

31 July 2025

**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 2025 session**

I. Introduction

The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), met from 14 to 23 July at United Nations Headquarters in New York, addressing the theme “*Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind*”. This included the three-day ministerial segment of the Forum from 21 to 23 July, as part of the high-level segment of ECOSOC, which concluded on 24 July.

The Forum was informed by the report of the Secretary-General on Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which states that the world is on track to meet or is making moderate progress on 35 per cent of the 137 SDG targets with available data. Progress on 47 per cent of the targets is insufficient, and 18 per cent of the targets have regressed from the 2015 baseline. Participants expressed concern that current challenges such as geopolitical tensions, trade disputes and climate change are hindering implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They widely affirmed multilateralism as the indispensable means of addressing sustainable development challenges.

Without prejudice to the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the Goals, the Forum conducted an in-depth review of progress on the following five SDGs: good health and well-being (Goal 3); gender equality (Goal 5); decent work and economic growth (Goal 8); life below water (Goal 14); and partnerships for the Goals and their interlinkages with the other Goals (Goal 17).

Thematic review sessions focused on mobilizing financing for the SDGs; accelerating SDG achievement in African countries, least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), middle-income countries (MICs) and small island developing States (SIDS); and actions for advancing SDGs at local and regional levels. The Forum also heard messages from the UN Environment Assembly and perspectives of the Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) on delivering the 2030 Agenda by aligning global processes through inclusive multilateralism.

This year marked the tenth anniversary of the SDGs and the presentation of voluntary national reviews (VNRs) at the HLPF. Thirty-five countries presented their VNRs this year, bringing the total number of reviews conducted so far to 402, with more almost 150 countries having presented two or more reviews (a list of countries that presented VNRs in 2025 is contained in the annex). Overall, many VNRs reflected greater reliance on evidence-based decision-making, integrated institutional frameworks and inclusive stakeholder engagement. Several countries also advanced efforts to localize the SDGs, including through voluntary local reviews (VLRs).

An in-person general debate was held from 21 to 23 July, focused on the theme “*UN@80: Catalyzing Change for Sustainable Development*”. It provided an opportunity for participants to

discuss the UN80 initiative, address challenges in realizing the 2030 Agenda and highlight national initiatives for accelerating SDG implementation in the five years remaining to the year 2030. The debate included 189 interventions from 140 participating States and the EU, including two Heads of Government, four Deputy Prime Ministers, 31 Ministers and 19 Vice-Ministers, and from 13 observers/intergovernmental organizations, 10 UN system entities and 23 representatives of MGoS and NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC.

Many delegations referenced the UN80 initiative as a key opportunity to reinvigorate multilateralism. The initiative was explicitly welcomed for its potential to make the United Nations more impactful and fit for purpose, effective in delivering its mandates and enhancing efficiencies, and improving delivery at the country level. Several Member States stressed that reforms must not weaken the United Nations' development pillar but should instead prioritize the 2030 Agenda and address pressing development needs.

More than 87 high-level speakers—50 per cent women and 65 per cent from the Global South—shared their views during the opening, townhall meeting and thematic panels. Representatives of MGoS participated actively in the Forum with more than 700 representatives, including 300 youth participants. In total, more than 6,000 persons attended the Forum and its related events, including 187 side events, 13 VNR labs, 15 exhibitions and 12 high-profile special events that highlighted actions by local and regional governments, parliamentarians, scientists and academia, higher education institutions, the private sector and others.

II. Key messages from the general debate on “UN@80: Catalyzing change for sustainable development”

- Progress towards the 2030 Agenda is significantly off track, with only a small share of SDG targets advancing, as recent global crises have reversed development gains and deepened inequalities.
- The UN80 initiative provides a timely opportunity to revitalize the United Nations, strengthen its impact, improve coherence and coordination and make the UN more responsive to today's global challenges.
- Multilateralism is essential to overcoming shared challenges and delivering the SDGs. Urgent action is needed to strengthen multilateralism and restore trust.
- Sustainable development cannot be achieved without peace and respect for international humanitarian law.
- Amid growing inequalities, conflict, civic space restrictions and anti-rights rhetoric, the 80th anniversary of the United Nations is an opportunity to make the UN system more inclusive, effective and accountable—promoting human rights, grassroots participation and people-led accountability.
- Inclusivity and equity must be central to sustainable development. Marginalized groups including women and girls, older persons, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, LGBTIQI+ communities, and those facing discrimination based on work and descent continue to be left behind in SDG implementation and must be meaningfully included in development and decision-making processes.
- Gender equality is a cornerstone of sustainable development. National legislation and programs to prevent gender-based violence and discrimination should be coupled with

inclusive approaches to development with a strong focus on health, education, digital innovation and climate resilience as cross-cutting priorities.

- Financing shortfalls remain a major barrier to SDG implementation. Meaningful debt relief and increased access to concessional and grant-based finance is needed for inclusive and coordinated approaches to accelerate implementation for countries in special situations.
- Reform of the international financial architecture that is equitable, accessible, and better aligned with the priorities of the global South should include expanded representation for more countries, increased financial efficiency, innovative solutions such as debt-for-climate swaps and renewed solidarity around sustainable financing.
- Renewed international partnerships must include developing countries and vulnerable populations. Meaningful civic engagement, locally grounded partnerships and inclusive governance are critical to closing the implementation gap.

III. Key messages from the Forum

- The estimated \$4 trillion annual SDG financing shortfall demands urgent global financial system reforms. Key priorities include debt restructuring for vulnerable nations, expanded concessional financing mechanisms and blended finance models to mobilize private sector capital at scale. These measures must be implemented with safeguards to ensure equitable access and prevent widening disparities between developed and developing countries.
- Science, technology and innovation (STI) is a catalyst for SDG implementation. Transformative technologies including artificial intelligence (AI), digital public infrastructure and open-source platforms present powerful opportunities to accelerate SDG progress, but their deployment requires adequate governance frameworks that prioritize inclusive access, ethical considerations, and local capacity building.
- Multi-stakeholder partnerships are essential for overcoming SDG implementation barriers, as recognized in the *Compromiso de Sevilla* (the Seville Commitment) from the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4). Empowering local communities and local partnership is essential. Indigenous peoples, women, youth and other marginalized groups must be part of decision-making process.
- Effective international development cooperation must combine North-South, South-South and Triangular cooperation with private sector engagement and private and public partnership.
- Health is shaped by complex social, economic and environmental determinants, and there is a need for integrated approaches and adequate financing to accelerate Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and health equity, including through domestic resource mobilization. Key solutions include investment in primary healthcare, improved data collection, use of digital tools, innovative financing mechanisms, strengthened multilateralism and partnerships.
- Despite meaningful advancement in women's legal representation, access to education and finance, gaps exist, and progress is uneven and far too slow. Whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches along with investment in care infrastructure, digital inclusion, and changing social norms should be the focus of policy and legal interventions, which should be evidence-based and consensus-driven.
- The Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Pact of the Future provide the institutional framework for the empowerment of women and successful implementation of Goal 5.

