

26 July 2024

**Summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council of the
high-level political forum on sustainable development
convened under the auspices of the Council at its 2024 session**

I. Introduction

The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, met from 8 to 17 July at United Nations Headquarters in New York. This included the three-day ministerial segment of the forum from 15 to 17 July, as part of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, which concluded on 18 July.

The 2024 HLPF was the first meeting of the forum after the 2023 SDG Summit. It focused on follow up to the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit, addressing the theme “*Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions*”. Participants expressed deep concerns that the SDGs are off-track, and highlighted transformative and innovative solutions, strengthening means of implementation, reform of the international financing institutions, and partnerships among all stakeholders for advancing the SDGs in the remaining years toward 2030. They also looked forward to the Summit of the Future in September 2024 and emphasized its significance in taking progress forward from the SDG Summit to the year 2030.

Without prejudice to the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the Goals, the Forum conducted an in-depth review of the following five SDGs: no poverty (Goal 1); zero hunger (Goal 2); climate action (Goal 13); peace justice and strong institutions (Goal 16); and partnerships for the Goals and their interlinkages with the other Goals (Goal 17).

The Forum also comprehensively addressed challenges faced by countries in special situations, including SIDS in follow-up to the fourth international Conference on Small Island Developing States, and the special needs of countries in Africa, LDCs, LLDCs and MICs. The Forum shared good practices and experiences of actions for achieving the SDGs at the local and regional levels, and heard messages from the UN Environment Assembly, and perspectives of the major groups and other stakeholders on strengthening partnerships for urgent and transformative actions for the SDGs. Other sessions also heard reporting from the ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum and the STI Forum.

Thirty-six countries presented voluntary national reviews, of which two were presenting for the first time. One hundred ninety countries have now presented VNRs. A list of countries that presented their reviews is contained in the annex. Overall, the VNRs demonstrated further deepening of data and indicators, maturing of institutional frameworks, and more inclusive engagement with stakeholders. Also notable was that several countries continued to address the localization of the SDGs, including through voluntary local reviews.

An in-person general debate that included 176 interventions was held from 15 to 17 July. The debate was focused on the theme “*From the SDG Summit to the Summit of the Future*”. It provided

an opportunity for ministers and high-level representatives of participating States, as well as representatives of intergovernmental organizations, entities of the United Nations system, major groups and other stakeholders, to address challenges to realizing the 2030 Agenda, highlight national initiatives for SDG implementation and look to the Summit of the Future in September 2024.

Three Heads of Government, five Deputy Prime Ministers and more than 80 Ministers and other ministerial level officials attended the meeting. One-hundred-and-twenty-five high-level speakers presented their views in the opening, townhall meeting and thematic panels, including the President of the General Assembly, Deputy Secretary-General, former Heads of State, Heads of Government, Ministers, the UN system principals, distinguished experts, and representatives of the major groups and other stakeholders (MGOS), including the private sector and youth. Continuing the pattern of civil society interest, around 1,000 participants from MGoS and NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC attended the forum. A large number of other events were organized in the margins of the HLPF, including 236 side events (162 in-person, 74 virtual), 13 special events, 13 VNR Labs, and 13 on-site exhibitions.

II. Key messages from the General Debate on “*From the SDG Summit to the Summit of the Future*”

- i) Countries continue to face ongoing international challenges, including geopolitical tensions, conflict, climate change, and economic, social and environmental challenges, that hinder progress on the SDGs. The multilateral system is at an inflection point, underlining the demands for international action and reform.
- ii) The Summit of the Future, to be convened in September 2024, is a critical opportunity to undertake further actions for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and to reinvigorate multilateralism and international policy coherence for advancing sustainable development. The Summit needs to create an ambitious and action-oriented Pact for the Future to address global challenges effectively.
- iii) The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs serve as a shared framework for global responses to geopolitical and sustainable development challenges. The Summit of the Future can “future-proof” the SDGs while further mobilizing partnerships based on the SDGs.
- iv) The Summit of the Future needs to send a strong political message and signal on the need to reform multilateral institutions based on the SDGs and to contribute to a restoration of trust.
- v) The international finance architecture needs reform, including the implementation and integration of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. There is need for debt alleviation to enable public spending on sustainable development and for further implementation of the SDG Stimulus Plan. There is also a need for the delivery of climate financing commitments.
- vi) Poverty is the greatest global challenge facing the world today and requires special attention from the international community. More than 333 million children are living in extreme poverty. Poverty eradication is linked to the other SDGs and cannot be achieved without

strong institutions and partnerships. There is need for targeting root causes of intergenerational cycles of poverty and conflict.

- vii) The triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss is compounded by conflict and weaknesses in the multilateral system. The world is at a crossroads challenging multilateralism, cooperation, and solidarity.
- viii) A gender lens in financing for development and foreign policy approaches is needed, as are the positive contributions of women's participation in sustainable development, peace processes and democratic institutions.
- ix) Meaningful and equitable youth participation at all levels is also needed.
- x) Many national initiatives are underway as well as forthcoming developments for implementing the SDGs. Strong national ownership of the Goals and their incorporation into national development plans in collaboration with partners remains fundamental. The role of localization is a way of bridging local realities with the global agenda.

