Frequently Asked Questions – For the Press

What is the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development?

- The Forum is the central platform for taking stock of the progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were adopted by world leaders in September 2015.
- It is an annual high-level event which provides an opportunity for countries to exchange experiences and share plans with regard to the implementation of the agenda, identifying gaps, lessons learned and providing policy recommendations.
- The HLPF aims to rallying further action to achieve the Goals by 2030 as we rebuild more resilient and prosperous societies following the devastating socio-economic impacts of COVID-19.
- The Forum seeks to address, in a cohesive and integrated manner, the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.
- The Forum also provides a platform for the creation of multi-stakeholder partnerships and the promotion of international cooperation as we advance towards achieving the SDGs.

Why is the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development important?

- The Forum is the key UN platform for reviewing implementation of the 2030 agenda. This year it is especially important because it will discuss how to respond to the impacts of the pandemic; and how to build back better and ensure that our response to COVID 19 puts us back on track for accelerated implementation of the 2030 agenda during the decade of action.
- The Forum serves as a global hub for governments, UN system organizations, intergovernmental bodies and the major groups and other stakeholders to share plans, exchange ideas and best practices and review progress on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.
- By providing political leadership, guidance and recommendations, it enables countries to accelerate progress towards achieving the goals and targets.
A central feature of the Forum is the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) that Member States present which showcase their work on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs.

The Forum provides an opportunity for countries, civil society and businesses to highlight the actions they are taking to achieve the SDGs and helps ensure that the SDGs remain relevant and ambitious.

Why is this year’s Forum of particular significance?

- While the theme of the HLPF is “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, the global challenges continue to hinder progress towards the 17 Goals.
- The COVID-19 has imperiled progress on the 17 Goals. Furthermore, the war in Ukraine is now further undermining food security, energy access and the economic recovery, complicating efforts to ensure needs of both present and future generations will be met.
- The Forum is taking place at a time of disrupted energy and food supplies, resulting in increasing inflation and threats of economic uncertainties. Urgent and scaled up efforts are needed worldwide if we are to achieve the SDGs by 2030. The UN Secretary-General launched his report “Our Common Agenda” in September 2021 to respond to the urgent need to get the SDGs back on track. Many of the actions proposed in “Our Common Agenda” seek to accelerate achievements of the SDGs.
- Health systems have been overwhelmed, unemployment has risen and it is expected that tens of millions of people will be pushed back into extreme poverty. The Forum is now more important than ever as the international community comes together this year to ensure that the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs are prioritized in the recovery from the pandemic and that we build forward better.

What are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

- Seven years ago, when member states adopted the SDGs, countries embarked on a journey to achieve a bold, ambitious and historic agenda to promote prosperity while protecting the environment.
- The SDGs—a core feature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—reflect a new understanding that development everywhere must integrate economic growth, social well-being and environmental protection.
• The list of the 17 SDGs, which contain 169 targets, can be found at [https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/)

• The SDGs offer the most practical and effective pathway to address the causes of violent conflict, human rights abuses, climate change and environmental degradation

How will the SDGs be achieved?
• Governments have the primary responsibility for follow-up to the 2030 Agenda. The achievement of SDGs also needs the efforts of whole society with contributions by all stakeholders in strong partnerships.
• The successful implementation of the SDGs relies on countries’ sustainable development policies, plans and programmes. It is led by countries. It also needs an enabling environmental of international cooperation and solidarity.
• Governments continue to develop national indicators to assist in monitoring progress made on the goals and targets, taking into account the global indicator framework.
• The mobilization of resources at both the domestic and international levels is essential to achieve the goals.
• The follow-up and review process at the global level is undertaken by the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and supported by an annual SDGs progress Report that is prepared by the United Nations Secretary-General.
• The **Decade of Action** is an opportunity to set the SDGs back on track and calls on governments, businesses, civil society and individuals to urgently scale up action through leadership, innovation, finance and collaboration to achieve the Goals by 2030.

In the seven years since the SDGs were adopted, what actions has the international community taken to achieve the Goals?
• Many Governments from both developed and developing countries have included the SDGs in their national policies and strategies and development plans. Many have taken concrete actions, measures and initiatives on advancing various SDGs in line with the national priorities, reaching out to communities and stakeholders. There have been many efforts to raise awareness about the SDGs and catalyze action among civil society, businesses, academia, media and other groups.
Many Businesses have integrated the SDGs into their companies’ practices and invested in new technologies.

Examples of concrete actions and initiatives by governments and other stakeholders to accelerate SDG implementation can be found online at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgactions.