- Goal 8 is among the most off-track goals, with progress stalled or regressed in key areas including youth unemployment, informality, labour rights and child labour. Unemployment among women and youth remains high. Formalizing the informal sector will be a critical first step to improving decent work. Investing in targeted training and inclusive labor rights will help reduce inequalities.
- Climate change and technology—particularly AI—are fundamentally changing labor markets. New policies must prioritize decarbonization and a more just economy, while ensuring decent working conditions amid changing weather patterns and extreme heat. Policy frameworks must leverage digital tools for economic advancement while safeguarding against technology-driven job displacement and labor rights exclusion.
- Ocean protection is a global responsibility. All countries, including those without coastlines, are directly impacted by ocean health through its role in regulating climate, ensuring air quality, and sustaining global food systems. There is an urgency to translate commitments, particularly the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) and WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, into action.
- Goal 14 is critically underfunded, and fragmented governance across sectors, jurisdictions, and institutions hinders effective ocean management. It is essential to advance innovative financing and equitable investment in the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean, while integrating ocean governance with climate, biodiversity, and economic-social frameworks. The science-policy interface and science-based innovation, including the use of emerging technologies, play an important role in catalyzing ocean action.
- The centrality of the Doha Programme of Action for LDCs and the Awaza Programme of action for LLDCs to unlock structural transformation and accelerate progress towards the SDGs was reaffirmed in the *Compromiso de Sevilla*. These PoAs are SDG enablers and instruments of transformation if fully implemented and financed.
- Despite being key drivers of economic growth and innovation, MICs continue to grapple with structural vulnerabilities and limited access to concessional financing, which hinder progress toward inclusive and sustainable development.
- The accelerated implementation of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) requires further integration of its commitments into national development plans and programmes through a whole-of-society approach, engaging youth, civil society, and the private sector. The UN development system, international financial institutions, and multilateral development banks have a critical role to play.
- Over 65 per cent of SDG targets require local-level action. Effective implementation depends on empowered local and regional governments, civil society and grassroots communities. Inclusive transformation must center on marginalized groups—youth, women, persons with disabilities, migrants, Indigenous Peoples and others. Gender-sensitive budgeting, gender-disaggregated data, and support for women’s organizations are key.
- Localized data, developed in coordination with national statistical offices, is essential for evidence-based planning and monitoring. VLRs and Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs) are excellent tools for inclusive governance and accountability.
- There is an urgent need to renew global commitment to the SDGs through stronger multilateral cooperation and inclusive partnerships, despite current global challenges, and follow through on multilateral momentum by urgently addressing conflicts, accelerating SDG progress, and

responsibly harnessing innovations like AI to build a sustainable and peaceful future, with the full inclusion and leadership of youth.

IV. Ministerial Declaration

The 2025 HLPF adopted a Ministerial Declaration that identifies current trends and challenges and recommits to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs, emphasizing the urgency to take bold, ambitious, accelerated, just and transformative action in the five years remaining. It also 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 builds on the 2023 SDG Summit, the 2024 Summit of the Future, the Third UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3) and FFD4, and looks forward to the convening of the Second World Summit for Social Development (WSSD2), the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20) and the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing+30).

The Declaration demonstrates the political will to accelerate implementation and achieve the SDGs for the benefit of all. It reiterates the urgent need to accelerate progress on the implementation of the SDGs, noting that two thirds of the Goals are currently lagging, and recognizes the special challenges facing all developing countries in pursuing sustainable development. It commits to address ongoing financing gaps for achieving the SDGs and to bridge the digital divides and the responsible use of science, technology and innovation (STI) as drivers of sustainable development and to build the capacities necessary for sustainable transformations.

The Declaration provides guidance on the 2025 theme by identifying priority actions for advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs for leaving no one behind. This includes specific priority actions for implementing Goals 3, 5, 8, 14, and 17, which were under in-depth review during this year's Forum. It commends the 35 countries that presented VNRs and commits to strengthening their use as a tool for sharing knowledge, tracking progress and providing a means of inclusion for stakeholders. It also encourages countries to consider developing national road maps of VNRs for presentation until 2030 and to support local authorities in the preparation of VLRs.

V. Unlocking means of implementation: Mobilizing financing and STI for the SDGs (Goal 17)

Participants highlighted stark disparities in SDG implementation and the growing urgency for accelerated action amidst a challenging global context marked by geopolitical tensions, rising inequality, economic uncertainty and climate-related shocks. They noted these obstacles are further compounded by widening digital divides, STI capacity gaps and structural vulnerabilities, particularly for LDCs. The annual financing gap estimated at \$4 trillion was identified as a critical bottleneck. Many emphasized that global cooperation, inclusive innovation and increased

financing are vital to prevent further setbacks in achieving the SDGs, and that STI can function as accelerators for implementation.

There was a broad consensus that mobilizing sufficient, timely, fit-for-purpose and accessible financing is central to delivering the SDGs. The Forum welcomed the *Compromiso de Sevilla* as a renewed global framework to strengthen development finance, with many calling for its immediate and inclusive implementation, and noting the outcome of FFD4 demonstrated that international cooperation remains robust and effective despite challenges. Several participants stressed the need to reform the global financial architecture to enhance the representation and voice of developing countries, for a more inclusive debt architecture expanded access to concessional financing, and equitable credit-rating evaluations especially for low-income countries, calling for solutions to address the systemic challenges to create enabling environments for private investment. Participants also called for expanding access to climate finance and leveraging blended finance and private capital, and scaling investment in universal digital connectivity.