III. Key messages from the Forum

- a) Now is a critical moment for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. Momentum from the SDG Summit in 2023 is being carried forward, while the forthcoming Summit of the Future offers a new opportunity to advance SDG implementation and to restore trust and human solidarity in the face of multiple crises.
- b) With only 17 percent of the SDG targets on track to be achieved, action is needed to implement integrated and holistic policies for accelerating transformative and inclusive strategies to bridge the gaps in SDG achievement.
- c) Bold action on peace and finance are required. Without peace there is no sustainable development. Accelerating SDG implementation in the face of multiple crises also requires adequate financing and engaging the whole of society so that no one is left behind.
- d) Multilateralism is the effective way forward. The upcoming Summit of the Future, Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, and second World Summit for Social Development are critical milestones for advancing the SDGs.
- e) Significant elements underpinning the means of implementing the 2030 Agenda include finance, policies, and institutional arrangements and capabilities which serve as crucial to drive transitions forward.
- f) Implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs means putting people first. There is need for ensuring greater respect for human rights and a just transition centering on people and a sustainable planet for future generations.
- g) Addressing the causes of poverty requires policies designed to address synergies across the SDGs, and policy approaches that consider the multidimensional nature of poverty. Debt restructuring and forgiveness are needed, as many countries are forced to divert expenditures on essential service provision towards debt repayments. Successful measures to address

poverty have raised further related issues, including the need to address political will and structural factors.

- h) There is persistent global food insecurity in the face of multiple global crises and conflicts. An estimated 20 per cent of children under five will suffer from stunting in 2030. National and sub-national programmes to eliminate hunger and transform food systems remain vital, yet recurring challenges are the lack of access to finance, credit, and capacity. Global solidarity and partnerships is required to strengthen the resilience of food systems.
- i) Current national policies set the world on track for 3°C warming. Urgent action on climate change can positively impact other SDGs, including on water, poverty, energy, and employment. The growing impact of climate-related disasters across the world is profoundly concerning and shared national and regional initiatives designed to boost climate action are required, including the adoption of disaster risk reduction strategies.
- j) To tackle ongoing multiple crises, an intersectional, holistic and coherent approach needs to be applied while building strong, inclusive and responsive public institutions. Transparency, accountability and efficiency need to be enhanced to rebuild public trust. There is an urgent need to galvanize innovative and concrete action while providing sufficient means of implementation and revitalizing multi-stakeholder partnerships, multilateralism and trust in intergovernmental institutions.
- k) There is need for a reform of the international financial architecture to make it fit for purpose. Lack of access to capital markets at affordable rates is an ongoing challenge for many countries that are most in need of financial allocations for sustainable development. High interest rates are punitive and debt servicing is prohibitive, with the latter being maintained by taking from budgets for healthcare, education, and welfare services.
- l) National and multilateral STI initiatives can be instrumental, as well statistics and evidence-based decision-making, and need increased resource mobilization. Increased governance is required around AI, with the need to tackle misinformation and discrimination.
- m) The Regional Forums on Sustainable Development provide unique spaces to review progress, challenges, and opportunities for accelerated implementation of the Goals, and also provide opportunities for establishing partnerships, which are crucial to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- n) The SDGs require localization and imply a bottom-up approach. As the local level is closest to the people and directly addresses their needs, political will and investment at this level is essential. Policy coherence is needed to meet the top-down efforts of global and national action.
- o) Small-island developing states are at a critical juncture in their ongoing battle with rising sea-levels, accessing development finance, and living with unsustainable debt. International support for official development assistance and concessional development financing for SIDS is required.

- p) African countries, LDCs, and LLDCs face severe economic vulnerabilities, high levels of poverty, limited access to essential services, and substantial impacts from climate change. These structural challenges hinder their progress towards achieving the SDGs.
- q) MICs are key for achieving the SDGs and can be a lever for regional and global development, peace and stability. A shift is needed to ensure inclusive international development cooperation and facilitate access to low-cost external financing at scale and debt relief.
- r) Civil society actors are vital partners for the implementation and achievement of the SDGs, often represent those who are at risk of being left behind.
- s) The Vice-President (Kazakhstan) of the Council shared messages from the ECOSOC system. These included the need for strengthening ECOSOC capacity to provide transformative policy guidance at a time of unprecedented crises. The messages also highlighted the need for food systems reform, climate resilience, reform of the international financial architecture, and consideration of the ethical aspects of governance in the realm of artificial intelligence.

IV. Ministerial Declaration

The 2024 HLPF adopted a Ministerial Declaration that identifies current challenges, and future actions and investment pathways to reinforce the 2030 Agenda and deliver on the SDGs. The Declaration builds on the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit and looks forward to the Summit of the Future in September 2024 as an important opportunity to, among other objectives, accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.

The Declaration addresses the current situation and challenges to achieve the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. It expresses concern about the persistent and long-term impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, continued poverty and widening inequalities, and the multiple interlinked crises that are pushing our world to the brink, particularly in developing countries and for the poorest and most vulnerable.

It pledges to redouble efforts to achieve a more sustainable and inclusive world and stresses the commitment of States to bold, ambitious, accelerated, just and transformative action to implement the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in the six years leading up to 2030. It reaffirms that international cooperation, multilateralism and international solidarity at all levels are the best way to address the global challenges that the world is facing.

The Declaration provides guidance on the 2024 theme by providing actions and investment pathways to support the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions for reinforcing the 2030 Agenda, accelerating poverty eradication and achieving all the Sustainable Development Goals. This includes specific priority actions for implementing SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16, and 17, which were under in-depth review during this year's HLPF.

The Declaration commends the 36 countries that presented national voluntary reviews and encourages all countries to use the key findings of the VNRs and the sharing of locally driven development approaches and pathway to accelerate actions to implement the 2030 Agenda.

V. From the SDG Summit to the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions

There was convergence among participants that this is a watershed moment. While there are some positive developments, SDG achievement has been severely compromised by the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, climate change, and other factors, as well as insufficient implementation of commitments. Conflicts are a major factor holding the SDGs back, yet aggravated poverty and inequality are also building blocks of further conflict. There is, therefore, a need not only to accelerate SDG action but to transform it, moving away from business as usual, with the engagement of the whole of society and all levels of government, leaving no one behind.