Has there been progress in achieving the SDGs?
The COVID-19 pandemic presents a major setback in the advancement of the SDGs. This happens when the world was already not fully on track to achieve the SDGs by 2030:

- The proportion of children under 5 years suffering from chronic undernutrition, or stunting, decreased from 24.4% in 2015 to 22% in 2020.
- The percentage of young people completing upper secondary school increased from 54% in 2015 to 58% in 2020, slowing down relative to its progress in the preceding five-year period. The participation rate in organized learning one year before the official primary entry age rose steadily in the years before COVID-19, from 69% in 2010 to 75% in 2020, but with considerable variation between countries (ranging as low as 13% to nearly 100%).
- As of 1 January 2020, women’s representation in national parliaments (lower chamber and unicameral parliaments) reached 26.2%, up slightly from 25.6% in 2021.
- Access to clean cooking fuels and technologies increased to 69% in 2020, from 60% in 2015 and 56% in 2010.

Where have there been setbacks?

- As the world enters the third year of the COVID-19 crisis, the catastrophic effects on people’s lives and livelihoods and on global efforts to realize the Sustainable Development Goals is now beyond dispute.
- An estimated 30% of the world population—about 2.4 billion people – were affected by moderate or severe food insecurity in 2020, an increase of almost 320 million people in just one year.
- In 2021, the global unemployment rate stood at 6.2%, which is still well above the pre-pandemic rate of 5.4%. The ILO projects that unemployment will remain above its 2019 level until at least 2023. Meanwhile, the level of unemployment underestimates the full employment impact of the crisis since many who left the labour force have not come back. It also does not reflect the reduction in working hours for those that remained employed. In 2021, 4.3% of global working hours were lost compared to the fourth quarter.
of 2019, which is equivalent to a deficit of 125 million full-time jobs (assuming a 48-hour working week).

How does the Forum guide progress on the SDGs?

- At the Forum, countries present the progress they have made and the obstacles they face in implementing the Goals. This year, countries are expected to share the impact of COVID-19 as well as the lessons they have learnt in the context of implementing the sustainable development agenda.

- A particular focus will be placed on how the policies to recover from COVID-19 can, at the same time, advance the SDGs. There will be discussions for example on whether emergency social protection or health measures are now translating into strengthening of social protection or health systems; or on whether recovery policies trigger the structural socio-economic or financial changes or reforms we need in order to realize the SDGs.

- The Forum brings together Member States, UN system, civil society, NGOs, the private sector and other stakeholders to discuss progress and review successes – it leads to new partnerships and energizes actions. It keeps the SDGs on the national and international agendas.

- The Forum results in the Ministerial Declaration which provides political guidance on the way forward for advancing the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

What will be the focus and format of the Forum this year?

- This year’s Forum, which takes place in person between 5-15 July will focus on the theme, “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

- This year alone 44 countries will present their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) of their implementation of the 2030 Agenda – a platform for sharing their experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learnt, in implementing the sustainable development agenda. Since the adoption of the SDGs, 176 countries have submitted their VNRs.

- The forum will review in-depth SDG 4 on quality education, 5 on gender equality, 14 on life below water, 15 on life on land, and 17 on partnerships for the Goals.

- The 2022 Sustainable Development Goals Report will be launched at the Forum, presenting new data and underscoring the need for further action to ensure that we achieve the Goals by the 2030 deadline.
Who will be attending the HLPF?

- Ministers and other high-level representatives from both developed and developing countries will present their national voluntary reviews at UN Headquarters in New York.
- A large number of world leading experts and voices, including Nobel Prizes, UN special envoys, economists, environment scientists, and social activists will participate in the Forum as resource persons to present their visions and experience on the impact of COVID-19 to SDGs and the way forward.
- UN system organizations, intergovernmental organizations at the international and regional levels, civil society, the private sector, academia and other stakeholders will also participate and provide major inputs.

Which countries are presenting their reviews this year?


11 countries presenting for the first time, 28 conducting their second reviews*, 3 countries conducting their third review** and 2 countries conducting their fourth review*** Their reviews may be found at: https://hlpf.un.org

How many countries have presented their review up to this date?

- Since 2016 which marks the first time countries presented their plans to achieve the SDGs, 247 VNRs have been presented by 176 countries.
- 9 countries have not yet presented or expressed interest to present a VNR.

Why are these reviews significant?

- These reviews are voluntary and demonstrate the commitment of the individual countries and the international community to mobilize efforts towards achieving the Goals.
- Reviews by countries at the Forum provide the opportunity to mobilize support and advice to overcome shared challenges, identify new and
emerging issues and provide recommendations for implementing the Goals.

- The presentation of reviews is a peer learning experience and can spur further action to implement the SDGs.
- Success in achieving the SDGs will help to address some of the most pressing global challenges, such as climate change (which is also an SDG), providing a better life for women and men and building a firm foundation for stability and peace in all societies, everywhere.

**What is sustainable development?**

- Sustainable development seeks to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development calls for concerted efforts towards building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and planet.
- Ending poverty, reducing inequalities and combatting climate change are indispensable requirements for the achievement of sustainable development.
- The 2030 Agenda addresses the interlinkages between the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, since a holistic approach that incorporates these three elements is essential if we are to achieve sustainable development.