Digital rehearsal, federated learning and commons-based infrastructure were highlighted as tools to de-risk investment and accelerate replication of solutions. STI was emphasized as both a catalyst and multiplier for SDG implementation, particularly in helping to align financial flows with impact. Some stressed the importance of mission-led science, open science infrastructure and co-designed national STI4SDGs roadmaps. Others called for one percent of global research and development funding to be allocated toward mission-driven, transdisciplinary research and sustainability initiatives. Speakers also noted the innovation gap leaving cities and countries behind, calling for reforms to the science system to close this gap.

Countries shared national strategies focused on digital transformation, inclusive AI and innovative ecosystems. Many underscored the need to fund ethical technology use, open data access, digital public infrastructure and capacity building, particularly for women, youth and marginalized communities. Some envisioned digital public infrastructure as providing free and open-source tools and data access, to serve as a “scaffolding” to enable innovation and unlock private investment. Several speakers stressed that inclusive digitalization must support broad participation in solution design and help close persistent divides in education, healthcare and access to services.

Speakers noted that FFD4 has the potential to advance an equitable future for people and planet, unlocking urgently needed public resources. They called for accelerated implementation of the UN Tax Convention and strengthened sovereign debt frameworks. Countries and organizations shared a range of practical actions—from tax reforms and SDG-linked bonds to innovation hubs and STI roadmaps—that demonstrate progress and potential for replication. Some underscored the role of official statistics and innovative data sources to inform evidence-based policy design and called for science diplomacy and localized innovation ecosystems. Participants made a strong call for renewed multilateralism, concrete action, and collective accountability to unlock resources, foster innovation and ensure no one is left behind in the push to achieve the SDGs.

VI. Review of progress on Goals 3, 5, 8 and 14 and interlinkages with other Goals

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Despite some progress, none of the Goal 3 targets are on track and over half the global population lacks access to essential health services, with a notable decline in public health financing since the COVID-19 pandemic. Speakers underscored the urgent need to shift from reactive to preventive and people-centered health systems, emphasizing the interlinkages between gender equality, health and human rights. They advocated for sustainable financing models, improved donor coordination and access to essential services, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized populations. The need for cross-sectoral action and integrated policies addressing housing, education and migration were underscored. Countries were called upon to implement accountability mechanisms for corporate actors within the health system and use scientific evidence to build trust and combat misinformation.

Participants overwhelmingly recognized the role of health as an enabler of sustainable development and expressed their continued commitment to Goal 3. Several highlighted the influence of health outcomes on economic growth and poverty reduction; others noted interlinkages with climate change and environmental degradation and called for the application of the One Health approach. Many emphasized efforts to strengthen primary care and highlighted the importance of accelerating progress toward universal health coverage.

Discussions also focused on the need to address disparities in access to health services, including by increasing affordability. Speakers stressed the need for gender-responsive approaches, including efforts to increase access to sexual and reproductive health services. Some called for greater attention to non-communicable diseases, including mental health, as well as engagement of youth and solidarity with populations in fragile and conflict-afflicted settings.

Data, technology and innovation have an important role to play; countries cited examples such as adoption of digital tools, implementation of national health insurance schemes, health volunteer programs, a health and climate change observatory and the use of social impact bonds for elder care. A few countries highlighted experiences with international medical cooperation.

Several delegations signaled their commitment to strengthened multilateralism, highlighting the pandemic agreement as a recent example, and noting the challenge of ensuring adequate financing, both through official development aid and domestic resource mobilization. Several countries noted the need to strengthen the implementation of the Lusaka Agreement, while several others stressed the importance of the upcoming High-Level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases and the Promotion of Mental Health.

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

The Forum noted that, despite advances in laws and policies promoting gender equality, overall progress remains uneven and far too slow. Participants observed meaningful improvements in women's representation in politics, legal reforms addressing violence against women, and expanded access to education and financial services in some countries. However, critical gaps persist; women continue to shoulder disproportionate unpaid care burdens, harmful practices like child marriage and gender-based violence endure, and many lack secure land and digital rights. While a few Member States have achieved national milestones, the collective trajectory indicates that, at current rates, true gender parity across social, economic and political spheres will not be reached by 2030.

Many participants highlighted a set of connected barriers that continue to stall gender-equality advances. Resource constraints at both international and national levels have led to under-investment in essential services such as care infrastructure, education and social protection, making it difficult for women and girls to participate fully in public and economic life. Some delegations also mention alarming backsliding on Goal 5 language and action. Delegations also note that while it is necessary to include women in digital transformations, it also poses a unique harm to women.

Many speakers emphasized that gender-neutral policies often fail to close gaps and can even exacerbate inequalities. Noting that effective progress requires integrated, whole-of-government approaches that mainstream gender considerations across all sectors, backed by sustained funding and gender-responsive budgeting. Increased collection and use of sex-disaggregated data were highlighted as essential for accountability and targeting interventions. Participants also underlined the necessity of translating legal reforms into practice through strengthened institutions, enforcement mechanisms and civil-society engagement. Finally, speakers called for greater investment in care infrastructure, digital inclusion, and community-driven models, and stressed the importance of engaging men as partners to transform social norms and share responsibilities.

Many speakers advocated for decisions and actions supported by evidence. Expanding girls' access to quality education and STEM training, alongside targeted scholarship and mentorship schemes, was shown to narrow skills gaps and foster future leaders. Digital-inclusion initiatives were praised both for empowering women entrepreneurs and for counteracting technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Underpinning all these sectoral actions, speakers stressed the imperative to collect and utilize sex-disaggregated, life-cycle data to ensure that policies are precisely targeted and responsive to evolving needs.

Participants underscored that gender equality acts as a catalyst across the 2030 Agenda rather than an isolated target. In climate action, women's leadership in resilience building and biodiversity conservation was linked to more effective and sustainable outcomes. In peace and security, their meaningful participation in negotiations and recovery efforts was shown to yield longer-lasting peace. Within food systems, closing the productivity gap between female and male farmers was highlighted as a pathway to bolster global food security and drive economic growth.

The Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) were reaffirmed as essential guides for national and local planning. Participants urged realigning policies with Beijing+30 priorities and fully leveraging CEDAW's reporting and review mechanisms to drive accountability. The recently adopted Pact for the Future was identified as a vital opportunity to consolidate international commitments, streamline monitoring processes and elevate Goal 5 as the foundational driver of the entire 2030 Agenda.

Speakers urged governments to strengthen existing systems like investing in care services, community-based programs, gender-responsive budgets and expanded digital access for women and girls. They also recommended testing new financing tools, building partnerships across sectors and engaging men and boys as allies to shift social norms. By embedding these proven strategies into existing national plans and international agreements, the Forum agreed that we can make real progress on Goal 5.

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

The Forum emphasized that while SDG 8 is critical to sustainable development, it is among the most off-track goals. Progress has stalled or even regressed in key areas including youth unemployment, informality, labour rights, and child labour.

Speakers agreed that two macrotrends most affecting labor include technological shifts and climate change. Speakers suggested that while technology and AI create new opportunities, they also introduce risks such as job displacement, hiring bias and exclusion from labor rights. One speaker highlighted that digital platforms often lack social and legal protections for workers. To that end, ILO is developing a set of binding global standards governing decent work in the platform economy. Regarding climate change, participants emphasized the need for a just transition, highlighting numerous initiatives to expand green jobs and advance a circular and green economy. One speaker emphasized that climate change, especially extreme heat, is impacting worker health and productivity, particularly in sectors like agriculture, construction and manufacturing. Some called for enforceable workplace heat standards and investment in climate adaptation to improve worker wellbeing, while increasing productivity.

Participants agreed that social inequalities and discrimination persist, with women and youth most affected. Female unemployment exceeds 40 per cent in some regions, and one in five youth are not in education, employment or training. One speaker raised the issue of poor labour practices among migrant workers, highlighting the need for international standards. Another speaker raised the issue of descent-based discriminatory practices against groups that are systematically limited to hazardous and underpaid jobs. Speakers identified solutions including formalizing informal work to enable access to social protections and financial services; investing in the care economies to boost gender equality and job creation; expanding vocational and digital training, particularly for youth and women; implementing legal reform to address discriminatory practices; and transforming supply chains to be more inclusive and transparent.

There was also agreement that financing remains a critical barrier, with low- and middle-income countries particularly struggling with high debt and limited fiscal space. Several speakers identified national strategies to generate funds including by improving public spending efficiency, enhancing tax enforcement, curbing illicit financial flows and unlocking private sector liquidity. Internationally, countries called for reforming global financial architecture to provide debt relief and fair credit ratings; expanding ODA, concessional financing and climate finance; leveraging private investment and blended finance; and operationalizing global platforms like the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection. Multilateral organizations can help to advance this discussion through global forums including the HLPF, the Financing for Development Conference, and the World Social Summit.

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development

Recent crises—climate change, biodiversity loss, marine pollution—have intensified threats to ocean health. The 2025 UNOC3 discussions catalyzed new commitments, including the near entry into force of the BBNJ Agreement and progress on a Global Plastics Treaty. Countries are leveraging AI, satellite monitoring and digital twins to enhance marine data and enforcement. However, SDG 14 remains the least funded of the SDGs.

Major impediments to the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean include fragmented governance and financing; exclusion of communities from decision-making; and data gaps in small-scale fisheries, gender roles and ecosystem health. In addition, plastic pollution remains an urgent global threat, while deep-sea mining poses emerging environmental concerns that require careful assessment. Many countries called for a precautionary pause on deep-sea mining and broad support for a Global Plastics Treaty to address lifecycle pollution.

The Forum also pinpointed emerging opportunities for ocean conservation and sustainable use, which include i) innovative finance like Nature Bonds, Blue Carbon Funds, and blended finance ii) leveraging digital technologies, for example, AI for vessel tracking, coral reef monitoring, and electronic fisheries surveillance. Strengthening the science-policy interface and promoting science-based innovation, including emerging technologies, were considered critical to advancing ocean action. Delegates emphasized the importance of emerging technologies such as digital twins, marine observation systems, and inclusive data platforms.

Recognizing the importance of inclusive governance by engaging indigenous people, women and girls, and youth, the co-designed, local and community-led models such as indigenous-led marine protected areas (MPAs), co-governance with maritime sectors through Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), and youth councils are advocated. The Panel also invited consideration of marine ecosystems beyond their resource value, including through the examination of issues such as animal welfare.

The Forum agreed that it is important to maintain global momentum emanating from UNOC3. The UNOC3 Declaration calls upon States and regional economic integration organizations that have not done so to consider signing and ratifying, approving or accepting the Agreement, encourages the membership of the World Trade Organization to deposit their instruments of acceptance of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies and invites them to strengthen regional cooperation. The Panel also underscored the continued importance of implementing other relevant international instruments related to the ocean, including the Global Biodiversity Framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Paris Agreement under the UNFCCC.

Delegates also recognized the importance of leveraging the interlinkages between Goal 14 and other Goals. Goal 14 is closely connected to Goal 5 through the roles of women in fisheries and marine conservation; Goal 8 through the promotion of fair labour practices and safety in maritime sectors; Goal 13 (climate action) through the role of blue carbon ecosystems in climate mitigation; and Goal 3 through the impacts of ocean pollution on human health.

VII. Thematic review of progress

Accelerating SDG achievement in African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and middle-income countries

Part I: Africa, LDCs and LLDCs

Speakers emphasized that the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising debt burdens, shrinking fiscal space and declining flows of ODA and FDI have severely constrained the prospects of African countries, LDCs and LLDCs. These constraints have been further exacerbated by climate change, global economic instability, geopolitical tensions, lack of energy

and Internet access and high investment gaps for the SDGs. They noted that the *Compromiso de Sevilla* reaffirmed the centrality of the Doha Programme of Action (DPoA) for LDCs and the Awaza Programme of Action (APoA) for LLDCs to unlock structural transformation and accelerate progress towards the SDGs, serving as enablers and offering concrete pathways to close development gaps and recover lost ground in the final five years of the 2030 Agenda.