Speakers referred to the six transitions identified during the 2023 SDG Summit that can have catalytic and multiplier effects across the SDGs, and that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls has a cross cutting impact across all other SDGs. There is a particular need for transformative action and multilateral reform in the area of financing, given persistent and aggravating challenges such as shrinking fiscal space and unprecedented levels of debt, as well as other areas. Transformations in governments and governance are needed, including to augment respect for human rights and the rule of law, as well as greater awareness of the SDGs, including among public servants. The transformative power of data has an essential role in evidence-based policy making and monitoring progress towards the SDGs. The Summit of the Future is an opportunity to advance on reforms of the international financial system and revitalize the multilateral system.

Participants referred to the importance of international cooperation in structural transformation, human capital development and innovation capacities, and to the potential of technology and the role of partnerships. Stronger solidarity, especially for LDCs, is needed in the implementation of the SDGs and the commitments of the SDG Summit and to promote peace and security through diplomatic conflict resolution and prevention. Achieving sustainable development and strengthening resilience of societies also require both a short-term and a long-term perspective in public policymaking. Fostering youth engagement is needed in national and international efforts towards sustainable development, and there is a need to look beyond 2030 and use the SDGs as a policy framework for the future.

VI. Review of progress on Goals 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17 and interlinkages with other SDGs

Goal 1: No poverty

Participants agreed that eradication of poverty in all its forms was the greatest global challenge and an overarching goal of the 2030 Agenda. They stressed the importance of prioritizing pro-poor social expenditures in national budgeting decisions on health, education and social protection based on human rights, setting national targets to reduce multidimensional poverty index and monitoring progress, and implement policies and programmes that consider the interlinkages of the SDGs. The importance of inclusive growth as an engine that will accelerate progress was highlighted. Countries had taken significant steps to combat poverty by focusing on achieving universal coverage in critical areas of education, nutrition, water, sanitation, employment, and/or housing.

Development must respect all communities and the environment, including by ensuring the involvement of those most vulnerable in the design and decision-making processes and allowing all citizens without discrimination to have equal access to services and opportunities, representation and rights within societies. Special attention must be given to the discrimination of marginalized communities including those discriminated against on the basis of work or descent, and those living in poverty due to historical injustice and exploitation. Participants also stressed the need for gender equality and gender-responsive programmes and policies. This required eliminating discriminatory laws governing work, property and families, recognizing and rewarding women's contributions in agriculture and in the informal economy, transforming care and support systems and inclusive participation in labour market, decision-making and leaderships. A people-centered approach to justice systems could empower people with the tools and knowledge to claim their rights and participate in decision-making.

Investment in productive capacity of the poor and developing human capital were emphasized as critical drivers to eradicate poverty. Participants highlighted the need to prioritize economic sectors that create decent and better-quality jobs, invest in human capital through education and training to bridge digital and knowledge divides, enhance skills and risk resiliency, support small and medium-sized enterprises with grants and low-interest rates loan and utilize cultural resources to strengthen creative economies. The LDCs stressed the importance of creating digital infrastructure and transferring appropriate technology to enable them to leverage science, technology and innovation to bring transformation in agriculture, industry, service, health and education. Strengthened partnerships and scaled up regional and international cooperation for developing countries, including South-South and Triangular cooperation, remained crucial in the quest to reduce poverty.

Goal 2: Zero hunger

The Forum reiterated that multiple global crises, including conflict, climate change, continued effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic slowdown, increasing food prices, as well as structural inequalities were impacting the implementation of SDG 2, highlighting its clear interlinkages with other SDGs. In particular, vulnerable people, such as children, women, indigenous people, and those forcibly displaced, were most likely to face hunger and food insecurity. Some participants also pointed out that not only rural areas, but also urban areas were experiencing malnutrition. Additionally, the Forum noted that stunted children suffer lower cognitive, social, and emotional skills and lower level of educational attainment, leading to lifelong effects on their well-being and economic productivity.

Recognizing the multidimensional aspects of SDG 2, the Forum emphasized the importance of a multi-sectoral approach, which engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society, among others. It was suggested that such an approach should take into account the different perspectives, including biodiversity, diversification of food resources, human rights, gender equality, animal welfare, and food waste reduction.

There was an agreement that financing plays a key role in ending hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all forms. Many participants recognized the need for a policy framework

facilitating evidence-based policymaking for effective and sustainable investments and the transformation of various systems related to food security and nutrition, including those for agriculture, health, trade, and food production. It was agreed that the innovative solutions and digitalization were essential for sustainable and resilient agriculture. Speakers encouraged member states to utilize international platforms for capacity building, knowledge exchange, strengthened global cooperation, and sustained collective action to keep eliminating hunger at the center of the agenda.

Goal 13: Climate action

With 2023 being the hottest year on record and global emissions at unprecedented levels, the Forum expressed deep concern over the severely off-track progress on SDG13 for climate action, emphasizing the urgency for elevated global actions on mitigation and adaptation at the same time. The Forum was in consensus with the urgency of emission reduction and achieving net zero by transitioning all sectors and utilizing all forms of low carbon energy sources. Many participants stressed the need to scale up adaptation efforts, particularly in risk management and loss and damage control, for those most impacted by climate change, including SIDS, LDCs and the most vulnerable.

