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

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

Note by the Secretariat

The present document is a compilation of the executive summaries of the position papers on the theme of the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development, “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions”, 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, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/290. The full reports are posted on the website of the forum: hlpf.un.org/2024.

* E/HLPF/2024/1.
** The present document is a compilation of the executive summaries of the thematic papers submitted to the high-level political forum on sustainable development by the major groups and other stakeholders and does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.
I. Women

1. As 2024 begins, countries and populations across the globe are grappling with multiple and interlinked crises, pushing them even further from realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Women’s rights, their bodies and the planet are in peril, and the most structurally marginalized are bearing the brunt as these crises exacerbate pre-existing inequalities.

2. The rise in militarism and warfare, fuelled by the interests of those holding the most power and their transnational allies, has led to widespread human rights violations and the dismantling of essential social services for basic human needs, creating new layers of vulnerability, especially for women, girls and gender-diverse people. The women’s major group demands an urgent redirection of military expenditures towards social spending and the acceleration of efforts towards peace, disarmament and feminist change. The group calls upon Governments to end imperialist occupation and uphold people’s right to justice, self-determination and sustainable development. Governments must do more to uphold the international laws and commitments that were adopted to protect women’s human rights, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights, other species and the planet.

3. The world can no longer afford to ignore the flawed systems of neoliberal capitalist development and unlimited growth that prioritize private profit over people and the planet, exacerbating the catastrophic impact of the triple planetary crisis for populations in the global South. As the voice of feminist activists and human rights defenders, the women’s major group urges Governments of the global South to show bold ambition, reject false solutions and demand reparative and adequate climate finance for the ecological crisis wrought by capitalist greed.

4. As the world recovers from the economic recession caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the women’s major group urges Member States to rethink and reform the international financial architecture, in order to ensure full and sustainable socioeconomic recovery in fragile countries. The group demands gender-transformative and pro-poor policies, equitable State and civil society participation, gender-based tax justice and an end to debt and conditionalities. The 2030 Agenda cannot be achieved if half the world’s population does not have the resources required to partner in creating, managing and caring for the planet.

5. Women are living in an increasingly polarized world, in which racism, gender discrimination and xenophobia are on the rise everywhere, undermining progress and holding their rights and equality hostage.

6. Governments must recognize the vital work of feminist and human rights groups and make concerted efforts to shift power and decision-making to the people, to lead the change they seek. The women’s major group calls upon Governments to boldly support feminist organizing by increasing social development budgets, implementing accessible, flexible and multi-year core funding policies, and creating mechanisms to safeguard and protect activists and groups.

7. The submission of the women’s major group to the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development will review all 17 Sustainable Development Goals through an intersectional lens that underscores the importance of urgent and transformative action, as well as the need to overhaul systems and structures to create a more equal world and halt the damage to the planet. As the group urges Governments and global institutions to renew their commitment towards the 2030 Agenda, it will inspire hope through stories of change, bearing witness to how the most marginalized and affected people persevere, innovate and organize in the face of unrelenting backlash.
II. Non-governmental organizations

8. The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are at a breaking point due to a lack of political will in the face of overlapping, multidimensional crises fuelled by misdirected and short-term decision-making. Misguided economic approaches have increased debt and inflation, deepened social inequalities and fuelled violence, conflict and displacement. The environment has been severely degraded and exploited, resulting in devastating climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The persistent impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic include socioeconomic ramifications and global constrictions of civic and democratic spaces, while failure to address the underlying causes of zoonotic diseases increases the risk of future disease outbreaks and pandemics.

9. This confluence of crises is driving humanity further from solutions to achieve the commitments of the 2030 Agenda, and opportunities for reversing this trajectory have narrowed. Without urgent, transformative and bold policy action, human, animal and environmental health and well-being face a catastrophic future.

10. Against the backdrop of these immense and persistent challenges, civil society plays a key role in the implementation, monitoring, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, not only in multilateral spaces, but also at the national, regional and local levels. Civil society is a consistent partner in meeting the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda and delivering transformation.

11. In this context, the non-governmental organizations major group calls for the following:

   (a) Sustainable Development Goal 1: Reduce extreme and multidimensional poverty through bold economic reforms, increased investment in universal social protection and the building of community resilience to economic, environmental, health and other shocks through participatory approaches;

   (b) Sustainable Development Goal 2: Adopt “whole-of-food-systems” approaches supporting young people, smallholders, Indigenous Peoples and rural women, in order to address nutrition security, food waste and loss, agroecology, healthy and sustainable diets, human rights, animal welfare and urban/rural equity;

   (c) Sustainable Development Goal 13: Transition to renewable energy by restoring land, expanding climate finance and education, building sustainable and resilient infrastructure, engaging Indigenous and local communities and implementing traditional knowledge and practices to foster resilience;

   (d) Sustainable Development Goal 16: Fully implement international law, including human rights and humanitarian law, taking concrete measures to reduce all forms of violence and strengthening institutional accountability by improving democratic participation in decision-making at all levels;

   (e) Sustainable Development Goal 17: Transform resource mobilization and financing by reforming the international financial architecture and upholding commitments, and strengthen multilateralism and cooperation across stakeholders, fostering trust, social cohesion and equity.

12. Recommendations for the high-level political forum on sustainable development and related policy moments include:

   (a) Commitment to combat racism, all forms of discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, stigmatization and hate speech through cooperation, partnerships, inclusion and respect for diversity;

   (b) Effective and meaningful civil society participation;
(c) Delivery of financing commitments to ensure implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with a clear prioritization of funding for local community action;

(d) Prioritization of multilingualism as a core value of the United Nations;

(e) Recognition of the interconnectedness of humans, animals and the environment, with a view to supporting the health, well-being and flourishing of all;

(f) Concerted collaboration at all levels among Member States, civil society, academia and the United Nations to address and overcome key challenges in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Sustainable Development Goals during the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development, the Summit of the Future, the Second World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development.

