:

> We express our highest appreciation of, and support for, the dedication, efforts and sacrifices, above and beyond the call of duty of all health professionals and workers and all other relevant frontline workers and **volunteers** in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

50. Volunteers build hope and resilience, improve lives, and strengthen sustainable development. Every day, volunteers meet community needs, and exercise leadership roles on the frontline in national responses and recovery. Volunteers remain critical to addressing the consequences of COVID-19 and restoring communities.

51. It is more important than ever for Member States to fulfill their commitments, made under the plan of action on volunteering for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to: promote Meaningful participation and involvement of volunteers in partnerships. Promotion of conducive environments for volunteering and volunteers to enhance the sustainability of development results as they continue to increase recognition of the value of civil society will also be important. Thus, our recommendations to Member States are as follows.

52. Volunteers build bridges by brokering relationships between communities and state authorities and other development stakeholders. We ask Member States to:

   i.   Integrate volunteering in policies and national development strategies and in their Voluntary National Reviews to create a more enabling environment for volunteering
   ii. Engage as partners and advocates for policies supporting an enabling environment for volunteering
   iii. Explore national and global partnerships and collaborations to leverage efforts towards supporting and promoting volunteering
   iv. Build coalitions and networks for learning and shared action on developing and enabling environment for volunteering
   v.   Adopt the Global Volunteering Standard to strengthen the quality of volunteering

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

   i.   Build on experiences of promoting volunteering among youth and extend these opportunities to all demographic groups, especially through virtual and hybrid volunteer opportunities
   ii. Recognise, work with, and support community-led volunteering systems and informal volunteers, involving them as equal partners in the volunteering space
   iii. Address barriers to volunteering faced by marginalised groups, ensuring that all volunteers are valued and supported as partners in social change
   iv. Address gender-related volunteering disparities and inequalities, recognising that the disproportionate burden of care falls on women around the world

54. Volunteering enables people of all walks of life to shape and own the development in their communities. We ask Member States to:

   i.   Invest in volunteer data, research, and measurement on the scope of volunteer work for the SDGs by accelerating investment and technology in measuring the scale of volunteering
   ii. Increase support for collection of evidence and statistics on volunteer work and the economic and social contributions of volunteers
   iii. Support a wider range of evidence-based, quality volunteering practices; knowledge sharing; and scaling up ways to address barriers to volunteering for marginalised groups
   iv. Accept citizen generated data to inform SDG review processes and national plans

IX.   Ageing

55. The world's population is ageing. There are 727 million persons aged 65 and over in 2020, with projected growth to 1.5 billion in 2050 (UNDESA, 2020). In 2021 older persons accounted for more than one billion people, with 70% living in low- and middle-income countries (AARP, 2021), the majority of which live in urban areas (HelpAge International). To ensure that neither today's nor future generations of older persons are left behind, the full implementation of Agenda 2030 must include the means for older persons to enjoy their independence, preserve their dignity, participate fully in society and attain their rights. Society's perception of older persons and older age/ageing needs to be transformed to accept older persons as valuable contributors to their families, communities and the national economy, not merely as recipients of medical rehabilitation and social welfare.

56. A human rights and life-course approach is necessary to ensure the intersection of the global megatrends of urbanization and population ageing (UNDESA, 2020). Policies and programmes that promote healthy ageing also benefit younger people as they age.

57. Technological advances present opportunities to achieve Agenda 2030. However, older persons are at risk of being left behind in the digital world due to increasing digitalization of everyday life. In the European Union, almost 40% of those aged 65 to 74 do not use the internet (EU, 2021). Efforts to ensure access to and knowledge of digital technology for those over 65 are essential. The International Telecommunications Union's report on Ageing in a Digital World provides an age inclusive roadmap to follow.

58. Member States have committed to protection of the human rights of older persons in a number of areas: through the establishment of the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing, 2021-2030; adoption by the Human Rights Council of its resolution 48/3 which encourages States to take measures to combat ageism and eliminate age discrimination; and the establishment by the World Health Organization (WHO) of a Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities.

59. The Steering Group on Ageing recommends that Member States and sub-national and local governments put in place policies, programmes and budgets that:

   a) Include older persons in the development of information and communication technology (ICT);
   b) Adopt age inclusive ICT accessibility and quality standards and provide appropriate training to guarantee the use of digital technology by older persons, recognizing the need to overcome sensory and cognitive conditions for some older persons;
   c) Ensure participation of older persons in all their diversity in the development of master urban and territorial plans;
   d) Contribute to the global effort of the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing, 2021-2030;
   e) Engage in WHO's Age-friendly Cities and Communities initiatives;
   f) Adopt mainstreaming ageing policy implementation tools and carry out age-sensitive analysis;
   g) Implement the New Urban Agenda as a roadmap to improving the lives of older people in cities;

h) Collect and use age inclusive disaggregated data reaching all older persons;

i) Support the efforts of the United Nations Open-ended Working Group to create a convention to protect the rights of older persons.