There is a need to ensure a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach in climate action to harmonize synergies with SDGs and ensure a just transition to carbon neutrality. Many speakers also called for addressing the triple planetary crises holistically, enhancing synergies in the Rio Conventions and other multilateral agreements, and adopting nature-based solutions like climate-smart agriculture, forest conservation and restoration. Countries and stakeholders reported and stressed the effective use of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to be updated by early 2025 to elevate national climate actions. Adoption of climate-related legal frameworks reported by some countries were recommended as an approach to mobilize public and private actors. The private sector's role in climate actions was emphasized. Localization approach, city-level actions, community-led programme, early warning systems, innovative tools and awareness-raising practices were reported as effective for risk prevention and building resilience.

Despite efforts in mobilizing climate finance, the Forum agreed that financing for climate action fell largely short of what was required. Some speakers recommended the adoption of innovative climate financing mechanisms, such as climate swaps, new regimes for debt cancellation, and actions to reform international financial institutions. Capacity building and climate-friendly technology transfer were also highlighted as areas requiring critical support. Innovation and partnerships at all levels were also considered important for implementation of climate action.

Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

Participants agreed that implementing SDG16 was key to building peaceful, just, and inclusive institutions and societies. SDG 16 was an enabler of the entire 2030 Agenda and synergies with other SDGs had to be reinforced. Given the lack of progress regarding SDG16 and the entire 2030 Agenda, there was a need to galvanize innovative and concrete action at the upcoming Summit of the Future. Participants expressed concerns about the ongoing multiple crises and global conflicts,

particularly affecting women, children, refugees, and other vulnerable groups, hampering SDG progress and enhancing inequalities. Some participants called for ending all conflicts, including through dialogue, negotiation, and diplomacy. Violence in all forms had to be eradicated and vulnerable groups protected, especially women and children, including from online abuse and sexual exploitation.

There was a need to strengthen public institutions, among others, by equipping them with clear mandates and sufficient human and financial resources and by undertaking capacity-building measures at the national and subnational level. Public institutions should be people-centered, inclusive and responsive. Transparency, accountability and efficiency had to be enhanced to rebuild public trust and empower people. This could, among others, be undertaken by improving data collection, data availability and data quality, undertaking digitalization of government and ensuring access to new technologies and public information. In addition, effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms and oversight by independent audit institutions as well as independent media and civil society organizations had to be ensured to hold government accountable. Participants also emphasized the need to combat corruption, money laundering, organized crime, terrorism, illicit financial and arms flows and illicit trafficking.

Democracy and the rule of law had to be upheld and strengthened, access to justice ensured, including by offering free legal aid, judicial independence ensured, and human rights protected and promoted. The participants noted the need to break working in silos and enhance multi-stakeholder collaboration, involving all relevant stakeholders and preserving civic space, while increasing international cooperation. Women, children, the youth, persons with disability, refugees and other vulnerable groups should be seen as agents of change and had to be empowered and more involved in national and global discussions, decision-making and peacebuilding processes. Multilateralism and trust in intergovernmental institutions had to urgently be revitalized.

Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Unlocking investment in the SDGs

Speakers acknowledged the critical need of unlocking investment to close the financing gap of the Sustainable Development Goals. They pointed out multiple and interrelated challenges regarding mobilizing resources to finance the broader development agenda in particular the SDG, including to redistribute resources more effectively within and between nations and regions, and to unlock the bottlenecks hindering investment flows. Speakers noted that incentives to affordable finance must be put in place. The Integrated National Financing Frameworks were a way to help governments assess how they were financing the SDGs. Creativity, pragmatism and incentive alignment could be useful as governments and investors considered how to best accelerate their ability to finance the SDGs. The speakers stressed that it was critical to have a reformed international financial architecture that responded to the most pressing global challenges in a more effective and inclusive manner, and to leverage MDBs to mobilize additional resources for developing countries.

Speakers called for an enabling environment for SDG-aligned investment, prioritizing SDGs in the national budgets, and reform on the Multilateral Development Banks to make them fit for

purpose, to scale up financing capacity and mobilize all the necessary resources. They highlighted the need for maximizing blended financing and other innovative financing mechanisms to close the financing gap. Member States expressed support for the process of the United Nations Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation to foster tax cooperation and address Illicit Financial Flows. They also stressed the importance of enhancing efficiency in domestic revenue mobilization to increase tax revenue and reduce reliance on donor finances and ensuring transparency and accountability in public resources allocation and budget execution.

Member States pointed out that the upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development provided a unique opportunity to address concrete measures on the flow of finance towards the developing countries, especially the LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, as well as to address the financial challenges, including debt crisis, and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Science, technology and innovation: triggering transformation and sustaining a science-driven recovery

Participants emphasized the critical importance of science, technology, and innovation (STI) in addressing global challenges and achieving the SDGs, highlighting the need for sustainable, resilient, and innovative solutions to drive transformative changes and sustained science-driven solutions. Participants highlighted the focus on artificial intelligence and climate change, stressing the importance of multidisciplinary and socially robust innovation. Participants also emphasized the importance of data as an economic asset, the need for collaborative efforts over competition in the AI race, the implementation of STI roadmaps and action plans at various levels, and the critical role of international collaboration and science diplomacy in driving sustainable and inclusive development.

Participants emphasized the need for increased funding and capacity building for SDG-related research and innovation, especially in low and middle-income countries. They called for integrating the needs and voices of marginalized communities, such as women and girls, in science and technology policies, highlighting the impact of the digital divide. The need for responsible AI deployment, addressing issues like misinformation and discrimination, and incorporating a gender perspective in technology development was also highlighted.

The role of STI in diversifying education and occupational choices was highlighted, with an emphasis on women's involvement in STI and international cooperation for sustainable development. The significance of higher education and research-based innovation in bridging gaps in STI through international cooperation was also stressed. The need for increased investment in generating targeted technological solutions to tackle global development challenges through a roadmap approach as well as science-policy interface was underscored, along with the integration of traditional knowledge systems with STI for sustainable food systems.

