



MESSAGES OF THE REGIONAL FORUMS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

2023



**Towards an Accelerated Recovery
from Multiple Crises**



**United
Nations**

ECA • ECLAC • ESCAP • ESCWA • UNECE

From February to April 2023, the United Nations regional commissions organized the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development (RFSDs), promoting dialogue among member States and multiple stakeholders on ways to accelerate the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels. The following key messages reflect shared priorities as well as region-specific challenges and recommendations. They serve as the inputs from the 5 Regional Forums to the deliberation at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the 2023 SDG Summit.

Our common messages



At the mid-point in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, a recommitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is the only path forward for a sustainable future. As SDG progress is largely off track, now is the time to double down on implementing the SDGs. Game changing solutions exist to accelerate urgently needed progress



Sustainable financing and transformative actions are also pivotal to realizing the 2030 Agenda. Financing for sustainable development must be sustained and further scaled up. This requires a reform of the international financial architecture, increased support for developing countries in managing debt and accessing soft loans and climate finance, more private investment and more innovative financing.



SDG policies must be informed by authoritative data. National statistical systems must be strengthened to have more timely and disaggregated data. Legal frameworks must be developed and strengthened to improve data-sharing, support open-source data, national and regional data exchange, and leverage satellite imaging and big data.



Investments in resilience of people, cities and economies, especially those in vulnerable situations, are key. This includes investments in social well-being, and tackling climate change. Food and energy systems need to be resilient and sustainable. Digital innovations/solutions need to be embraced.



Peace, stability, and resilience are preconditions for SDG progress. Ending conflicts and occupation and addressing insecurity to create an enabling environment for sustainable development are critical for the achievement of the SDGs and require strengthened regional cooperation and global solidarity.



Enhancing collaboration and bolstering partnerships across countries and stakeholders is vital to advancing the SDGs. Subnational and local actors must be involved in the SDG localization and VNR process, and inclusive approaches are required that engage vulnerable and marginalized groups such as women, youth, persons with disabilities, and indigenous communities.

Halfway towards the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda, most African countries are struggling and are generally off-track to meet most of the SDG targets. For example, 411 million people in Africa still lack basic drinking water service and 779 million lack access to basic sanitation services. Moreover, Africa remains the least electrified region, with 589 million without access to electricity. At the same time climate-induced disasters are increasing and disproportionately affect the continent. The continent lags in industrialization with manufacturing accounting for just 10.5 per cent of African gross domestic product.

Innovative and transformative initiatives such as the Great Blue Wall, Great Green Wall, Battery and Electric Vehicle Value Chain, Regional African Carbon Markets; digital transformation; enhancing the demographic dividend of Africa's youth population; and the implementation of the AfCFTA will be key drivers for achieving the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in Africa.

Roadmaps should be designed, financed and implemented to modernize and transform national statistical systems to inform the formulation of data-driven policies and programmes and for reporting on the two agendas.

It is crucial to reinforce people-centered approaches and strengthen engagement as well as increase funding for the vulnerable and those at risk of being left behind. The demographic dividend can be realised through concrete investments in strengthening human capital, expanding opportunities for job creation and managing global commons.