Some stressed the need for a rights-based approach, good and equitable governance and multilateralism for advancing implementation. Observing that youth make up more than half the population in these groups of countries, calls were made to remove systemic barriers by investing in their education and facilitating access to employment and ICTs. One speaker said that investing in women—who comprise 50 per cent of business owners in Africa—as well as in digital technology, which has been shown to impact 34 SDG targets, could potentially double Africa's GDP. Another noted that discrimination of vulnerable groups and corruption are both major threats to SDG progress in many African countries.

There was agreement that African countries and LDCs face systemic challenges, including poverty, and many expressed their commitment to supporting African countries, LDCs and LLDCs through various initiatives such as financial aid, capacity building programmes, knowledge sharing and debt relief. They reaffirmed the importance of financial support to the implementation of the DPoA and APoA, immediate debt relief, integrated solutions, political will and commitment.

Several LDCs reported substantially reduced poverty levels and the provision of extensive social health coverage to their populations. Some countries and organizations reported on their support to African countries, noting that Africa is home to 32 of the 44 LDCs, and describing support in areas of education, gender equality, rule of law, ocean governance, debt-for-climate swaps, technical cooperation, energy access, health and nutrition. Others detailed strategic partnerships to address the challenges faced by African countries and LLDCs. Several LLDCs looked forward to participating in the upcoming Third UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC3), to be convened in Awaza, Turkmenistan in August 2025.

Part II: MICs

The discussion underscored the persistent challenges faced by MICs in achieving inclusive and sustainable development, amid global economic uncertainties, social inequalities, and technological shifts. Recognized as key drivers of global economic growth and innovation, MICs play a critical role in shaping sustainable development pathways and South-South cooperation. Participants emphasized the pressing need for coordinated national strategies that leverage digital transformation, capacity building, and regional integration to unlock new growth opportunities. Attention was drawn to the paradox many middle-income countries face—limited access to concessional financing despite enduring structural vulnerabilities—which threatens to stall progress on critical development goals.

There was broad agreement that reforming the global financial architecture is essential to address these constraints. The Sevilla Commitment was welcomed as a pivotal framework for advancing inclusive and equitable financing mechanisms, with strong calls for its swift and comprehensive implementation. Many participants advocated for expanded access to concessional finance based on multidimensional vulnerability rather than income alone. Debt relief mechanisms, improved credit rating systems, and enhanced representation of developing countries in international financial institutions were also emphasized as key enablers.

Digitalization emerged as a central driver of resilient and diversified economic transformation. Delegations highlighted national initiatives aligned with the principles of the Global Digital Compact, focusing on human-centric, ethical, and inclusive digital development. Digital infrastructure, AI governance, and capacity building—particularly for youth, women, and marginalized groups—were noted as critical to closing persistent digital divides. Participants agreed that leveraging technology must support inclusive participation, strengthen digital public services, and catalyze productive diversification.

Practical actions shared during the discussion ranged from public-private partnerships and innovation hubs to reforms in taxation and financial mobilization. The Pact for the Future was referenced as a reaffirmation of commitments to leave no one behind and to advance innovative financing that bridges public and private sectors, ensuring equitable access to resources for vulnerable populations. Many participants underscored the Makati Declaration as a key political milestone, calling for both a strategic plan of action for wider international support and coordination, and a comprehensive, system-wide response plan by the UN system. There was consensus on the urgency of scaling up collaboration among governments, multilateral organizations, and private actors to accelerate structural transformation and sustainable growth.

Small island developing States: Strategies for SDG success

Many SIDS continue to face severe climate crises, high debt burdens and services, and limited capacities and resources for essential sectors such as health, education, and environmental protection, posing significant challenges to realize the 2030 Agenda's commitments and achievement of the SDGs by 2030.

The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda (ABAS) provides a blueprint for action aligned with the Pact for Future, and its success depends on aligning national strategies and development plans with ABAS's core pillars on resilience, inclusion and innovation, through a whole-of-society approach engaging youth, civil society and the private sector.

The international community, including the UN system, international financial institutions and multilateral development banks, must work hand-in-hand with SIDS to address their priorities, from protecting the ocean, forests and biodiversity to investing in sustainable livelihoods and resilient infrastructure, particularly through financing, capacity building, and knowledge exchange, building on the Nice Declaration (UNOC3), the Sevilla Commitment (FFD4), and the Pact of the Future.

Many SIDS face structural debt burdens and barriers to concessional financing, highlighting the need to expand fiscal space for concessional and grant financing resources available to SIDS, including through the better recognition of vulnerability of SIDS, revision of financing eligibility to look beyond the GDP per capita and economies of scale, operationalization of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) by the multilateral development banks and international financial institutions, and mainstreaming of innovative financing mechanisms such as blue bonds and debt-for-nature swaps.

Debt relief can provide SIDS with fiscal space to invest in infrastructure, climate adaptation, health systems, and education, which is essential for sustainable development and resilient prosperity. Immediate debt relief and a comprehensive rethinking of the global debt architecture are urgently needed. A renewed debt system should account for SIDS' vulnerabilities, promote

environmental justice, and protect human dignity. The role of predictable domestic and international public finance on concessional terms in supporting SIDS and leveraging private financing was also highlighted.

Participants underscored the urgent need to improve access to better, more coherent data on ABAS and SDG implementation, including through the operationalization of the ABAS Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and Centre of Excellence, to facilitate evidence-based policymaking and tracking progress on the ABAS implementation. In this regard, SIDS Global Data Hub represents a multilateral initiative that complements the national system and supports real-time sovereign data collection and tabulation, as well as institutional capacity building to inform evidence-based national policies and strategies.

Several participants stressed the need to integrate debt sustainability solutions, climate adaptation finance and investments, and capacity-building measures into the ABAS implementation, including through the Debt Sustainability Support Service.

The international community and the UN system have a key role to play in supporting SIDS to achieve their sustainable development objectives, including through supporting technical capacity building and multi-country projects to improve infrastructure, conservation and protection of nature capital; build climate resilience and early warning systems; and promote strategic alliances and South-South cooperation to foster disaster risk reduction and climate action with a focus on adaptation.

Strengthening alliances for SDG implementation: multi-stakeholder engagement for the 2030 Agenda

The global multilateral system is now under immense strain. This discussion highlighted a convergence of crises—violent conflicts, economic instability, climate shocks and rising inequality—that are eroding trust in institutions and threatening the foundation of the 2030 Agenda. Civil society, long the engine of progress on issues like HIV/AIDS, gender equality and labor rights, is facing unprecedented challenges.