X. Asia-Pacific regional civil society organization engagement

60. We are now half way towards the deadline of achieving the 2030 Agenda, but it is more and more apparent that we are not only years but decades behind in achieving these goals.[2] We were off track prior to COVID-19, but the last three years have been particularly disastrous in their impacts due to exacerbating effects of the pandemic, the worsening planetary and energy crisis, the increasing militarism and conflict, as well as the rise of patriarchy and patriarchal authoritarian governance.

61. Estimates tell us that around 574 million people globally will be in extreme poverty, and a similar number of people will face hunger by 2030.[3] The goals under review this year also do not exude confidence. For instance, 1.6 billion people will lack safe drinking water and 2.8 billion people will be without sanitation and hygiene in 2030 (SDG 6).[4] Despite a slight increase in access to electricity, 100 million people might revert to solid fuels and 679 million will still be without access to electricity in 2030 (SDG 7).[5] Less than half of the countries that committed to end international financing of fossil fuels by 2022 were able to enact credible policies towards it. While mobile connectivity has increased, half of the population has no equipment to access it with digital divide impacting women more than men (SDG 9).[6] Cities and urban poor vandalized by the pandemic and climate crisis, and 99% of the urban population will continue to breathe polluted air, impacting human and environmental health (SDG 11).[7]

62. More than half of the low-income countries (LICs) (and also a significant number of the LMICs) are either in or at the verge of debt distress.[8] LICs accounted for less than 2% in the recent IMF Special Drawing Right (SDR) allocations. ODA, though increasing, still accounts for less than 1% of the total fiscal stimulus during the pandemic ($16 trillion). ODA backlogs over the past fifty years have reached up to 5.6 trillion, which is supposed to be capable of reducing extreme poverty many times over.[9] LDCs are overwhelmingly represented in the number of casualties due to extreme climate events and account for 69% of deaths.[10] While the sustainability agenda continues lacking critical resources, the global military expenditure surpassed $2 trillion for the first time in 2021 and has been on the rise since.[11] This is happening in the middle of the pandemic, where only the five top spenders put over 1.3 trillion (62%) in weapons, while ODA couldn't even reach a couple of hundred billions. The SDG financing gap has also increased from $2.5 trillion per year to $4.2 Trillion per year post pandemic.[12] The tax revenue of the LICs and the LMICs put together is $4.86 trillion, and they cannot fulfill SDG financing gaps without significant international financial collaboration.

63. Countries in the region also continue to face disasters. Pakistan faced floods of biblical proportions in 2022 which killed more than 1,700 people, displaced 33 million and caused economic losses of over $30 billion.[13] The people and communities in the region dependent on natural resources have suffered chronic impacts, much earlier and deeper than predicted, requiring urgent mitigation and adaptation support. This is an altogether untenable situation worsened by the increasing biodiversity loss, pollution and depleting means of livelihood.

64. Besides lack of progress on the SDGs, Asia and the Pacific has also seen a decline in human rights, and a rise in authoritarian governments. The right to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, rights of women and girls, human rights and environmental defenders, rights of minorities, media personnel and civil society activists have been violated with impunity by both state as well non state actors. The securitization narrative has curbed the space for dialogue and accountability while persecution of democratic dissent is constantly on the rise.

65. In 2023, the prospect of recovery looks extremely weak. The plateaued investment (FDI), outflow of capital from developing countries through illicit financial flows, tax evasions, asset stealth, profit shifting, ISDS penalties, and continuing debt crisis have shrunken national fiscal capacities critical for COVID-19 recovery efforts. On the flipside, IFIs, especially IMF, continue to push for belt tightening measures across over 75% of the loan programs negotiated during the pandemic, notwithstanding its very lesson to strengthen public service infrastructure – lack of which wreaked havoc in the first place. Similarly, multilateral processes continue to be fraught with contradictions breeding policy incoherence, reflective of the IMF's Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT) and Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) as opposed to permanent cancellation of sovereign debt, and TRIPS flexibilities instead of a full waiver, to address financial crises as well as vaccine apartheid in the Global South.