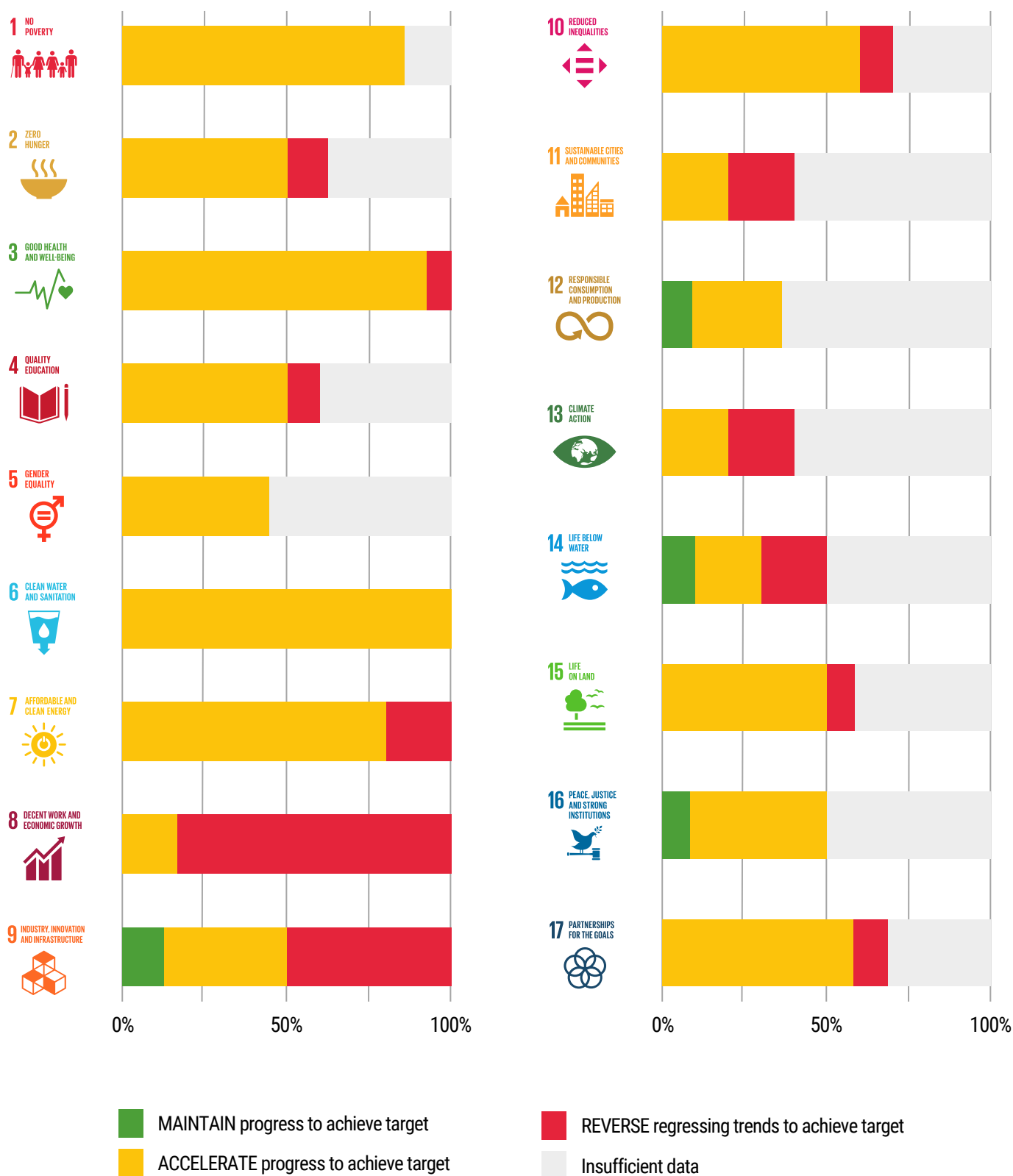
Science, technology and innovation policies and strategies should be incorporated and fully implemented as integral priorities of national development visions and plans.

The United Nations Resident Coordinators should boost their support to revitalize national institutions and development plans and advance transformational initiatives to recover from multiple crises and achieve the SDGs.

SDG financing should be delivered including through concrete actions to reform the global financial architecture to be responsive to Africa's needs and to urgently operationalize the Sustainable Debt Coalition and the Loss and Damage Fund.