III. Local authorities

13. Local and regional governments are crucial in ensuring universal, equitable access to public services that have direct impacts on the capabilities of populations to prosper. Because such governments work closely with communities, they are able to develop public-community partnerships that strengthen the capacities of local services to redistribute prosperity opportunities, building trust, fostering culture and leveraging proximity and local democracy in the fight against poverty.

14. Addressing inequalities means revitalizing rights-based public service provision, with care as the basis of a new social contract. Caring cities and regions advance a feminist agenda that guarantees equal rights, empowers local communities, supports local economic development and gives the highest priority to the well-being of people and the planet.

15. Ending hunger and malnutrition requires local government involvement in food policy to promote sustainable food systems and supply chains rooted in proximity and strengthen local public service provision and multilevel governance.

16. Fighting poverty requires focusing on the population, development and sexual health, prioritizing equality in human rights and dignity, redefining health as a local and global common good and accompanying a new paradigm on the demographic trends that are shaping the urban-rural continuum, urbanization and ecology.

17. In the face of growing global crises, local and regional governments are central actors in addressing refugee and migrant inclusion and protection. The only way to ensure global impact is to invest in local action and safe and regular pathways, using an approach to migration that is based on human rights, inclusiveness and dignity.

18. Local and regional governments must be recognized as part of the governance of the planetary response to climate change, given the urgent need to level up ambitions to implement the Paris Agreement, and included in decision-making mechanisms such as the loss and damage fund.

19. Local and regional governments play a critical role in securing water supply and sanitation services for their communities and must be included in water governance to ensure that it is managed as a common good, protecting aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity.

20. Local and regional governments understand peace as a global public good that needs to be cared for in all spheres of government, addressing its roots and developing a renewed social contract with civil society, young people and marginalized groups as part of peacebuilding strategies. Local democracy must be a pillar, promoting transparency, accountability, open governance and the fight against corruption.
21. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires revisiting the financial architecture, enabling local and regional governments to leverage various sources of finance, unlocking flexible and tailored revenue streams with the support of multilateral and subnational development banks and increasing resiliency to emergencies.

22. Voluntary local reviews and voluntary subnational reviews foster transformative change in the governance of the Sustainable Development Goals, affecting the improvement of multilevel governance relations and service provision. Enhanced recognition is required at the high-level political forum on sustainable development and beyond to leverage these processes and achieve the Goals.

23. Renewing the multilateral system by making it more inclusive and networked is a prerequisite to implementing the 2030 Agenda and other global agendas. The local authorities major group is issuing a call to action to define a special, formal and permanent status for the self-organized constituency of local and regional governments before the policymaking bodies of the United Nations.

IV. Workers and trade unions

24. Multiple crises are turning the prospect of decent work into an illusion for the majority of workers and derailing progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, while democracies and the rule of law are increasingly under attack.

25. In this context, trade unions are calling for a new social contract based on six key demands: (a) the creation of decent and climate-friendly jobs with just transitions; (b) rights for all workers; (c) minimum living wages and equal pay; (d) universal social protection; (e) equality; and (f) inclusion.

26. Demands relating to the Sustainable Development Goals under review at the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development are as follows:

(a) Goal 1:
   (i) Invest in decent and climate-friendly jobs as a key strategy for tackling poverty;
   (ii) Achieve universal social protection in line with International Labour Organization (ILO) standards;
   (iii) Support developing countries by allocating at least 7 per cent of official development assistance to social protection and setting up a global social protection fund;
   (iv) Respect workers’ rights and minimum living wages and ensure equal pay;
   (v) Advance gender equality to elevate women out of poverty;
   (vi) Establish social dialogue on poverty eradication policies;
   (vii) Reform international tax architecture and support progressive taxation;

(b) Goal 2:
   (i) Recognize the right to food as a human right;

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(ii) Ensure decent work, lifelong learning and minimum living wages for workers in agriculture and throughout the food supply chains, including for migrant workers;

(iii) Implement just transition policies based on social dialogue on sustainable agriculture;

(iv) Support Indigenous communities’ land rights in line with the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169);

(c) Goal 13:

(i) Introduce just transition measures based on social dialogue on nationally determined contributions;

(ii) Implement the work programme on just transition pathways adopted at the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

(iii) Meet adaptation needs through robust social protection plans;

(iv) Step up international climate finance for developing countries, with accountability mechanisms for sustainable and green investments;

(v) Promote social dialogue to align the new collective quantified goal on climate finance with just transition principles;

(c) Goal 16:

(i) Uphold labour rights and social dialogue as pillars of peace and democratic processes;

(ii) Engage social partners in all sustainable development policymaking processes;

(iii) Advocate for labour courts and access to legal aid on labour matters;

(iv) Set a 50 per cent goal for women’s participation at all levels of international peace and security initiatives;

(v) Enhance international law on disarmament, arms control, non-proliferation and the arms trade;

(d) Goal 17: Renew multilateralism on the basis of social dialogue and democracy to promote social justice.

**Centrality of Sustainable Development Goal 8 for rescuing the Goals**

27. At the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development, the international community should seek to:

(a) Put decent work at the heart of United Nations development processes, including the Summit of the Future and the Second World Summit for Social Development;

(b) Support the United Nations Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions;

(c) Uphold social dialogue and democracy as key governance tools for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;

(d) Adopt clear commitments to finance the Goals and reform the international financial architecture.
V. Business and industry

28. The business and industry major group is a diverse global constituency, comprising micro- and small enterprises, employers’ federations all over the world and large companies across every sector in developed and developing countries. The group is invested in achieving successful and inclusive outcomes at the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development, in the lead-up to the Summit of the Future.