66. Fractured multilateralism, profit-driven neoliberal framework, asymmetry in global power relations, hegemony of imperialist countries and their devices and patterns, domination of behemoth corporations, aid and trade rules benefitting the global north, and diversion between sustainable development and respect to human rights fueling persistent inequities have been the fundamental structural flaws in our weak global governance. There is no sustainability without equity and justice. Unless the conceptualization of societal transformation addresses these systemic failures, upholds Development Justice, and ensures Right to Development for all, achieving the SDGs will remain a pipe dream.

XI.   Communities Discriminated by Work and Descent

67. Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (CDWD) are dangerously un-document or under-documented. The caste-system in Asia is the most commonly known example of descent and work-based discrimination globally. However, in Africa, Latin America and Europe the phenomenon is also common, founded on complex beliefs and behavioural systems and enforced systematically.

68. The mapping and documentation are hindered by the historic invisiblization of those who experience this unique and socially cemented social stratification. Socially "dominant" castes/classes reject its existence and continue to profit from this belief system.

69. As a consequence, this summary to the HLPF 2023 focuses on a call for global partnerships in and beyond SDG 17 to recognize the 270 million individuals who belong to Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent.

70. In Asia, the Dalits and Burakumin; in Africa, the Haratins; in Europe, the Roma/Romani people; and in South America, the Quilombolas form a small selection of various groups who experience oppression through discrimination on work and descent.

71. Sexual violence, gender-based violence, and the enslavement of women and girls and control of their reproductive rights is a common enforcement mechanism of the imposed "social order" forced onto them.

72. Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent do not share a common history or origin, but a common scarring by a social structure that ascribes a permanent status of devalued personhood and requires of us the performance of stigmatized and exploitative forms of labour.

73. This mode of oppression diminishes the life chances of 270 million individuals, the equivalent of what would be the 5th largest country in the world. Their condition has yet to be fully recognized by the global community including the United Nations and its institutions.

74. The oppressor or "dominant" group often shares the same race, ethnic background and language as the oppressed group, pre-dating colonial enslavement. The caste-system in Asia is the most commonly known example of descent and work-based discrimination globally.

75. Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent are characterized by the stigma of "impurity, pollution or uncleanliness" by birth often reinforced by physically segregated housing and living spaces and lack of access to water and sanitation. The lack of electricity, water and infrastructure characterizes those settlements.

76. Menial manual labour, often related human and animal death, excrement, recycling and waste or death, cleaning, and other general tasks of servitude all of which characterizes the often-hereditary *work* element the Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent. Access to water and sanitation is of upmost importance in such circumstances.

Recommendations:

- Recognition of the more than 270 million individuals who belong to Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent, to achieve global partnership (SDG 17) approaches of state and non-state actors to design and implement CDWD strategies.

- Collect disaggregated data, mapping and implement quotas systems in education, housing, scholarships and further strategies to eliminate discrimination on work and descent, designed in a partnership approach with each community.

- Facilitate access to the justice systems at all levels and enforce decisions to uphold the rights of each individual.

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

77. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda was already falling behind when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. While harmful to all, those furthest left behind, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) populations, saw their vulnerabilities amplified by this crisis. As the world seeks to accelerate its pandemic recovery, marginalized populations must be at the center of all decision-making, implementation, and evaluation processes.

78. Around the globe, LGBTI populations experience stigma, discrimination, violence, and other human rights violations based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). LGBTI populations who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination due to their gender, age, race, ethnicity, ability, class, caste, socioeconomic status, migration status, and other factors that drive exclusion are even more marginalized.

79. LGBTI populations already faced barriers to participating in development spaces and benefits before the pandemic. The crisis and States' responses compounded this exclusion and deprivation by deepening existing social, economic, and political inequalities and reinforcing barriers to access to education, employment, healthcare, food, shelter, and other rights and services.

80. If not centered on pandemic recovery efforts, LGBTI populations are at an urgent risk of being further left behind. They must be included in the implementation and revision of all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDGs 6, 11, and 17, that are being reviewed this year.

81. To achieve SDG 6, states must consider the unique barriers to clean water and sanitation faced by LGBTI populations; the frequently facing conditions of vulnerability with lack of access to clean water exposes them to greater health risks and infections.

82. Due to income disparities and discrimination, LGBTI populations face repeated evictions and forced relocation due to violent attacks in their homes or communities. They must also be centered on the implementation of SDG 11, which seeks universal access to safe and affordable housing, public transport, and public spaces; as they are also more likely to have experienced homophobic acts from their own families and have suffered from forced displacement and migration, face street harassment, violence, and denial of access while using public transportation and public spaces, which are services they primarily rely on.