Percentage of SDG Targets by progress status in 2023

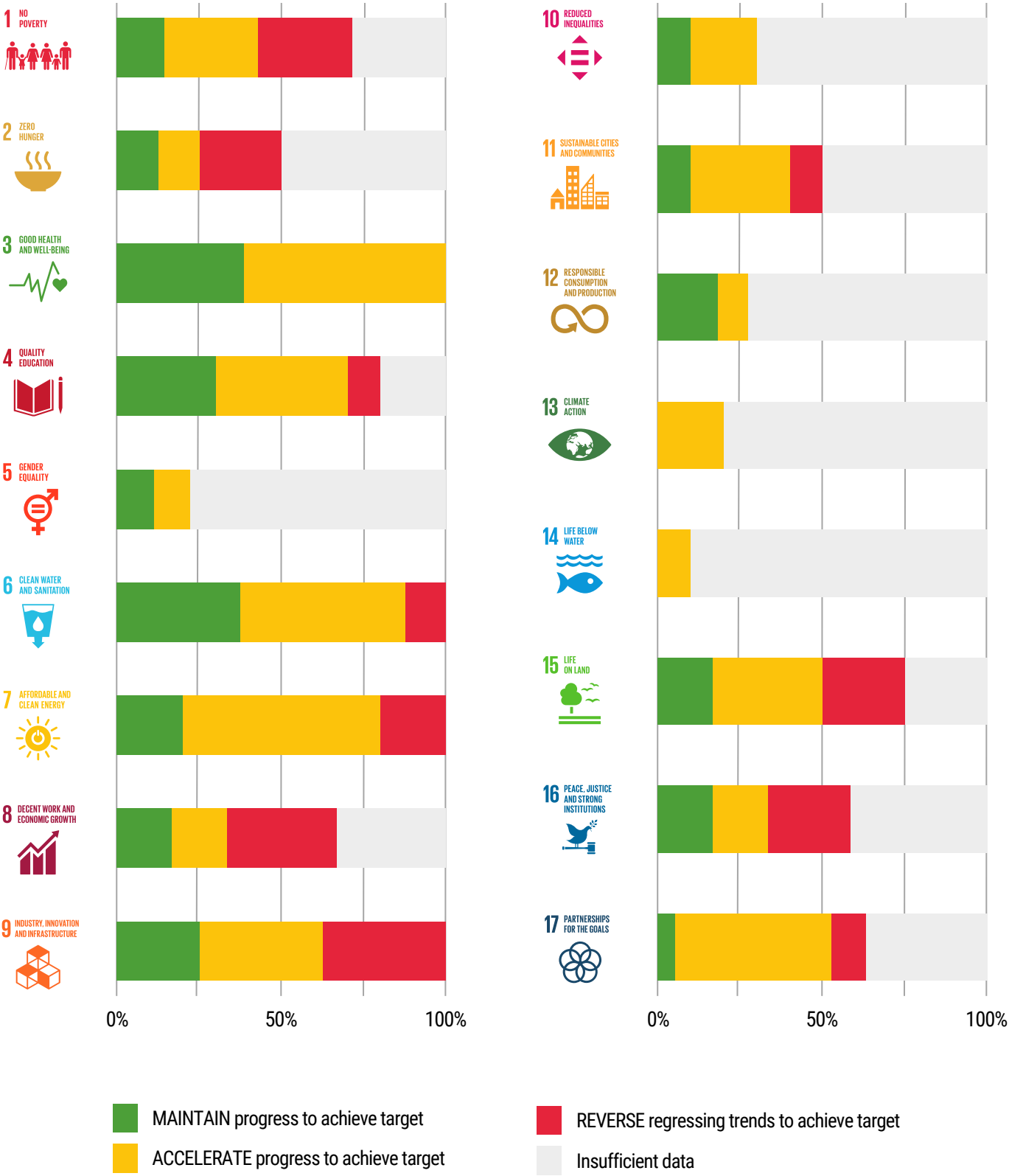


Arab States

- **Protecting water security is critical for the region and will require the adoption and activation of a water-energy-food security-ecosystem nexus approach.** It is also essential to enhance community participation in water management, build relevant capacity in government institutions, establish research centers for transboundary water resources, and mobilize investments in water infrastructure.
- **Ambitious and clear targets must be set, and research funded, to increase the share of renewables in the energy mix** as a practical course of action to minimize exposure to fluctuations in the fossil fuel market, reduce pollution and diversify economies.
- **To reduce dependence on food imports and build resilience to price volatility, regional investments in Arab food systems are needed,** including the transfer of modern technologies such as those that help produce crops adapted to climatic conditions, and efficient irrigation and energy techniques.
- **The private sector must be incentivized to invest in knowledge production, consider investment opportunities in the SDGs** such as in the circular economy and shared social value, and commit to transparent sustainability reporting.
- **Breaking the cycle of intergenerational violence will require action to promote gender equality standards and dismantle prevailing discriminatory stereotypes.** Investments in programmes to reduce violence against women and children are also needed, including child-rearing and risk management programmes for adolescents.
- **Efforts to mobilize SDG financing must be accompanied by clear plans to address the governance of finance, the waste of public expenditure and corruption.** This includes implementing strict anti-corruption measures and enhancing fiscal transparency and accountability.