29. In many ways, the constituents of the business and industry major group are the “means of implementation” working with Governments and stakeholders to deliver investments and innovations to implement the 2030 Agenda. Innovative technologies are already being mobilized to create new jobs and opportunities, through business-to-business efforts, in partnership with employers, business groups, Governments, United Nations entities and resident coordinators. Business is leaning in on investment and innovation to deliver on the 2030 Agenda and priority Sustainable Development Goals in particular, including those focusing on zero hunger and climate change, which can serve as catalysts for others.

30. The business and industry major group regards the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development as critical to reinforcing multilateralism for sustainability and addressing an array of challenges facing the global community.

31. Conflict and war threaten people and societies, exacerbating poverty and displacement for already vulnerable populations. Labour markets are not future-proofed and employers need to become dynamic and innovative in expanding job opportunities, particularly for marginalized groups. Skill-building systems have not kept up with evolutions in the world of work and changing labour market needs, and are failing to adequately equip job seekers with the skills required to enter the labour market and meet the needs of businesses. Many micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in developing and emerging economies continue to face challenges, including barriers impeding the cultivation of conducive business environments, which hinder their ability to reach the level of productivity required to be competitive and create sustainable jobs.

32. Sustainable recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequences of conflict, climate change and economic inequality requires an even stronger commitment to multi-stakeholder engagement and partnership through inclusive multilateralism that is practical, effective and transparent. Over the next two years and beyond, all United Nations meetings should contribute to making and advancing coherent and concerted efforts to implement what has been discussed, agreed and ratified across intergovernmental forums with respect to addressing these challenges.

33. The high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Summit of the Future must be opportunities for recognizing and empowering the private sector to be a meaningful partner by contributing funding, innovation, expertise, technology, fresh ideas and diverse perspectives.

34. The business and industry major group is calling for greater inclusivity of business and stronger, more formal and strategic cooperation between the private and public sectors. The members of the group believe that leveraging the private sector’s potential and its engagement with Governments and the international community is indispensable to building a prosperous and sustainable global economy and delivering solutions to sustainability challenges.

35. There is too much at stake in the 2030 Agenda for us not to “think outside the box”. All stakeholders need to join with Governments in redoubling collaborative
action. The 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development should set the stage for a post-2030 approach to international cooperation that is defined by renewed dedication and focus on societies that are peaceful, resilient and responsive to people’s needs and aspirations.

VI. Scientific and technological community

36. The window for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 is narrowing rapidly, revealing a concerning lack of progress on individual Goals and a broader misunderstanding of their implications for the 2030 Agenda as a whole. Progress on targets related to ending extreme poverty and reducing inequality (Goal 1), ensuring food security (Goal 2) and addressing climate change (Goal 13) has deteriorated amid recent shocks from pandemics, wars and economic crises. Without a reversal of current trends and accelerated action, the world is at risk of facing prolonged periods of crisis.

37. It is becoming increasingly evident that the future holds transformative shifts in economic and natural systems, with profound implications for human civilization. The key question is whether the international community will passively observe these changes or actively engage in steering them towards positive outcomes. Sustained collaboration between scientists, decision makers and stakeholders is essential, including through employing scenario and foresight exercises and Earth system boundaries to better understand the risks and costs associated with failure to attain the Sustainable Development Goals and identify viable pathways to a safe and just future.

38. The Sustainable Development Goals, as an indivisible agenda, are an integral part of other global agendas, including the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. Implementation of the Goals requires joint, sustainable investment and cohesive road maps over a longer time horizon to 2050 for scaling up impactful and synergistic interventions and achieving their collective ambitions.

39. Urgent action is required to focus science, both natural and social, on informing action with respect to key transformation points and pathways for accelerated progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, while adapting the indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to national and subnational contexts. Achieving the Goals requires evidence-based, context-specific prioritization, grounded in an understanding of Goal-related synergies and trade-offs, including negative environmental and social spillovers between countries and regions. Efforts must be concentrated on identifying and overcoming systemic barriers to achieving the Goals. The high-level political forum on sustainable development should serve as the primary platform for enabling sustained exchanges among policymakers, scientific communities and other sectors, and inspiring a concerted global effort to stay within safe and just Earth system boundaries.

40. Rethinking and reorienting the role of technology in supporting the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda is key. The United Nations should explore leveraging artificial intelligence technologies for accelerated progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, while also ensuring alignment with the Goals. In addition, the United Nations should facilitate inclusive and collective dialogues on emerging technologies, including geoengineering solutions, for climate change mitigation. These dialogues should be guided by comprehensive risk assessments and actively involve scientific and engineering communities.
41. Strengthening science-policy-society interfaces at all levels will be crucial for policymakers and other stakeholders to access the latest scientific knowledge. Governments need to take concrete actions to better leverage science and engineering for accelerated achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. This includes enhancing capacities in knowledge generation, synthesis, evidence collection and the effective translation of scientific observations, data and information into actionable knowledge and solutions. Furthermore, to build greater trust in science, it is essential to forge stronger connections with policy communities and their constituents through more deliberative engagement.

42. Governments and science funders should make mission-oriented science for sustainability a priority in pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals. The International Science Council Global Commission on Science Missions for Sustainability has presented a new model for science missions, with the aim of facilitating systematic collaboration between scientists, engineers, policymakers, funders, local and Indigenous communities and other stakeholders to co-produce actionable knowledge and solutions that advance long-term sustainability.