83. Finally, States must ensure LGBTI populations are included in the implementation of SDG 17, including when States safely collect disaggregated data, without which it is impossible to determine if the SDGs are being implemented equitably.

84. This year's HLPF theme, "Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels," allows Member States and stakeholders to include LGBTI populations and tackle cis-hetero-normative patriarchal structures in their recovery and development initiatives. The LGBTI Stakeholder Group

calls on all stakeholders to center LGBTI populations as they seek to fulfill the 2030 Agenda to guarantee that all people can equally exercise their rights and to promote a sustainable and resilient recovery.

XIII. Financing for Development (FfD) major group

85. We call on UN member states to address the following systemic solutions to address the broken global economic architecture:

    a) Organise the next FfD Conference in 2025: We welcome the adoption of the 2022 UNGA resolution on FfD to 'consider convening, in 2025, a fourth international conference on financing for development'. We call on all Member States to adopt strong modalities for preparatory member-state led, intergovernmental negotiation rounds that are transparent and inclusive, allowing full and effective participation of civil society.

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

    c) Agree on a UN Tax Convention to comprehensively address tax havens, tax abuse by multinational corporations and other illicit financial flows: We welcome the approval by consensus of the Africa Group's UNGA proposal in 2022 to begin intergovernmental negotiations to strengthen inclusive and effective tax cooperation. We call on all member states to work towards agreeing an effective UN Tax Convention;

    d) Agree on terminating Investor-State-Dispute-Settlement (ISDS) mechanisms: UN member states should elaborate a multilateral agreement for a coordinated and permanent termination of ISDS mechanisms that has empowered transnational corporations to sue governments in confidential tribunals on a range of issues including debt, tax and increasingly climate action;

    e) Review 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) Accelerate the implementation of the official development assistance (ODA) commitments to fulfil and exceed the 0.7% target for ODA in the form of unconditional grants. As the ambitions of the Agenda 2030 are further away, it is vital that the long-standing commitments to delivering international development assistance, including ensuring quality and effectiveness, are realised and secure commitment to make up for the shortfall in unfulfilled targets in the past years in addition to future targets for ODA flows;

    g) Assess systemic risks posed by unregulated or inadequately regulated financial sector instruments and actors: Member States should assess the current financial "non-system" and undertake decisive steps towards financial regulation, including 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 UN. As the UN, Governments and institutions grapple with the governance of digital technologies, there is an urgent need for transparent and inclusive member state-led deliberations on the current and potential impacts of those technologies on the environment, the labour market, tax policy, livelihoods and society;

i) Ensure fiscal space and scale up international cooperation for decent jobs creation and universal social protection in line with SDGs 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 the standards of the International Labour Organization.

XIV. Scientific and technological community

86. The message from the scientific and technological community, as we reach a midpoint in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation, is clear: the world is failing on the SDGs and achieving their vision as a global plan of action for people, planet and prosperity by 2030 seems increasingly unlikely. Progress towards many goals and targets has deteriorated including on ending extreme poverty, reducing inequality and unemployment, halting hunger and achieving food security, ensuring health and wellbeing with COVID-19 leading to a decrease of immunization coverage and upsurge in mental health issues, amongst others. Recent cascading crises, while making the SDG agenda more pertinent than ever, have wiped out years of progress.

87. Since agreeing to the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs in 2015, the world has faced a global pandemic affecting all our life aspects and every public policy domain. The war in Ukraine, beyond being a human catastrophe, further destabilized the already fragile implementation context reverting uneven economic recovery from COVID, exerting ripple effects that reverberate across and beyond the world's food, energy and finance systems. This confluence of crises further compounded by other humanitarian crises such as the Horn in Africa, political turmoil in Haiti, conflict, violence and weather shocks in South Sudan and others, altogether expected to lead to more than 230 million people requiring emergency assistance in 68 countries, further puts the 2030 vision out of our reach.

88. Negative trends in halting climate change and reversing biodiversity loss are not solely undermining our chances to realize the SDGs by 2030 and beyond but represent an existential peril endangering the future of all living beings. Science is showing that both are consequences of centuries of accumulated anthropogenic impacts on the environment which embody the disconnect between people and nature. Reversing the damage is essential to ensure liveable conditions on the planet, and requires rethinking ways in which we interact with, protect and value nature, and fully leveraging the power of nature to build a prosperous and resilient future, including through innovative engineering and nature-based solutions to address climate change.