Percentage of SDG Targets by progress status in 2023



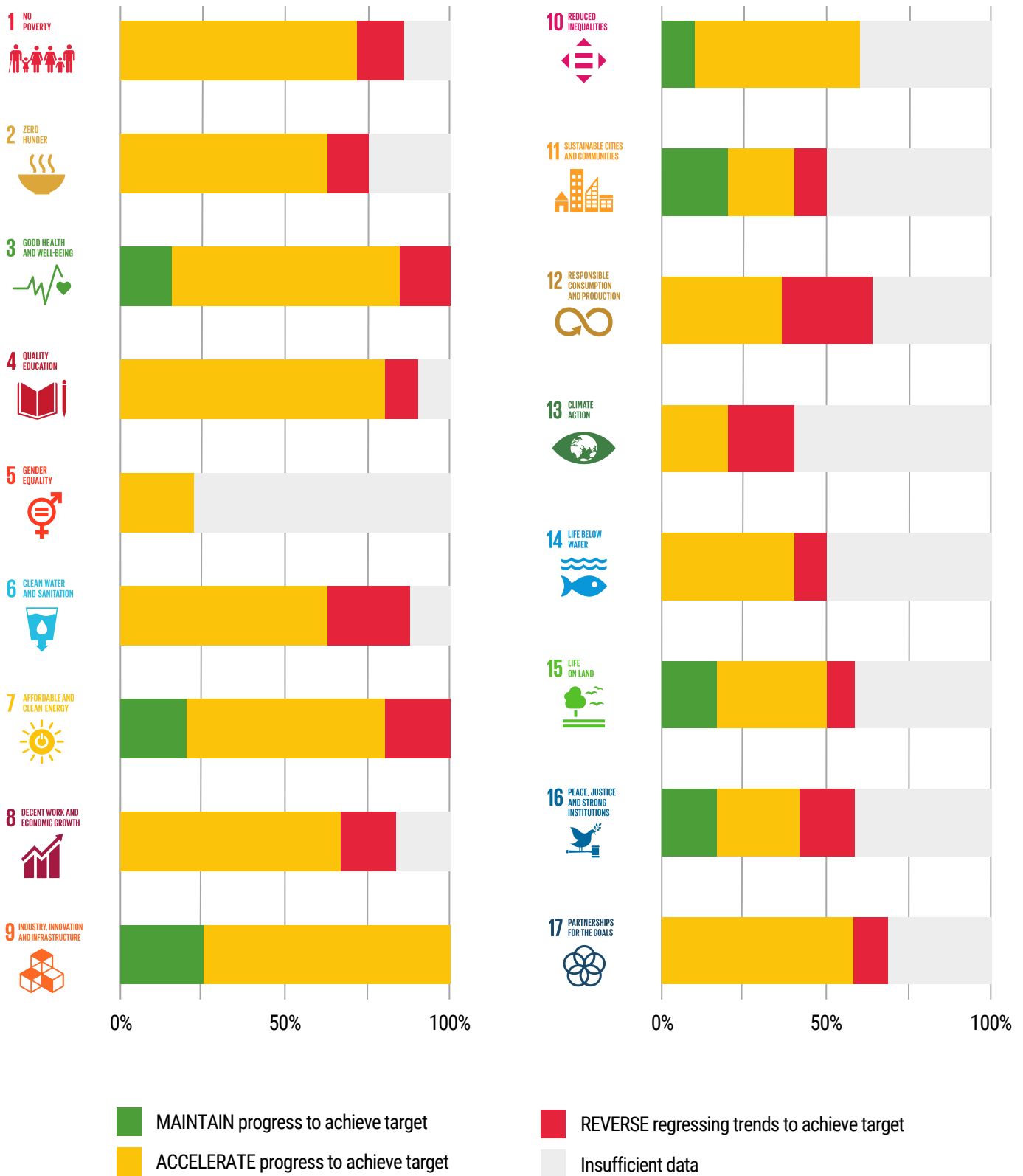
Source: <https://arabsdgmonitor.unescwa.org/>