Budget cuts, especially to programs like UNAIDS, risk reversing decades of progress, with projections of up to four million AIDS-related deaths and six million new infections by 2029. The approval of a revolutionary HIV prevention drug in the United States, priced at \$28,000 per person annually, underscores the inequities in access and the urgent need for generic alternatives. The moderator of the session stated that “The deeper crisis is not financial, it is moral.” The erosion of democratic space and the rollback of inclusive development threaten to dismantle the multilateral gains of the past decades.

In response to these challenges, speakers across sectors and regions called for a reinvigoration of inclusive multilateralism grounded in justice, equity, and accountability. There was a strong consensus that the United Nations and its Member States must uphold and protect hard-won civil and human rights, including the rights of women, LGBTIQ+ individuals, workers, and Indigenous peoples. Civil society must be recognized as co-creators of solutions. This includes ensuring their meaningful participation in policymaking, budgeting and monitoring processes. Several speakers emphasized the need for structural reforms within the UN system to ensure that marginalized voices are not only heard but have real influence. The upcoming WSSD2 was repeatedly cited as a pivotal moment to institutionalize these efforts. Civil society groups are preparing to present

bold, intersectional proposals that reflect the lived realities of those most affected by inequality and exclusion. They are demanding that the Summit not be a symbolic exercise but a transformative space that redefines power, participation and accountability.

Many countries shared promising practices for engaging civil society in SDG implementation, showcasing a global appetite for more inclusive governance. Some countries outlined their structured, participatory approaches, emphasizing the importance of building a multistakeholder consensus-building including Government, academia, civil society and the private sector in national SDG plans.

Participants concluded that with the 2030 Agenda off-track, and as the UN approaches its 80th anniversary, the clear message is that multistakeholder engagement that includes marginalized communities in policymaking and implementation is essential for the world to realize the promise of the 2030 Agenda.

Transformation from the ground up: Acting at local level

Speakers emphasized that achieving the SDGs requires genuine local engagement. Key measures included financial resources, capacity building for local officials, legal empowerment and decentralization. While local governments are closest to citizens, proximity alone is insufficient. Mechanisms must ensure participation from underrepresented groups. Women's leadership is vital, and specific steps could include partnering with women's groups, gender budgeting and local capacity development.

Some stressed the need for expansion of local reviews, and others called for participatory governance, local ownership, and mandatory—not voluntary—SDG frameworks. Speakers also called for strong national-local data cooperation; disaggregation by gender, ethnicity and geography; and community-led data practices.

Many described innovative local approaches being undertaken in their countries. The VLRs were praised as useful in tracking progress, fostering inclusion, and leaving no one behind. Countries also emphasized the importance of empowering local leadership and ensuring their access to necessary resources and highlighted rural SDG localization through sustainable farming.

Regional perspectives on SDG implementation

The UN Regional Commissions (ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, UNECE) are uniquely positioned to translate global commitments into regional and national implementation, highlighting their convening power, technical expertise and institutional memory. They play a pivotal role in aligning frameworks, supporting VNRs, building capacities and facilitating financing and partnerships. There was a strong call to adequately fund and empower the Regional Commissions, especially in consideration of the UN80 initiative.

Representatives of regional perspectives recognized that SDG progress is lagging and emphasized the need to intensify efforts through stronger policy coherence, institutional reform and integrated development approaches. ECA underscored the dual commitment to Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. ESCWA emphasized investing in social protection and managing the green and digital transitions, while ESCAP called for inclusive digital access and climate resilience for vulnerable states. ECLAC focused on breaking structural constraints and enhancing governance. ECE noted progress was slow but surmountable with the right technologies and policies in place.

Social protection, equity and inclusion were recurrent themes in the discussion related to the upcoming WSSD2. Some pushed for a “new social contract,” while others stressed inclusive education, universal health care and labor informality reduction, and emphasized increasing health budget allocations and local vaccine production. The need to support marginalized communities, especially people with disabilities, was reinforced by stakeholder groups.

Innovative financing was deemed essential across regions. ECA called for debt relief and fair valuation of natural capital. ECE promoted blended finance and local-level investments. ESCAP and ECLAC emphasized domestic resource mobilization, while ESCWA suggested turning debt into development investments. Several regions proposed reforming global financial frameworks to align with current needs. The private sector was acknowledged as a crucial partner in mobilizing resources and driving innovation.

Good practices and replicable examples were cited by many, including emphasis on regional value chains and blue economy, digital innovation, AI applications for health and governance and marine conservation strategies. Some speakers advocated for documentation and certification of scalable, local solutions such as climate-resilient parks and reforestation.

VIII. Opening of the ministerial segment

The President of ECOSOC reaffirmed that the SDGs are not optional ideals, but essential commitments rooted in humanity’s common sense. Reflecting on the UN’s founding principles, he reminded delegates that peace requires justice, security demands dignity, and prosperity must be shared to be meaningful. Amid ongoing global disruptions, climate change, conflict, economic instability and unchecked nationalism, he stressed that now is the time to renew our obligations rather than abandon our ideals. The President acknowledged the challenge posed by shrinking national budgets and difficult political environments, which complicate the UN’s work but do not render it impossible. He urged stronger collaboration with civil society, the private sector, youth, Indigenous peoples, and local governments, emphasizing that the SDGs become reality through inclusive implementation. He called for ECOSOC to deepen cooperation with the General Assembly and Security Council to address the roots of conflict and economic crises, warning against repeating the mistakes of the early 20th century. He underscored the obligation to promote higher living standards, full employment, and universal human rights, both nationally and globally, fostering understanding and respect. He expressed gratitude to VNR countries and praised ECOSOC’s partnerships with the World Bank and IMF on financing and the work of other UN bodies on forced displacement and AI.

The Secretary-General reflected on recent milestones including the Pandemic Agreement, UNOC3 and FFD4 that signal momentum, represent collective progress and affirm that multilateralism can deliver meaningful results. He underscored the vital link between sustainable development and peace and called for an end to ongoing conflicts. He highlighted critical challenges in health inequalities exposed by COVID-19, ongoing violence and discrimination against women and girls, and the prevalence of informal work affecting over two billion people. He emphasized the need to fulfill commitments on ocean conservation; invest in science, data and social innovation; responsibly leverage AI; and strengthen government capacities for reform. He embraced the VNRs as tools of accountability and shared learning.