VII. Thematic review of progress

1. Messages from the regions

Regional cooperation and approaches were deemed vital in addressing local and global challenges, by supporting countries scale up actions, mobilizing financial and technical resources, and aligning regional actions with global commitments. The Regional Forums on Sustainable Development mobilized engagement of Member States and other stakeholders ahead of the Summit of the Future. Speakers highlighted the opportunity the Summit offers in strengthening multilateral cooperation in support of sustainable development across all regions. The Summit must be inclusive, where representatives from all regions, particularly the global South, as well as civil society, including those with linguistic barriers, and all stakeholders can participate effectively.

Speakers identified several key issues from a regional perspective. Digital technologies and science, technology and innovation have a significant potential to advance the achievement of the SDGs. Speakers stressed the importance of closing the digital gap, by building digital skills, especially among youth, reforming education systems to meet labour market demands, investing in digital infrastructure, and promoting digital governance. Quality data and statistics remain indispensable to achieving the SDGs. Speakers also highlighted the importance of localization, noting the need for locally relevant synergistic coherence and integrative strategies and voluntary local reviews foster forward-thinking and inclusive governments.

Financing for the SDGs calls for substantial reform of the international financial architecture to be fit for purpose, including by enhancing the representation of developing countries in IFIs, reform of the G20 Common Framework, and advancing the SDG stimulus. Many speakers highlighted the importance of developing transparent and accountable institutions and public administration, strengthening multilevel governance, and strengthening access to justice. The interlinkages of Goal 16 and 17, particularly in relation to policy coherence, were also noted.

2. Transformation from the ground up: acting at the local level

Speakers focused on the transformative potential of local and regional action in accelerating SDG implementation. There was a consensus that local governments, which are closest to the people and can address disparities directly, play a central and essential role in achieving the SDGs. The importance of a local ownership approach to SDG implementation was stressed. Participants agreed that local authorities could have a larger role in national and international discussions, where greater attention could be devoted to local perspectives.

Representatives highlighted that while significant progress has been made, much more needs to be done to ensure that vulnerable and marginalized communities, including migrants, have access to basic services. These communities should be actively involved in designing their future, contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. Many participants noted the value of the Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs). The practice of carrying out VLRs and VSRs has brought many benefits, including helping to identify and fill critical data gaps, though more work is needed in this area.

Participation at the local level is vital for creating inclusive and effective policies. SDG implementation can be driven from the ground up. Local communities offer innovative solutions, such as agroecology and community-based climate initiatives, which should be supported and scaled up by governments and the private sector.

3. SIDS

The presentation by the Vice President of ECOSOC emphasized the unique challenges faced by Small Island Developing States (SIDS), particularly their delayed progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) due to climate change, limited access to finance, and unsustainable debt levels. Half of the SIDS are experiencing a decline in progress towards the SDGs. Decisive political action was needed to address the climate emergency and support SIDS' sustainable development. The international community needed to act swiftly and prioritize the disbursement of climate finance, streamline access to funds, and operationalize the SIDS Centre of Excellence.

The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS: A Renewed Declaration for Resilient Prosperity (ABAS) was identified as a crucial roadmap for SIDS' sustainable development. Samoa underscored the importance of developing a robust implementation, monitoring, and evaluation framework for the ABAS, with a deadline set for the second quarter of 2025. Participants emphasized the roles of the UN system, international financial institutions, and multilateral development banks in supporting SIDS through partnerships, capacity building, targeted interventions, and financial mechanisms to maximize impact on both ABAS and SDG goals.

Participants expressed their commitment to supporting SIDS through various initiatives such as financial aid, capacity building programs, and knowledge sharing. The importance of high-quality data, knowledge sharing, and capacity building for evidence-based decision-making and effective implementation of the ABAS agenda was emphasized. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) announced a commitment of €13.7 million for technical cooperation projects aimed at building a more resilient, sustainable, and prosperous future. Several participants highlighted the potential of SIDS to become powerhouses of digital innovation and contribute to global impact.

4. Africa, LDCs and LLDCs

The session focused on the significant challenges and opportunities in building resilience and capacities in African countries, Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs). These regions face substantial obstacles, including economic vulnerability, high poverty levels, limited access to basic services, and severe impacts from climate change. LLDCs are particularly disadvantaged due to their lack of access to seaports, leading to high transit and trade costs. These countries are also disproportionately vulnerable to disaster risks, with mortality rates 2.5% higher than the global average and economic losses almost six times greater.

The panelists highlighted the immense challenges in achieving the SDGs faced by African countries, where a significant number of LDCs and LLDCs are located. Recent data reveals that these countries are significantly off track in meeting the SDGs, having lost ground due to the pandemic and other global crises. Global warming and extreme weather events are accelerating, further complicating progress. The new programs of action for LDCs and LLDCs provide tailored advice to advance the SDGs, especially in poverty and hunger. Recovery and progress depend on the implementation of these action programs and close cooperation with key partners.

Resolving the debt crisis and prioritizing the expedited allocation and mobilization of resources is crucial. Conflict and fragility are critical constraints facing Africa, LDCs, and LLDCs, negatively impacting all SDGs. Hunger in Africa is primarily driven by conflict, necessitating broad coordination between regional institutions and close collaboration with the United Nations. The impact of climate change on Africa necessitates improvements in connectivity, adaptation to green energy, and strengthened capabilities. Infrastructure projects must respect mechanisms to protect indigenous communities. Emphasizing green bonds, blue bonds, and climate finance credits is crucial for building resilience. Speakers called for systematic change and the need to build development solutions that integrate Africa and its people.