Asia and the Pacific

- **Multiple crises have pushed millions of people in Asia and the Pacific into poverty**, increased inequality and further undermined progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. As we reach the midpoint in implementing the 2030 Agenda, the progress made in the Asia-Pacific region stands only at 14.4 per cent. At the current pace, the region will miss 90 per cent of the 118 measurable targets by 2030 unless concerted efforts are made. One in five SDG targets are regressing and need a complete trend reversal.
- **Many solutions are being implemented across the region, where countries remain committed to the 2030 Agenda** as a blueprint for responding to the multiple crises and the region's major challenges, including for transforming the energy and food systems to support a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient recovery.
- **Regional cooperation, South-South and triangular cooperation and partnerships are essential for bringing about the necessary transformations** at the speed and scale necessary to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. These can foster high-impact initiatives and transformative actions to enhance social well-being, tackle climate change and support the region's energy transition.
- **Confronting food, energy, social and environmental crises will require scaling up investments in achieving the Goals**, including through targeted national stimulus measures and innovative public and private sector financing, and addressing debt sustainability concerns.
- **The collective and coordinated work of the United Nations development system at the regional level remains of critical importance** to the members and associate members of ESCAP in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.



Percentage of SDG Targets by progress status in 2023



Latin America and the Caribbean

All 33 Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries have institutions in place that support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The 53 VNRs submitted by LAC countries have generated an exponentially growing interest in the contribution of subnational and local actors to the fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda, while local authorities are increasingly involved in the development of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs).

Halfway to the deadline set for the 2030 Agenda, only a quarter of the targets have been or are expected to be met by 2030 in the LAC region. Progress towards 48 per cent of the targets goes in the right direction but too slow, and for 27 per cent, the trend is backwards. Thus, 75 per cent of the targets are at risk of not being met unless transformative policies are taken to get back on track.