VII. Ageing

43. Accomplishing the theme of the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development requires the active contribution of older persons, in line with the 2030 Agenda and its call for societies for all ages.

44. The present and future include people of all ages. Projections of population ageing reflect increased longevity, especially among women, with the percentage of the global population aged 65 and over expected to rise from 10 per cent in 2022 to 16 per cent in 2050.

45. There is need for an intergenerational, life-course approach that promotes the rights of older people and includes their voice and agency. Social protection floors have a proven impact on intergenerational poverty and are essential for younger generations, now and in the future.

46. The pursuit and advancement of the principle of intergenerational solidarity would ensure that the rights of people of all ages are protected and promoted, at all times, to secure a life of dignity across the broad diversity of the world’s population. This would also ensure that older people are recognized as rights holders, including with respect to the right to development (Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002), and help to realize the transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind.

47. However, progress on the priority Sustainable Development Goals of the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development does not inspire confidence in poverty eradication efforts, for the following reasons:

(a) Goal 1 is seriously off track. Inequalities in terms of income, education and opportunity in earlier years result in extreme poverty at older ages, which is worsened by a lack of social protection systems and the failure to implement social protection floors;

(b) Goal 2 includes the aim of ending malnutrition among older persons. However, reports, including those published by HelpAge International in 2023, indicate that, globally, older people are at risk of starvation and extreme poverty due to the rising costs of food and farming;

(c) With regard to Goal 13, older persons with disabilities and older women are especially affected by climate-related disasters, but are often not included in
climate responses, climate preparedness and prevention measures. As a result of ageism, poverty, neglect, abuse and social exclusion, the experience and resilience of older persons may be ignored and they may be relegated to the periphery of society;

(d) The peace, justice and strong institutions envisaged in Goal 16 fade away in the face of unpunished violence against older people, including the killing of older women in parts of Africa, based on false accusations of witchcraft;

(e) The commitment under Goal 17 to consider age as a cross-cutting issue in the implementation of all Goals and targets remains largely unattained despite the ongoing efforts of the Titchfield Group on Ageing-Related Statistics and Age-Disaggregated Data.

Recommendations

48. The stakeholder group on ageing recommends that Member States:

(a) Provide sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data, in order to identify gaps and propose solutions on issues related to ageing;

(b) Include the voice and agency of older people in the development agenda;

(c) Establish as soon as possible financial and technical measures to deliver on target 3 of Sustainable Development Goal 1;

(d) Ensure that institutions promoting peace, justice and equality address ongoing violence against older people, particularly older women;

(e) End malnutrition and food insecurity in old age through targeted agricultural incentives, secure pensions and intergenerational skills sharing using a life-course approach;

(f) Ensure the participation, inclusion and leadership of older people in climate action, resilience, adaptation and responses;

(g) Invest in age-disaggregated data covering diversity across all age groups.

VIII. Persons with disabilities

49. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery efforts to date may have simply put a pause on disability inclusion in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and significantly heightened the risk of reversing the progress made. Against this backdrop, the stakeholder group of persons with disabilities recommends the measures set out below.

End poverty in all its forms

50. There is a vicious cycle of poverty and disability that stems from a lack of access to education, employment, accessibility and health care, which is compounded by the lack of adequate social protection and coverage for the additional cost of disability. Only 33.5 per cent of persons with disabilities worldwide are covered by at least one social protection benefit.\(^2\) It is therefore critical to implement social protection schemes that are not tied to the ability to work across the lifespan of persons with disabilities.\(^3\)


End hunger, and achieve food security and improved nutrition

51. On the one hand, food insecurity and malnutrition can lead to disability; on the other hand, disability can lead to food insecurity and poverty. Children with disabilities are three times as likely to be malnourished as children without disabilities and twice as likely to die from malnutrition during childhood. States must ensure that all nutrition and food security plans are accessible and that targeted programmes for persons with disabilities are put in place, with adequate investment.

Urgent action to combat climate change

52. Persons with disabilities continue to be invisible in national strategies to combat the climate crisis. Eighty per cent of the parties to the Paris Agreement do not include a single mention of persons with disabilities in their nationally determined contributions. It is critical that States and other actors protect the human rights of persons with disabilities and include them in the contexts of both climate adaptation and climate mitigation.

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development

53. States must ensure that persons with disabilities are able to exercise their agency and autonomy, as provided for in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including through inclusive and accessible humanitarian assistance; assistive technologies; transportation; housing; infrastructure and services; and participation in political life. States must strengthen the implementation of Security Council resolution 2475 (2019) on the protection of persons with disabilities in situations of conflict.

Strengthen the means of implementation

54. Steps must be taken to ensure the increased and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. International cooperation must “do no harm” by ensuring that investments do not fund exclusion or segregation. States must ensure the disability-specific collection and disaggregation of data, using recognized approaches, and ensure greater investment in disability-inclusive development.

IX. Education and academia

From crisis to opportunity: education and lifelong learning in the pursuit of the 2030 Agenda

Introduction

55. The world is currently grappling with crises of unprecedented magnitude, including the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, wars and armed conflicts. These challenges necessitate a re-evaluation of the approach to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The disruptions caused by these crises have not only

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5 Hannah Kuper and Phyllis Heydt, “The missing billion: access to health services for 1 billion people with disabilities”. Available at www.lshtm.ac.uk/TheMissingBillion.
6 International Disability Alliance and International Disability and Development Consortium, “Persons with disabilities and climate action”. Available at www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/cop_28_-_final_version_-_nov_16th_-_02.pdf.
affected global education systems, affecting learners across all age groups, but also exacerbated existing inequalities, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations. A comprehensive, transformative approach is imperative to restore and enhance educational frameworks, facilitate the recovery process and advance comprehensive achievement of the Goals.