5. Middle Income Countries

Many speakers and participants agreed that Middle Income Countries (MICs) are central actors for achieving the SDGs, including as regional growth poles through trade and investment linkages, South-South and triangular cooperation, and as contributors to global public goods. Yet, there was general recognition that the recent confluence of crises had reversed development achievements and exacerbated existing challenges, which required urgent national and international action to help MICs avoid the middle-income trap.

The main challenges identified by the Forum include high debt burdens, constrained fiscal space and a lack of access to concessional finance, at a time of high public spending needs for social protection and sustainable investment, worsened by high vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and conflict. There was broad consensus on the need for improved access to international finance – including on concessional terms and through innovative financing instruments – and debt treatment for MICs with high debt burdens. Most speakers and participants stressed the need to reform the international financial architecture and called for the further development of multidimensional measures of sustainable development that go beyond GDP.

The Forum recognized the important role of the United Nations development system in support of MICs, by building international consensus in the run-up to global summits – including the Summit of the Future in 2024 and the Fourth Financing for Development Conference in 2025 – and through tailored country-level support, including capacity-building for the collection, analysis and use of data on SDG implementation. Some speakers and participants called on the United Nations to advance towards the elaboration of a specific inter-agency, comprehensive, system-wide response plan for MICs, to be reflected in the 2024 QCPR.

6. Perspectives by the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders

Speakers echoed that engaging Major Groups and other stakeholders (MGoS) in intergovernmental processes and events enriches the deliberations with different perspectives and innovative ideas as well as practical solutions. As the world is more interconnected than ever, the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda can only be realized in partnership with the collective efforts of MGoS, the majority of which represent civil society and community-based organizations, including those who are at risk of being left behind.

MGoS are vital actors who advocate for the implementation and achievement of the SDGs. Their efforts and impacts help to maintain the SDGs at the forefront of the international and national agendas. As a fundamental pillar for implementation and follow-up, they use their experience and expertise to catalyse political change and mobilize resources at the national and international levels. To enhance their engagement, the UN Mute initiative, launched in 2020 as a collaborative effort between Costa Rica and Denmark advocating for the meaningful engagement of civil society at the United Nations, has proposed a review of the participation modalities at UN meetings and processes, including maximizing the use of ICT and digitalization, so that more voices can be heard from every corner of the world.

Recognizing MGoS' cooperation and participation are the cornerstones of the 2030 Agenda implementation, it is imperative to safeguard and enforce partnership at the local level, but also among intergovernmental organizations, civil society, private sectors, and academia. Several speakers recommended strengthening the inclusion of marginalized groups, youth, women and indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities to actively participate in decision making processes, policy dialogue and implementation efforts.

VIII. Opening of the ministerial segment

The President of the Economic and Social Council opened the ministerial segment by emphasizing the urgency of delivering on the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At the SDG Summit, global leaders reaffirmed their commitment in the Political Declaration, and now it must be translated into concrete actions. ECOSOC and the United Nations play a crucial role not only in addressing crises, but also in preventing them. The Ministerial Declaration builds on the Political Declaration of the 2023 SDG Summit, while also looking ahead to the Summit of the Future, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and the second World Summit on Social Development in 2025.

The Deputy Secretary-General emphasized that geopolitical crises, financing gaps, conflicts, climate emergencies, and debt crises pose significant barriers to achieving the SDGs. With only 17 per cent of targets on track, and following the rescue plan issued at the SDG Summit, she called to move from words to action. She urged ambitious action in four key areas. Firstly, she underscored the imperative of peace. Secondly, she urged to advance the green and digital transitions. Thirdly, she highlighted the critical need for SDG financing. An ambitious Pact for the Future and Summit of the Future will be critical to address these issues. Lastly, she emphasized the central promise of leaving no one behind, which includes addressing gender equality.

The Representative of the Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY) presented the Group's key recommendations for the Pact for the Future, which will be the outcome document of the Summit of the Future. The Pact of the Future should address the urgent reform of the international financial architecture and multilateral development banks and should make an observer seat available for the youth constituency. The Declaration on Future Generations should protect current and future generations, and models such as a dedicated office or committee on future generations, should be pursued. The ECOSOC Youth Forum should serve as a platform for a stock-taking and review of youth specific commitments in the Pact for the Future.

The President of the General Assembly underscored the urgency of addressing poverty, hunger, conflict, climate change, and economic shocks at their roots and finding sustainable resilient and innovative solutions to deliver the 2030 commitments. He underscored that the Pact for the Future must be transformative to deliver on the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement. He called on Member States to be creative, inclusive and above all, bold in ensuring that the Pact for the Future is genuinely transformational. Looking forward, he highlighted the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development as an opportunity to bridge financing gaps and the 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of the UN development system as a means to bolster impact.

The former President of Chile called upon the international community to find solutions to global challenges, emphasizing the collaborative spirit among diverse groups and the diagnostics at hand. Highlighting urgent issues such as the humanitarian crises in Gaza, tensions in Ukraine, and issues like climate-induced displacement and inequality, she stressed the importance of international cooperation and solidarity. She proposed revitalizing global cooperation to rebuild trust and advance sustainable development, and advocating for agile institutions capable of responding swiftly to threats and opportunities for peace and security. She further underscored the need to strengthen institutions, enhance political participation, and protect human rights for our collective future. Looking to the Summit of the Future, she highlighted the Summit's potential to enhance global cooperation, address governance gaps, and restore trust in multilateral institutions through a robust international system, guided by norms, international human rights and humanitarian law.

IX. Voluntary reviews

Representatives of 36 countries* presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), reaffirming countries' commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) amidst global challenges. Nations reported on their progress, shared best practices, and highlighted ongoing challenges while also emphasizing effective partnerships, climate action, social protection, and inclusive growth.