The President of the General Assembly noted the successes of UNOC3 and FFD4, and emphasized that the Pact for the Future offers an inclusive and equitable framework well-suited to address the complex challenges of the 21st century. Recognizing the persistent gap between ambition and delivery, he stressed that closing this divide requires solidarity, adequate resources and political will. He encouraged all Member States to endorse the consensus around the draft ministerial declaration and underscored their dedication to multilateralism. He praised the VNRs for effectively translating global commitments into national action, affirmed that they deserve full support and urged participants to harness the momentum gained from recent milestones in Seville and Nice, carrying it forward to Doha and beyond to achieve transformative outcomes.

The representative of the Major Group for Children and Youth urged full implementation of the 2030 Agenda and warned against excluding youth from AI governance, calling for a global framework to ensure safe, inclusive AI that protects vulnerable communities. She advocated for institutionalizing youth participation in science and technology policy, full inclusion of migrant youth in climate plans and closing the digital and STEM gender gap undermining Goal 5. She called for investment in equitable systems that support care work, reproductive rights and bodily autonomy, and urged stronger youth engagement in the Commission on the Status of Women. She also proposed a UN legal framework to address unsustainable debt, youth representation in financing for development, and long-term funding for grassroots initiatives. Finally, she called for stronger youth inclusion in ECOSOC processes and a global ceasefire in all armed conflicts.

IX. Voluntary national reviews

Ten years of VNRs have produced over 400 reports that demonstrate national accountability through efforts to embed the SDGs into national development frameworks, mobilize whole-of-society approaches and scale up local solutions. This year, representatives of 35 countries* presented their VNRs, reaffirming their strong commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the principle of leaving no one behind. They largely emphasized the need for inclusive governance, stakeholder participation and civil society engagement to create people-centered approaches with long-term impacts. Many Governments have mainstreamed the SDGs into national policies, strategies and planning frameworks, emphasizing cross-sectoral coherence and gender-responsive policies.

Stakeholder engagement has emerged as a central pillar in SDG planning, implementation and review. Governments have largely adopted whole-of-society approaches that involve civil society, youth, Indigenous peoples, academia, and the private sector through consultations, town halls and formal governance mechanisms. Multi-stakeholder engagement including local governments and vulnerable groups was central in the design and implementation of most VNRs this year. Localization of the 2030 Agenda, through mechanisms like VLRs and integrated policy frameworks, coupled with multi-stakeholder collaboration, is a proven and critical enabler for SDG progress, and presenting countries showcased tangible results at both grassroots and national levels.

Advancing gender equality and empowering women and girls was presented as a priority for many countries, with efforts ranging from legal reforms to targeted programs, as well as political participation and gender-responsive budgeting. Poverty eradication remains a central objective for many Governments, with expanding access to quality healthcare, education, and essential services

* Please see the Annex for a list of the 35 countries that presented Voluntary National Reviews in 2025.

such as water and electricity cited as core priorities. Countries highlighted investments in poverty alleviation and social protection, often through targeted programs such as cash transfers, job creation schemes and community development initiatives. Some reported on capitalizing on the interlinkages among innovative financing mechanisms and improvements in social reforms, healthcare access and education as catalysts for sustainable transformation, including stronger mainstreaming of gender and environmental policies.

While significant achievements have been made by several countries in poverty reduction, health care, gender equality and environmental protection, others reported on persistent challenges including aid dependency, youth unemployment, gender-based violence, gender inequality, fiscal constraints, structural inequalities and economic informality. Some also flagged urgency in post-conflict settings where war, trauma and displacement continue to hinder progress and threaten the principle of leaving no one behind. Many called for enhanced international support, including targeted partnerships and knowledge-sharing to accelerate progress, particularly for vulnerable groups.

Climate action was identified as an urgent, cross-cutting priority, with countries committing to adaptation, environmental sustainability and increased access to international climate finance. Countries widely acknowledged the climate crisis and described measures they are taking to increase climate resilience and invest in renewable energy technologies. Addressing climate change by strengthening data systems and enhancing international cooperation and financing were priorities for most countries, as these measures are also important for overcoming systemic challenges such as territorial disparities, policy delivery gaps and limited institutional capacity. A few countries underscored the need for ocean governance and marine ecosystem protection as critical components of sustainable development and climate resilience. Innovations in clean energy, green finance and digital tools were showcased as drivers of resilient economies.

Countries reported on how technology and science are helping to drive innovation and support implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Monitoring SDG progress through improved data systems and disaggregated indicators was seen as vital for evidence-based policymaking. Digital transformation, data collection and statistical analysis were recognized by many countries as catalysts for SDG progress overall, and some described efforts to improve national SDG monitoring systems, strengthen national data collection and promote policy coherence for accelerated implementation. International cooperation, regional partnerships and South-South cooperation was discussed by several countries as important for SDG advancement. Statistical analysis and digital development were highlighted as tools to help Governments better support local populations, work across sectors, and track SDG progress. AI has been implemented to drive intervention and community engagement in some countries.

Civil society actors emphasized the need to sustain and deepen engagement beyond VNR presentations to ensure inclusive and accountable development strategies. They acknowledged national progress on the SDGs, highlighted persistent gaps and offered targeted recommendations, including formalizing civil society participation in SDG processes, aligning education with labor market needs, investing in gender-transformative education, expanding gender-responsive budgeting, improving disaggregated data systems, and securing sustainable financing through progressive taxation. Many speakers underscored the need for inclusive, community-driven approaches to ensure no one is left behind.

X. General debate

As the world approaches the 2030 deadline for achieving the SDGs, a strong sense of urgency permeated the general debate. Many countries expressed concern that progress is significantly off track, with recent global crises reversing hard-won development gains and exacerbating inequalities. LDCs have seen little to no advancement, with economic growth remaining below targets. Despite these setbacks, countries reaffirmed their commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the principle of leaving no one behind. The SDGs continue to serve as a guiding framework for national planning, budgeting and reform efforts. Special attention was given to vulnerable groups, including women, children, youth, Indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities, with many countries highlighting inclusive policies and targeted investments.