The impact of crises on education worldwide
56. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to unprecedented educational interruptions, affecting over 1.6 billion learners globally. The sudden transition to alternative learning methods, compounded by issues of access and quality, has underscored the depth of the educational divide. Concurrently, conflicts and wars in several regions have denied further millions of individuals their basic right to education, exacerbating inequalities and threatening long-term socioeconomic development.

Education as a catalyst for recovery and sustainable development
57. Literacy and education are not only fundamental human rights but also a cornerstone of sustainable development. They empower individuals, drive economic growth and are essential for achieving gender equality and poverty reduction, and for fostering innovation and resilient societies. Therefore, revitalizing the education sector is crucial for sustainable progress across all areas of the 2030 Agenda. This demands a focus on inclusivity, equity and quality, from early childhood to adult education.

Strategies for enhancing education and lifelong learning
58. Strategies for enhancing education and lifelong learning include:
   (a) Prioritizing inclusivity and equity: efforts must be intensified to reach marginalized and vulnerable groups, addressing barriers such as economic hardships, security concerns, geographical isolation and social stigmatization;
   (b) Strengthening lifelong learning and a holistic approach: lifelong learning and adult education programmes can equip learners with the necessary knowledge and skills for a rapidly evolving world. Such programmes should promote soft skills, literacy and vocational training, and emphasize peace education, intercultural dialogue, critical thinking and media literacy;
   (c) Promoting community and non-formal education initiatives: non-traditional learning environments and community-based educational programmes can effectively reach underserved populations, offering flexible and relevant learning opportunities while fostering social cohesion and community development;
   (d) Reinforcing teacher support and training: empowering educators is central to educational revitalization. It is essential to ensure that they receive comprehensive training, adequate resources, social recognition and fair compensation, even in resource-constrained settings;
   (e) Education should not only meet present needs but also address the underlying causes of crises, systemic issues and structural inequalities, fostering sustainable solutions through a transformative approach.

Conclusion
59. Recovery from the current crises and the pursuit of the 2030 Agenda are intricately linked, with education serving as a vital bridge between the two. By adopting a holistic approach, major stakeholders can transform the education system into a potent tool for sustainable development. It is also crucial to recognize the
indispensable role of science and research in shaping educational policies and practices, enhancing evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement, and fostering innovation in educational technologies, learning methodologies and solutions for addressing educational disparities.

60. Investing in education is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity for building a more sustainable, inclusive and equitable future for all.

X. Asia-Pacific regional civil society organization engagement mechanism

61. Almost a decade into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, progress remains alarmingly slow, with most of the targets still out of reach throughout the world. The absence of emphasis on addressing systemic barriers entrenched within social, economic and political structures impedes the full realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. There are widening inequalities and poverty has been exacerbated by debt conditionalities, free trade regimes, regressive tax systems, illicit financial flows, the liberalization of trade and agriculture and the denial of people’s access to resources and services, amid the stark manifestations of the triple planetary crisis of biodiversity loss, pollution and climate change, and against the backdrop of a deepening cost-of-living crisis, resource grabbing, illegal occupation and genocide, patriarchy and fundamentalisms, human rights violations, militarism, increasing corporate capture and shrinking democratic spaces. Beneath these atrocities lies a structurally flawed, neoliberal model of development that prioritizes profits over the well-being of both people and the planet.

62. The Asia-Pacific region faces a myriad of such crises, which are reflected in the Asia and the Pacific Sustainable Development Goals Progress Report 2024 published by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. According to the report, only 11 per cent of the 116 measurable targets are on track to be achieved by 2030, while the region is likely to miss the remaining 89 per cent of targets. With the halfway mark to 2030 having been passed, the report underscores a dismal rate of regional progress of merely 17 per cent, owing to significant stagnation and regression, and indicates that the Goals are not expected to be achieved until 2062. The projection is based on available data. On average, only 52 per cent of the indicators have two or more data points, and more than a third of the indicators lack data altogether. That leaves the region in the precarious unknown of the missing 48 per cent, which is comparable to the situation in other regions of the world with lacklustre progress. The limited scope of the mechanism for reviewing the Goals fails to capture realities on the ground and offers very little insight on what happens after the review or on vertical governance at the regional and global levels to address the challenges that are beyond the jurisdictional capacities of individual Governments. However, according to the Chair’s summary of discussions at the Eleventh Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, there is little to no recognition of the need to inform decision-making at the global level.

63. The convergence of crises underscores the urgent need for fundamental, structural and transformative reforms. In the 2023 political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly, world leaders acknowledged the urgency of the issue but fell short of achieving consensus on critical priorities. The recent focus on the Summit of the Future, which has been proposed as a measure to accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the promise for critical reforms in the outcome document entitled “A Pact for the Future” must deliver on the ambition to mobilize the political will and leadership required to avoid the business-as-usual approach.
However, the emphasis placed on “networked multilateralism” creates the risk of cementing the corporate capture of our policy processes and diverting political will away from the 2030 Agenda.

64. The Asia-Pacific regional civil society organization engagement mechanism refuses to accept the neoliberal model of development and calls upon Governments to prioritize people and the planet over profits by upholding the principles of the right to development, policy coherence and non-regression, leaving no one behind, common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and self-determination, and to curb unilateral coercive measures, in order to promote a holistic, people-centred and rights-based approach to development for all.