Presenting countries underscored the continued, further and deeper integration of the SDGs into their national policies and strategies as pivotal for sustainable development. Efforts included improving established national coordination frameworks, organizing high-level meetings focused on SDGs, and aligning national budgets and development plans with the SDG framework. The principle of leaving no one behind was central, guiding inclusive policy formulation and implementation. The integration of the 2030 Agenda into national development plans was indicated across various planning instruments, ensuring that sustainable development remains a central focus of national agendas. Countries reported embedding the SDGs into their short-, medium-, and long-term strategies, reflecting a holistic approach to sustainable development.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation were underscored as critical priorities. Presenters reported on enhancing policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, investing in renewable energy, and implementing climate-smart agricultural practices. Initiatives included promoting circular economy principles, enhancing waste management systems, and developing comprehensive marine and biodiversity conservation plans. Some countries stressed the importance of preserving

* Please see the Annex for a list of the 36 countries that presented Voluntary National Reviews in 2024.

ocean health and managing water resources efficiently, while others highlighted the implementation of national climate action plans with ambitious targets. Climate change was identified as a significant threat to sustainable development, with countries reporting on carbon trading initiatives and the importance of blue diplomacy.

Expanding social protection and empowering vulnerable groups emerged as essential themes. Countries discussed efforts to support elderly populations, persons with disabilities, youth, children, and low-income families through targeted social assistance programs. Gender equality received significant attention, with nations reporting on strategy documents, economic empowerment programmes for women, and measures to combat gender-based violence and human trafficking. Policies aimed at empowering vulnerable groups included transformative commitments targeting health, education, energy, youth, sustainable economies, equity, and anti-corruption measures.

Food insecurity remained a pressing concern, with countries focusing on improving agricultural productivity, enhancing food availability, and implementing national school feeding programs. Policy interventions included providing low-cost fertilizers, investing in irrigation, and transforming food systems to ensure access to nutritious food. The impacts of high reliance on imported and processed foods were also addressed, with measures aimed at promoting local food production and nutrition. Efforts to improve food security and agricultural productivity were emphasized, with initiatives in fisheries and agricultural reforms enhancing food security through natural resource management.

The COVID-19 pandemic's continued impact on health and education systems was a recurrent theme. Countries reported on measures to provide universal healthcare access, support businesses, and ensure the continuity of education. Efforts to address non-communicable diseases, mental health issues, and improve healthcare services were highlighted. In education, initiatives included year-round schooling, expanding digital learning, and increasing access for remote and vulnerable students. The importance of resilient healthcare and education systems was reiterated in light of the pandemic's challenges and continued long-term impacts.

Presenters emphasized boosting economic growth through support for small and medium-sized enterprises, improving domestic resource mobilization, and fostering innovative solutions. Effective partnerships with international organizations, civil society, and the private sector were deemed crucial for bridging financing gaps and promoting sustainable development. Presenting countries called for enhanced capacity building, technology transfer, and financial cooperation to achieve the SDGs. The role of bilateral and multilateral partners, civil society organizations, and the private sector was highlighted, with initiatives to engage diverse sectors in sustainable development efforts.

Effective data collection and monitoring were identified as critical for delivering the 2030 Agenda. Presenters reported on efforts to improve national statistical systems, collect disaggregated data, and implement robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Challenges in data quality and statistical capacity were recognized, with some countries sharing progress in reducing data gaps. Data availability for monitoring and tracking SDGs remains a challenge, requiring significant attention to improve data collection and integration. The VNRs demonstrated a further deepening

of data and indicators, reflecting a commitment to more comprehensive and nuanced tracking of progress. Countries are increasingly leveraging advanced data technologies and methodologies to ensure more accurate and reliable metrics.

Several presenters highlighted the persistent challenges posed by conflict, economic instability, and infrastructural deficits. The need for resilient infrastructure, particularly in the face of climate change, was stressed. Presenting countries shared their experiences in addressing the impacts of prolonged conflicts on education, healthcare, and overall development. Attention was also given to efforts to transition from humanitarian to development interventions. Issues such as poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, and historical social conflicts were common themes, with global events like the COVID-19 pandemic having exacerbated many of these challenges.

Presenting countries reaffirmed their commitment to the 2030 Agenda and highlighted various measures to ensure sustainable development. Initiatives included addressing gender equality, enhancing social welfare programmes, improving food security, strengthening healthcare services, and leveraging digital infrastructure.

The importance of robust partnerships, civil society engagement, and international cooperation was consistently underscored. Countries emphasized the need for continued solidarity, international cooperation, and effective partnerships to overcome obstacles and achieve the SDGs. The VNRs highlighted efforts to engage a broader range of stakeholders, including local authorities, private sector actors, and marginalized communities, ensuring their voices and contributions are integral to the development process. This inclusive approach aims to foster a sense of ownership and collaboration, driving more effective and sustainable outcomes.

The 2024 VNRs showcased a diverse range of initiatives and challenges in achieving the SDGs. Countries underscored the importance of inclusive policies, effective partnerships, climate action, and robust data systems. While significant progress has been made, ongoing global challenges necessitate intensified efforts and international cooperation to realize the 2030 Agenda. There was a clear message of the need for continued resilience, innovation, and collective action, highlighting the collective effort required to achieve sustainable development for all.

X. General debate

The Summit of the Future in September 2024 was seen as an opportunity to renew trust in multilateralism and get back on track to achieving the sustainable development goals and implement the 2030 Agenda. Speakers emphasized the importance of the Summit as a crucial moment to advance policy coherence and multi-stakeholder engagement that fosters transformative, practical, and inclusive action toward sustainable development.