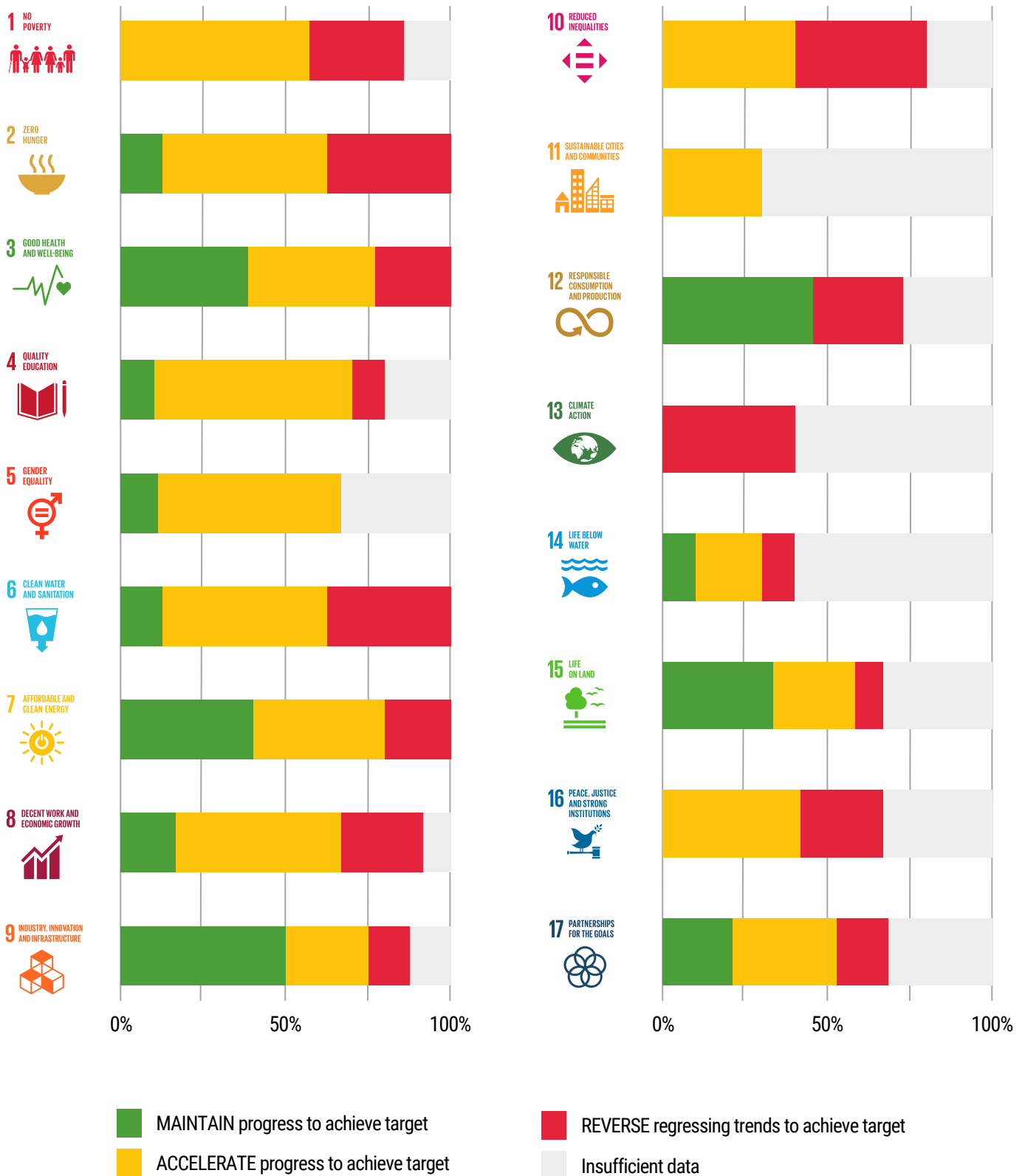
To pick up the pace, ECLAC proposes seven transformative initiatives that can simultaneously drive the achievement of several SDGs: the bioeconomy, sustainable tourism, the digital transformation, regional economic integration, the care society and gender equality, the energy transition and related industries, and the export of modern Internet-enabled services.

Seven years from 2030, the path ahead is as important as the outcome as it lays the foundations for the paradigm shift needed to build the future that generations will inherit. Foresight and the ability to adopt a forward-looking approach are increasingly relevant for the achievement of the SDGs and with the crisis proving the need to focus on the long-term.

The region is at the forefront of the care systems dialogue, but income inequality and the rural-urban divide persist. Productive transformation, boosting renewable energy, bridging the digital divide, renewing cooperation models, and rethinking concessional finance eligibility for middle-income countries, including by building a multi-dimensional vulnerability index, along with regional integration and cooperation are vital in this process.