XI. Economic Commission for Europe regional civil society engagement mechanism

65. Six years remain in which to implement the 2030 Agenda. Cooperation between member States is the only way to ensure progress in the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region. The negative impacts of rising right-wing populism and xenophobia must end. The shrinking of civic spaces undermines member States’ human rights obligations and imperils the 2030 Agenda.

66. In the ECE region, national gender and anti-discrimination plans must be informed by fully disaggregated data and strengthened by civil society. They should also address global inequalities, integrate asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants, and uphold international humanitarian law.

67. Populations in the ECE region are ageing. The exclusion of widows and the hardships faced by older women and unpaid care workers must be recognized and addressed through interconnected regional strategies.

Goals under review

68. Sustainable Development Goal 1: Key factors include climate crises; conflict; unemployment and working poverty; age discrimination and lack of diversity in the workplace; regressive taxation; lack of investment in social protection and lack of social protection floors.

69. Sustainable Development Goal 2: Key factors include rampant inflation and inflationary food pricing; profiteering by food companies; the impacts of conflict and climate crises on food prices; unacceptable food waste; and the limited reach of humanitarian programmes.

70. Sustainable Development Goal 13: Climate change increases inequalities between and within countries, with people from marginalized groups being among the most exposed. Water scarcity and land degradation are on the rise, urbanization is leading to higher pollution levels and air quality is being degraded. Member States are neither complying with existing laws and regulations nor fulfilling their historical responsibilities. National adaptation plans are not compliant with the Paris Agreement.

71. Sustainable Development Goal 16: This Goal has been jeopardized by increased military spending at the expense of social protection and public services, leaving more and more people behind; conflict, war and illegal occupation; polarized societies; weakened democracies; the rise of right-wing populism and the increase of hate speech; increasing numbers of political prisoners; attacks on environmental activists, trade unionists and human rights defenders; and the lack of access to justice.
72. Sustainable Development Goal 17: Key factors include the misuse of digital technology; surveillance; cyberattacks; and exclusion. Digital regulation threatens the fundamental right of association and restricts people’s online freedoms and activities.

Recommendations to Member States

73. Member States should:
   (a) Enact age-, disability- and gender-inclusive pro-poor policies based on social dialogue, basic income guarantees and fully funded universal social protection;
   (b) Uphold human rights obligations and implement tax policies which redistribute wealth between and within countries;
   (c) Promote decent work in all sectors, including by enforcing statutory minimum wages and equal pay for work of equal value, and recognize and rectify unpaid care work;
   (d) Strengthen regulations in food systems, promote sustainable farming practices and support community actors working with those most left behind;
   (e) Formulate national climate change adaptation plans, with the inclusion of civil society organizations and representatives from marginalized groups as full participants;
   (f) Uphold international humanitarian law obligations and appoint a special rapporteur to investigate the consequences of conflict;
   (g) Guarantee freedom of association, collective bargaining and the right to strike, and ensure access to justice for those left furthest behind;
   (h) End political persecution for peaceful activities;
   (i) Immediately release political prisoners and respect the human rights of environmental defenders and trade unionists;
   (j) Integrate human rights principles, gender equality and intersectionality into the conception, design, development and regulation of digital technologies.

XII. Communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent

74. Comprising over 270 million people worldwide, the equivalent of what would be the population of the fifth-largest country on Earth, communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent face stigmatization related to notions of “impurity”, “uncleanness” and “pollution”. This results in segregation, endogamy, limited access to public services and infrastructure, harassment and violence, including sexual violence against women and girls, and the risk of slavery or bonded labour.

75. Communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent face systemic marginalization and include groups such as the Roma in Europe, the Dalits and burakumin in Asia, the Haratine in Africa and the Quilombolas in South America. The discrimination they experience is based on caste or similar forms of inherited social status or descent and is often linked to stigmatized ancestral occupations or exploitative forms of labour.

76. In relation to the Sustainable Development Goals, the status of communities who experience discrimination based on work or descent reveals significant challenges, which leave them behind in terms of all the Goals.
Sustainable Development Goal 1

77. Discrimination, limited access to opportunities, economic exploitation, lack of social protection, limited mobility, lack of access to education and landlessness deprive communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent from enjoying basic socioeconomic rights.

78. The practice of manually cleaning excrement from private and public dry toilets and open drains persists in several parts of South Asia. Across much of India, consistent with centuries-old feudal and caste-based custom, women from communities that have traditionally worked as manual scavengers still collect human waste on a daily basis, load it into cane baskets or metal troughs, and carry it away on their heads for disposal on the outskirts of the settlement. 7

79. In several African countries, hereditary slavery continues to affect some communities. The Haratine are one such community, whose members often remain dependent upon former “masters” because of their limited skills and lack of alternative economic opportunities. 8 Women belonging to communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent, such as those within the devadasi and trokosi systems, face extreme poverty and social exclusion, and are forced to perform sexual labour in the form of ritualistic forms of sexual slavery and prostitution.

80. In Europe, 80 per cent of Roma people in the surveyed countries were at risk of poverty, with 54 per cent of Roma children living in a household in severe material deprivation. 9

Sustainable Development Goal 2

81. Across the globe, the disruption of livelihoods, limited access to food and barriers to health care and nutrition in the post-COVID-19 context have led to increased food insecurity for communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent. Nearly 56 per cent of women who are part of such communities in India are anaemic, while the national average is 53 per cent. A study conducted in Turkey in 2022 found that an estimated 2.5 million to 5 million Roma people living in Turkey suffered from extreme levels of poverty and malnutrition. 10 Similarly, the prevalence of food insecurity is extremely high (86 per cent) among the Quilombolas.