Multilateralism emerged as a central theme, with widespread agreement that international cooperation is essential to overcoming global challenges and accelerating SDG progress. Many delegations emphasized the importance of a strong and effective United Nations, calling for reforms to make the organization more inclusive, responsive, and aligned with contemporary global realities. The UN's 80th anniversary was seen as a pivotal moment to reflect on its role and renew global commitment to sustainable development. Countries welcomed the UN80 initiative as an opportunity to streamline operations, enhance impact and ensure that the UN is better equipped to support vulnerable populations and respond to emerging challenges. Several delegations stressed the need for a revitalized multilateral system that is agile, inclusive and capable of addressing both current and future crises. It was also noted that reforms should instead prioritize the 2030 Agenda and address pressing development needs.

Financing for development was another dominant concern. Many countries highlighted persistent and widening financing gaps, particularly in the global South. There were strong calls for bold reforms of the international financial architecture to make it more equitable, accessible and responsive to the needs of developing countries. Scaled-up access to concessional and grant-based resources, meaningful debt relief and increased climate finance were identified as critical to bridging the SDG financing gap. Some countries emphasized the need for tailored financial measures during transitions out of LDC status and called for international cooperation to curb illicit financial flows and recover stolen assets. Others expressed concern over declining official development assistance projections and called for predictable financing and debt relief, especially for SIDS. The outcomes of FFD4 and the Sevilla Commitment were widely endorsed as important tools for accelerating SDG implementation.

Participants noted that none of the health-related SDG targets have been fully achieved and that half the world lacks access to essential services. Countries emphasized the need for resilient health systems, pandemic preparedness and digital health solutions. Some condemned attacks on health infrastructure in conflict zones, while others shared national experiences of how conflict has reversed health and development gains. Universal health coverage was prioritized as a national and collective goal, with several countries reporting progress in maternal and child health through targeted investments, although health outcomes in LDCs continue to lag behind global averages, particularly in reproductive health and maternal mortality. Some countries shared progress in maternal health, vaccination and rural healthcare, while others emphasized the need for resilient systems to address emerging health threats. Mental health and non-communicable diseases were acknowledged as growing public health priorities requiring urgent attention.

Gender equality was highlighted as a cross-cutting enabler of sustainable development. Countries reported progress in eliminating gender-based violence, promoting women's participation in decision-making and expanding access to economic opportunities. Legislative reforms, digital platforms and targeted investments were cited as tools to empower women and girls. Some countries emphasized the importance of gender-responsive justice systems and social protection services. Others stressed that gender equality should not be undermined by broader reform efforts and called for continued efforts to close gender gaps in education, leadership and the workplace.

Decent work and economic growth remained a priority, with many countries focusing on youth employment, vocational training and inclusive economic strategies. Some highlighted efforts to formalize employment, improve working conditions and align labor laws with international standards. Others reported on the creation of temporary jobs, support for women entrepreneurs and the role of small businesses in driving growth. Despite these efforts, structural challenges persist, particularly in the global South, where economic slowdowns are affecting job creation and income growth. LDCs noted that economic growth remains below targets, with high youth unemployment and a predominance of informal, low-paid and unprotected jobs.

Ocean sustainability and marine ecosystem protection were key concerns, especially for coastal and island nations. Countries reported on actions to expand marine protected areas, combat illegal fishing and restore coastal ecosystems. Regional cooperation and sustainable fisheries governance were highlighted as important strategies. Some countries reaffirmed their commitment to ocean conservation and called for urgent ocean financing. The BBNJ Agreement was frequently mentioned as an essential tool for advancing marine sustainability. Climate change was identified as an existential threat, with countries calling for investment in ocean science, resilient infrastructure and environmental protection. Low-carbon energy initiatives, green financing and organic farming were also discussed as part of broader sustainability efforts.

International partnerships were described as indispensable to achieving the SDGs. Countries emphasized the importance of inclusive cross-sectoral collaboration involving civil society, youth and the private sector. Many reported aligning national development plans with international cooperation frameworks and scaling up engagement with multilateral organizations. South–South and triangular cooperation were highlighted as effective mechanisms for sharing knowledge and resources. Countries called for honoring development assistance commitments and ensuring that technology, financing and capacity-building reach those most in need. The localization of SDG implementation through municipal-level action and data systems was also emphasized.

Digital technologies were recognized as powerful enablers of sustainable development. Investments in digital infrastructure, inclusive data systems and e-governance were seen as essential for transparency and efficiency. Technology was also highlighted as a tool to support small businesses, education and local governance. Some delegations expressed support for the UN to play a central role in global AI governance, particularly in building capacity in developing countries.

National ownership of development responsibility emerged as a key theme, with countries sharing strategies for SDG acceleration and inclusive planning. Grassroots solutions, particularly those involving Indigenous knowledge and women's leadership, were highlighted as effective approaches. Some highlighted inclusive VNR processes that elevated the voices of marginalized groups. Others reported on health coverage expansion, youth employment initiatives and SDG-

aligned reforms. Civil society groups stressed that vulnerable populations continue to be excluded from progress and called for more inclusive policies. Youth representatives emphasized the need for institutional reforms to ensure their participation in decision-making and proposed a youth lens in reviewing global commitments.

Annex

List of countries and groups presenting voluntary national reviews of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in 2025

1. Angola **
2. Bangladesh ***
3. Belarus ***
4. Bhutan ***
5. Bulgaria **
6. Czech Republic ***
7. Dominican Republic ***
8. El Salvador ***
9. Eswatini ***
10. Ethiopia ***
11. Finland ***
12. Gambia ***
13. Germany ***
14. Ghana ***
15. Guatemala ****
16. India ***
17. Indonesia ****
18. Iraq ***
19. Israel **
20. Japan ***
21. Kazakhstan ***
22. Kyrgyz Republic **
23. Lesotho ***
24. Malaysia ***
25. Malta **
26. Micronesia **
27. Nigeria ***
28. Papua New Guinea **
29. Philippines ****
30. Qatar ****
31. Saint Lucia **
32. Seychelles **
33. Sudan ***
34. Suriname **
35. Thailand ***

** Presenting for the second time.

*** Presenting for the third time.

**** Presenting for the fourth time