Percentage of SDG Targets by progress status in 2023

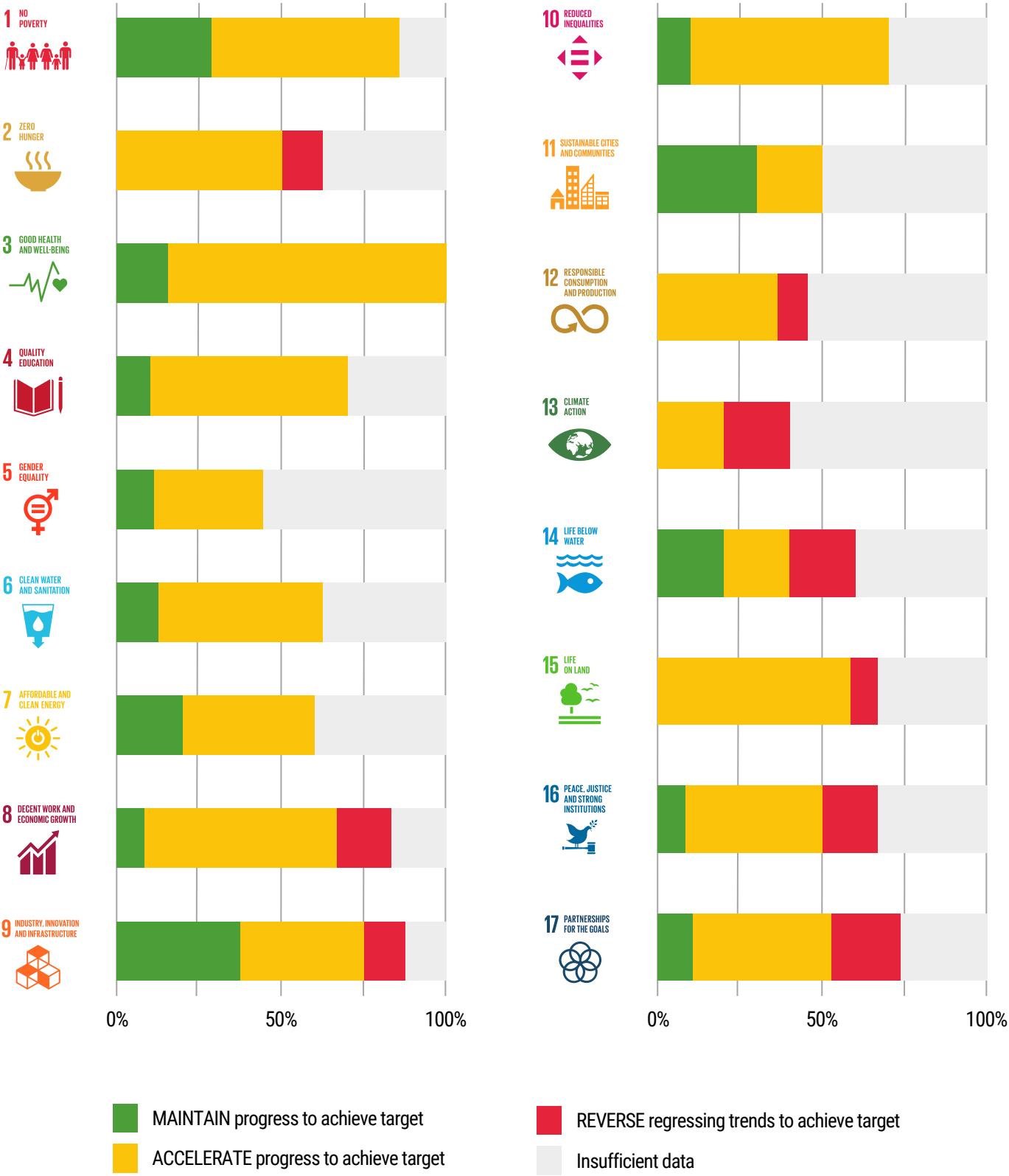


UNECE Region

- **The 2023 UNECE Regional Forum succeeded in carving out a space for substantive discussions** on how to accelerate SDG progress in challenging circumstances.
- **The 2023 SDG progress report for the UNECE region shows that much progress is required halfway to 2030.** The region will achieve only 21 out of 169 SDG targets by 2030. For 79 targets, progress must accelerate, and the current trends need to be reversed for 15 targets. Data is still insufficient for assessing 54 targets.
- **The process of developing institutions, strategies and plans in line with the 2030 Agenda has continued throughout the region.** In addition, the protection of people from marginalized groups from the socioeconomic impact of various shocks has been a central concern.
- **Initiatives to engage different actors, including academia, science, the private sector and society at large, remain an important focus for SDG implementation.** Voluntary national reviews (VNRs) have provided a mechanism to coordinate efforts among various actors and rally support for implementation.
- **Progress towards sustainable development requires SDG localisation.** The UNECE Forum of Mayors can play a useful role to facilitate this engagement. Moreover, regional and subregional cooperation remains essential to fulfil the 2030 Agenda.
- **Developing public policies that promote SDGs requires precise, reliable, updated, and comparable data.** Furthermore, policy actions should be guided by scientific research and advice.



Percentage of SDG Targets by progress status in 2023



Source: <https://w3.unece.org/sdg2023>

The United Nations regional commissions would like to recognize and thank the chairs and vice-chairs of the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development (RFSDs) for their efforts and role as deliverers of the key regional messages at the global level.