Sustainable Development Goal 13

82. Climate change disproportionately affects communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent, exacerbating existing social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities. Displacement due to climate change has an impact on these communities, often resulting in loss of livelihoods, poverty and limited access to health services, water and a clean environment, which often leads to forced

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labour. In the presence of inequalities, discrimination and marginalization, communities exhibit lower resilience to external shocks resulting from climate change impacts. This heightened precariousness amplifies vulnerability to all forms of discrimination.

**Sustainable Development Goal 16**

83. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing inequalities and vulnerabilities, magnifying the challenges faced by communities who experience discrimination based on work and descent. The Roma community is often faced with investigators who refuse to investigate hate crimes and prosecutors who refuse to prosecute cases concerning the breach of constitutional rights. Atrocities against Dalits have increased in South Asia in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era.

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

84. In an era of unprecedented global challenges, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) stakeholder group emphasizes the critical importance of delivering on the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty. The group’s collective commitment to sustainable development means approaching intersecting issues while fostering inclusivity and resilience to enable LGBTI people to participate to their full potential.

**Sustainable Development Goal 1**

85. LGBTI persons are at a disproportionate risk of facing poverty due to systemic discrimination, marginalization and a lack of social and legal protection. Policies must be designed to promote economic inclusion and social safety nets among persons with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions and sex characteristics. Ensuring that no one is left behind can be achieved only if LGTBI organizations, families and communities are actively included in efforts to tackle barriers to accessing employment, education, health care and housing.

**Sustainable Development Goal 2**

86. Access to adequate and nutritious food, which is a fundamental human right, is hindered by food insecurity, which disproportionately affects LGBTI individuals, especially those who are also members of other marginalized communities, including young people, migrants, older persons, persons with disabilities, women and girls, Indigenous Persons, lesbian, bisexual and queer people and transgender people. Discrimination restricts their access to employment and social services, exacerbating hunger and malnutrition. To achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2, there must be targeted interventions that address the unique needs of LGBTI communities, ensuring access to food, agricultural resources and inclusive livelihood opportunities.

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12 The term LGBTI is used in the present document as shorthand for persons of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics, in recognition of the many words used in different cultures and by persons to reflect who they are.
Sustainable Development Goal 13

87. Climate change poses significant risks of loss and damage, exacerbating poverty and inequality globally. LGBTI people are vulnerable due to social stigma, displacement and limited access to resources. Effective climate action must be intersectional, integrating LGBTI perspectives into mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Sustainable Development Goal 16

88. LGBTI persons face barriers to accessing justice due to criminalization, discrimination and violence. Military conflicts and the abetting of violent dictatorships and occupations destabilize institutions responsible for service provision and drive the displacement of LGBTI individuals. Governments must repeal anti-LGBTI laws, enforce laws protecting the human rights of LGBTI people and enact hate crime legislation. Inclusive institutions and dialogue between Governments and LGBTI civil society organizations are essential to build a foundation for lasting peace and justice.

Sustainable Development Goal 17

89. LGBTI populations play a vital role in driving positive change and in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Meaningful engagement with LGBTI persons and all relevant stakeholders in sustainable development is necessary for the realization of a sustainable future predicated on inclusive and equitable development justice for all.

90. In order to effectively address Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17, marginalized groups, such as LGBTI populations, must be included in solutions that ensure a more resilient and prosperous world that leaves no one behind.

XIV. Civil society financing for development mechanism

91. The civil society financing for development mechanism welcomes the decision of the General Assembly to convene the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in 2025. The Conference will provide a critical opportunity for Member States to implement the following systemic solutions for addressing the broken global economic architecture:

   (a) Establish a multilateral legal framework under the auspices of the United Nations that would comprehensively address unsustainable and illegitimate debt, including through extensive debt cancellation. Current ad-hoc international initiatives to address debt crises are insufficient and systemic solutions are vital to avoid devastating impacts, especially on developing countries. The United Nations, with its core mandate to address critical global issues, is neither a debtor nor a creditor. Accordingly, it is the only inclusive multilateral and democratic space that has the legitimacy and competence to define a multilateral legal framework to prevent and address sovereign debt crises;

   (b) Agree on a United Nations framework convention on international tax cooperation to comprehensively address tax havens, tax abuse by multinational corporations and other illicit financial flows. The civil society financing for development mechanism welcomes the historic decision by the General Assembly to start intergovernmental negotiations towards a United Nations framework convention on international tax cooperation. The mechanism therefore calls upon all Member States to support and engage in the process;
(c) Agree on terminating investor-State dispute settlement mechanisms. Member States should formulate a multilateral agreement for a coordinated and permanent termination of investor-State dispute settlement mechanisms that have empowered transnational corporations to sue Governments in confidential tribunals on a range of issues, including debt, tax and, increasingly, climate action;

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

(e) Accelerate the implementation of official development assistance commitments to fulfil and exceed the 0.7 per cent target for such assistance in the form of unconditional grants. It is vital that long-standing commitments on international development assistance be realized and commitments secured to make up for the shortfall in unfulfilled targets of the past years. Broader vulnerability indicators must also be considered, beyond per capita income, to include middle-income countries in development financing programmes;

(f) Assess the 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. This includes the regulation and supervision of credit rating agencies, a global regulatory framework for the asset management industry and a global agreement on capital account management;

(g) Establish a global technology assessment mechanism at the United Nations. There is an urgent need for transparent and inclusive Member State-led deliberations on the current and potential impacts of digital and emerging technologies on the environment, the labour market, tax policy, livelihoods and society;

(h) Ensure fiscal space and the scaling up of international cooperation for decent job creation and universal social protection in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and ILO standards. The COVID-19 pandemic illustrated the importance of ensuring adequate fiscal space to extend social protection systems and offer universal coverage with social protection floors in line with ILO standards.