89. Despite the fragile context and insufficient advances, the worst thing we could do as humankind is to dismiss the SDGs. At the midway point of implementation in 2023, multilateral institutions and governments must make a concerted effort to identify, assess and address the real and systemic barriers to SDG implementation to date, many of which have been omitted or neglected so far. Governments and other relevant actors, in dialogue with the scientific and technological

community, must evaluate successes and failures, develop and harness existing tools and evidence-based practical guidance on tractable and transformative solutions from the local to the global levels and ensure developmental benefits are distributed more evenly and do not exacerbate inequalities for the many whilst benefiting the few. These efforts are crucial to get back on track, raise awareness of the importance of the SDG agenda being a planetary plan critical for our survival and future prosperity.

90. In the face of calls for urgent action, the scientific community urges governments and the international community to focus on actionable knowledge and evidence-based prioritization grounded on SDGs interlinkages while minimizing unwanted trade-offs. This will provide a basis for effective action and fostering policy coherence, while encouraging systems thinking and breaking down silos that hinder SDG implementation. As we progress, scientists need to collaborate with various stakeholders to develop and make practical use of scenario and foresight exercises to gain a deeper understanding of the risks associated with not achieving the SDGs and to identify viable pathways to success. Evidence-based transformation points and pathways are necessary for a successful SDG implementation as we enter the second half of the implementation period. Engineers have a crucial role in implementing solutions, requiring increased engineering education and skill development.

91. Enabling mission science for sustainability must be one of the key priorities of governments and science funders in pursuing the SDGs. Accelerating SDG implementation requires deep engagement with complex, multi-sectorial contextual problems and systemic collaboration between scientists, engineers and other stakeholders to co-produce actionable knowledge and solutions that advance long-term sustainability locally and globally. This kind of transdisciplinary science requires visionary thinking and fundamentally disruptive actions from science funders worldwide, stepping out of business-as-usual approaches to funding science, doing research and creating supportive institutional arrangements for implementing sustainability science findings with impact.

XV. Sendai Framework major group

92. During the past years the world has witnessed the exacerbation of climate change, the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, and persistent conflicts, thus illuminating the ever-evolving and intricately connected nature of risks. These events have significant implications for how individuals, societies, and government's approach risk. This unique situation presents an opportunity for learning, which is crucial for assessing progress towards achieving Agenda2030. In order to promote sustainable development, it is imperative that we address risks and potential opportunities associated with slow- and sudden-onset hazards, and that without generating new risks.

93. The recommendations presented herein have been developed by the Sendai Stakeholder Engagement Mechanism (SEM) and represent the collective contributions of our seventeen stakeholder constituencies. By taking into account the perspectives of diverse stakeholders, these recommendations have been designed to reflect a broad and inclusive approach to risk reduction.

94. Despite efforts to promote resilient and sustainable development, progress at the local level remains inadequate. In order to address this pressing concern, there is a need to prioritize investment in

local actions, which should be grounded in the voices of local communities and their traditional knowledge, and equitably acted upon. These actions should not take place in silos, but it is crucial to connect and collaborate and share experiences across. Such an approach will inspire collective ownership and foster meaningful collaboration, ultimately enhancing progress at all levels.

95. Just as societies are holistic, diverse and integrated, so too must be the institutions which govern them. This means alignment and mutual reinforcement of global policies; domestic ministries working across silos; local authorities serving the whole individual at the community level; and businesses responsibly use and provide resources without generating new risks. Moreover, these governance systems must be mutually reinforcing at all levels. Strengthen coordination and coherence by linking DRR to development (e.g. through a risk-informed development lens) and climate change (e.g. with an emphasis on adaptation and loss and damage).

96. Despite increased attention to leaving no one behind, efforts to address the vulnerabilities of communities and individuals most at risk remain inadequate. To avoid leaving anyone behind, it is essential to prioritize enhanced investments to address the vulnerability of persons who are most at risk. This includes but is not limited to providing flexible and accessible financing and resource allocation mechanisms that enable these populations to respond to emerging risks and prioritize shifting needs.

97. The pandemic provides an opportunity to learn from the risk governance failures and successes. The response has highlighted the need for a holistic approach to public health, recognizing that it cannot be considered in isolation from social, financial, and environmental factors. Public health must be integrated with other risk reduction strategies. The pandemic has also shown that collaboration and resource mobilization for a common goal can be successful. Whether public-private partnerships, transboundary cooperation, or scientific collaboration, all sectors need to prioritize the wellbeing of people and the planet over financial gains.

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