Speakers reaffirmed their commitment of their countries to the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs. They stressed their deep concern with stalled, slowed, and even reversed global progress toward achieving the Goals, emphasizing the need for strengthening multilateralism with peace and human development at its core. There were calls for greater efforts to strengthen cooperation and overcome challenges that have impeded progress, including conflict and violence, climate change, and insufficient financing for development. Renewed commitment to leaving no one behind and

political will and inclusion of all stakeholders were deemed critical to accelerating progress towards the Goals and overcoming challenges.

The SDGs remain a key priority and concern, as countries underscored that less than one fifth of the SDG targets are on track to be achieved. Many countries have developed initiatives and incorporated the Goals into their national development plans and frameworks, aligning national priorities and policies with the 2030 Agenda as a crucial roadmap for accelerated action. Several countries emphasized the importance of their voluntary national reviews as a mechanism for accountability and the implementation of constructive and impactful solutions for their countries' progress towards sustainable development and implementing the Goals.

Increased investment and access to financing were identified as vital to achieving sustainable development. Countries expressed that much of the burden resulting from lack of access to financing is borne by least developed countries and other developing countries; they continue to face challenges in debt relief and access to financing mechanisms, as well as high interest rates and constrained fiscal spaces, with very limited options for economic diversification. Several participants also highlighted the need for greater support for countries in special situations, in particular for land-locked developing countries and small island developing States.

Many participants called for a renewed international commitment to financing for development, including financial support for those furthest behind, increased official development assistance, reform of the international financial architecture, access to equitable and innovative financing mechanisms, debt restructuring, debt relief for climate action and disaster-related events, and the full implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Secretary General's SDG Rescue Plan.

Speakers stressed that that increased access to financing is pivotal to getting the Sustainable Development Goals back on track. Participants from various countries stated that the full operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund and implementation of the multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI) for small island developing States are crucial. They serve as components for mobilizing financial resources to help mitigation and adaptation strategies, especially in countries facing the impacts of climate change, particularly on food systems, agriculture, and infrastructure.

The eradication of poverty and hunger remained a top priority. Many participants emphasized that SDG 1 on ending poverty is strongly interlinked with many of the other SDGs. They noted further that this SDG cannot be realized without multistakeholder partnerships and strong institutions that prioritize investment in building sustainable agriculture systems through innovative solutions and the leveraging of science and technology.

Increased investment in enhancing science, technology, innovation (STI) capacities and human capital was also stressed as critical to fostering economic inclusion. Participants highlighted that developing workforces that are digitally literate and equipped to navigate the evolving job market is critical. Others noted that policies aimed at the economic empowerment of women, including social protection measures and direct cash transfers, are vital in addressing gender disparities in the workforce. Several participants announced the commitments and initiatives of their countries to solving the challenges of decreasing barriers for women and youth engagement. They emphasized the significance of inclusive education programmes for all, including rural, vulnerable, and minority groups.

Addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution remains an urgent priority. Some speakers highlighted how climate exacerbates global inequality, particularly poverty, and called for comprehensive solutions and policies that map synergies and trade-offs crucial for mitigating climate change's impacts on vulnerable populations. Countries identified small island developing States as those who face unique vulnerabilities, suffering the most from damage to local ecosystems, loss of life and livelihoods, and extreme weather events.

Participants noted that a financial architecture that prioritizes accessible financing for disaster risk reduction and climate action is urgently needed. Additionally, many speakers shared their national progress in implementing climate change principles into national plans and initiatives, highlighting a commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, including transitioning to a green economy and reaching global warming targets. They also noted the importance of renewable energy commitments and movement away from fossil fuels.

Participants encouraged increased investment in data collection and governance, noting the importance of data monitoring and evaluation and digital progress for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals. Advancing digital transformation and data governance was highlighted as vital for achieving sustainable development. Participants expressed commitment to strengthening data collection, monitoring, and evaluation systems to allow for better tracking of SDG progress and informed decision-making. Improving data availability, particularly for marginalized and disadvantaged groups, was highlighted as essential to promote equity in access to information. Some called for the embrace of digital technology for data management and for fostering open, secure digital policies to help bridge the gender digital divide.

Several speakers stressed the negative impact of conflict and violence on the progress toward achieving the Goals and emphasized that peace and adherence to international humanitarian principles must remain at the forefront of sustainable development efforts. Participants emphasized efforts to counter global violence and divisions. They also advocated more generally for participatory processes that involve all stakeholders to ensure accountability and justice.

Annex

List of countries and groups presenting voluntary national reviews of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in 2024

- 1. Armenia ***
- 2. Austria **
- 3. Azerbaijan ****
- 4. Belize **
- 5. Brazil **
- 6. Chad ***
- 7. Colombia ****
- 8. Congo (Republic of the) **
- 9. Costa Rica ***
- 10. Ecuador ***
- 11. Equatorial Guinea **
- 12. Eritrea **
- 13. Georgia ***
- 14. Guinea **
- 15. Honduras ***
- 16. Kenya ***
- 17. Lao People's Democratic Republic ***
- 18. Libya **
- 19. Mauritania **
- 20. Mauritius **
- 21. Mexico ****
- 22. Namibia ***
- 23. Nepal ***
- 24. Oman **
- 25. Palau **
- 26. Peru ***
- 27. Samoa ***
- 28. Sierra Leone ****
- 29. Solomon Islands **
- 30. South Sudan *
- 31. Spain ***
- 32. Syrian Arab Republic **
- 33. Uganda ***
- 34. Vanuatu **
- 35. Yemen *
- 36. Zimbabwe ***

* Presenting for the first time.
** Presenting for the second time.
*** Presenting for the third time.
**** Presenting for the fourth time