XV. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030

92. Over the past three years, the world has encountered unprecedented challenges, including the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and record-breaking temperatures worldwide. Correspondingly, communities have grappled with climate-related disasters, further underscoring the urgent need to develop appropriate policies and countermeasures at all levels.

93. The recommendations outlined below have been formulated by the Sendai stakeholder engagement mechanism and encompass the combined inputs of the 17 stakeholder constituencies. By considering the viewpoints of various stakeholders, these recommendations are designed to embody a comprehensive and inclusive approach to disaster risk reduction and its profound relation with climate change.
**Full integration of disaster risk reduction in the climate change agenda**

94. Governments, the United Nations system, non-State actors and other stakeholders should fully incorporate disaster risk reduction as a crucial element of their climate strategies.

95. Vulnerability, which is one social aspect of disaster risk, stems from the inadequate management of the interaction between hazards and communities’ exposure to them. Given that climate change implies the emergence, intensification and more frequent occurrence of potential natural hazards, it is vital to strengthen strategies for building resilience and promote collaborative efforts through a comprehensive, society-centred approach. This involves confronting uncertainty and urgency with robust prospective, preventive, reactive and compensatory measures.

**Just financing of disaster risk management**

96. Allocating resources to disaster risk management offers a distinctive and cost-effective base for supporting climate change adaptation and climate justice.

97. Sufficient public funding for disaster risk management is vital for developing and deploying comprehensive, accessible and life-saving tools aimed at reducing disaster risk. Investing in accessible multi-hazard early warning systems and offering technical assistance to vulnerable and marginalized communities, particularly those in the global South, will help to address historical injustices and enhance resilience.

98. Furthermore, the effective engagement of locally led civil society organizations representing vulnerable populations is crucial. In other words, the participation of groups such as women, children, young people, persons with disabilities, migrants, displaced persons, Indigenous Peoples and older persons needs to be prioritized. In addition, locally driven initiatives play a significant role in bolstering resilience and ensuring that solutions align with specific needs and are effective in maximizing investments. Therefore, it is imperative that public financing, along with support from the private sector and multilateral entities, be directed towards empowering civil society, engaging intersectional groups in climate action and strengthening disaster risk reduction efforts.

**Immediate operationalization of loss and damage measures**

99. Despite increased attention to leaving no one behind, efforts to address the vulnerabilities of the communities and individuals most at risk remain inadequate. To avoid leaving anyone behind, it is essential to prioritize enhanced investments for addressing 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.

100. Following the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the timely operationalization of a dedicated loss and damage fund to fulfil climate justice objectives and provide tangible assistance to communities cannot be underestimated, and this process ought to be conducted independently, immediately, on the basis of grants, predictably and adequately. Furthermore, the promotion of transparency and access to finance ought to be aimed at fulfilling obligations and providing tangible assistance to communities affected by climate change. This underscores the commitment to upholding climate justice and ensuring an equitable response. It is crucial that this operationalization be conducted immediately and in a transparent manner, without the introduction of new risks to any of the stakeholders, and in full, comprehensive collaboration with the Santiago network for averting, minimizing and
addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change and its technical assistance capacities.

XVI. Together 2030

101. The 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development needs to add one primary goal to its annual session, namely to set high ambitions for the Summit of the Future.

102. Although the Summit of the Future and the follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals are different processes, the links between them are strong and need to be clearly established. It will not be possible to accelerate and deliver on the Goals without ensuring that international multilateralism has the tools required to do so, a task that should be undertaken at the Summit.

103. Areas of particular interest that are aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals under in-depth review and that can contribute to setting standards for the Summit of the Future include:

(a) On Goal 1: Aside from the failure to reduce poverty globally, new forms of poverty are emerging. One such form that is particularly worrying is “digital poverty”, which implies that millions of people are not benefiting from digital technologies, leading to increased inequalities within and between countries. The vulnerable groups that Member States promised to prioritize in the 2030 Agenda, including children and people with disabilities, will be the most affected;

(b) On Goal 2: The current global hunger crisis is alarming and malnutrition continues to be an underlying factor in most childhood deaths. Despite commitments to address the nutrition targets set by Member States, little progress has been made. The high-level political forum on sustainable development should send a strong message for the Summit of the Future to prioritize addressing the issue of hunger globally;

(c) On Goal 13: It is critical to keep pushing for more decisive action against climate change and to create new financing lines to address its impacts. The international community must prioritize fighting climate change disinformation in its efforts to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. The high-level political forum on sustainable development should push for the Summit of the Future to ensure that climate financing is a central theme at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in 2025;

(d) On 16: There is an urgent need to reform the multilateral institutions, including the international financial institutions. Without improved financing for development and climate change, it will be impossible to accelerate the achievement of the Goals. At the same time, if the United Nations cannot implement its own reform, it will not be in a position to ask other institutions to do the same. The high-level political forum on sustainable development should state clearly that the United Nations will not be able to accelerate the achievement of the Goals without changing the institutions and working methods of its main bodies, a responsibility that must be upheld by the Summit of the Future;

(e) On Goal 17: Civil society faces increased obstacles to participating in Member State-led processes, with conference rooms being closed to its representatives. Member States should revert to previous practices immediately. To accelerate the achievement of the Goals, there should be greater participation and transparency and more defined stakeholder engagement mechanisms.
104. Finally, the high-level political forum on sustainable development should explore ways of pushing for more solid statistical systems in developing countries because it will not be possible to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals without data. In addition, consideration should be given to addressing issues that were not considered in the 2030 Agenda, such as artificial intelligence, which, nevertheless, have a direct impact on the achievement of the Goals.