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Synthesis of voluntary submissions by functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums

Note by the Secretariat

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The present document provides a synthesis of the voluntary submissions prepared by functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums. Contributions were provided in response to the invitation of the President of the Council contained in her letter dated 14 January 2020¹ addressed to the Chairs of those bodies, in which she requested that they offer substantive input to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, highlighting their contributions towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.² The integral texts of the submissions received for the present synthesis report are available on the forum's website.³

¹https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/25650Draft_letter_for_inputs_by_ECOSOC_functional_commissions_and_othe_r_intergovt_bodies.pdf

² The present document has benefited from contributions received from the following **functional commissions and expert bodies of the Economic and Social Council**: Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice; Commission on Narcotic Drugs; Commission on Science and Technology for Development; Commission on the Status of Women; Committee for Development Policy; Committee of Experts on Public Administration; United Nations Forum on Forests; United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names; and Statistical Commission; **the following regional commissions**: Economic Commission for Europe; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; and Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; **the following United Nations intergovernmental and related bodies**: Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Committee on Migrant Workers; Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women; Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; Committee on the Rights of the Child; Committee on World Food Security; Convention on Biological Diversity; Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna; Human Rights Council; Inter-American Development Bank; International Labour Organization; International Organization for Migration; International Renewable Energy Agency; International Standards of Accounting and Reporting; International Telecommunication Union Administrative Council; International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; United Nations Capital Development Fund; United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); UN-Habitat; UNESCO Sustainable Development Goal Education 2030 Steering Committee; UNESCO World Heritage Centre; United Nations Environment Assembly; Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and its technical and intergovernmental bodies; United Nations Group on the Information Society; United Nations Population Fund; United Nations System Staff College; United Nations University; United Nations Volunteers; Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer; World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control; World Intellectual Property Organization; World Meteorological Organization; World Summit on the Information Society Forum; and World Tourism Organization; **and the following other intergovernmental bodies**: 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production; Global Forum on Migration and Development; Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation; Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services; and Steering Committee of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development.

³ See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/inputs/>.

I. Introduction

1. The high-level political forum on sustainable development provides a central platform for follow-up and review at the global level of progress toward the implementation of General Assembly resolution 70/1, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. In line with paragraph 82 of the resolution, the forum facilitates the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned. It also provides political leadership, guidance and recommendations for follow-up and promotes the system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies.
2. In paragraph 85 the same resolution, the General Assembly called for thematic reviews of progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals, including with regard to crosscutting issues, to take place at the high-level political forum. In accordance with existing mandates, the forum’s review of progress, global achievements and challenges is supported by the reviews of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums, which should reflect the integrated nature of the Goals and the interlinkages between them.
3. The President of the Council therefore invited the functional commissions and expert bodies of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums, including global platforms and intergovernmental organization-driven mechanisms that contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, to share relevant input and deliberations as to how they address the goals and targets from the perspective of the theme of the 2020 high-level political forum, “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.”
4. The present document is based on a synthesis of the voluntary submissions received as of 23 April 2020.⁴ It does not suggest a formal reporting link to the forum or modify any entity’s mandate or governance. It reflects how the intergovernmental bodies are responding to the theme of the 2020 high-level political forum, including an assessment, based on their work, of critical gaps in implementation, a focus on key policies and measures to ensure accelerated action and transformative pathways for realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, and a selection of recommended actions by the contributing entities. Some entries also address actions taken since the current global crisis surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, and these are also reflected in the document.

II. Key policies and measures to ensure “accelerated action and transformative pathways” for realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development

5. The multilateral system is under threat at a time when it urgently needs reform and reinvigoration to promote the 2030 Agenda. Even before the coronavirus (COVID-19) created a pandemic that has assailed communities around the world and driven the global economy into a downturn whose long-term effects cannot yet be fully assessed, the collective effort to implement the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals had reached a crossroads. The high-level political forum completed its first four-year cycle, culminating in the Sustainable Development Goals Summit held under the auspices of the General Assembly in September 2019. In assessing the progress achieved five years after its historic adoption by Heads of State and Government, it is clear that much work has been done to align frameworks and policies at the international and national levels to achieve the Goals, foster collaboration to gather data, forge partnerships, and nurture the transformative vision of sustainable development across sectors and among populations. Yet much more effort will be needed—especially now—to ensure a successful decade of action and delivery for sustainable development. And the COVID-19 pandemic requires a rethinking of our immediate policy responses.
6. The inputs of United Nations system entities synthesized in this report to the 2020 high-level political forum on sustainable development demonstrate progress but also setbacks in various areas of the 2030 Agenda, identify transformative pathways and groups at risk of being left behind, and point the way forward for member States, stakeholders and all who are interested in making the decade of action for sustainable development a success. In

⁴ Contributions received after 23 April can be found along with all other submissions received, at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/inputs/>.

contributing to a roadmap for the next ten years, the inputs began by identifying where progress is lagging and attention is most needed.

7. The COVID-19 pandemic may set back the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. It could also point to the ability of Governments to take extraordinary steps to attain the Sustainable Development Goals.

A. Critical gaps in implementing the 2030 Agenda

Many are being left behind

8. The devastating impact and rapid spread of COVID-19 has made public health responses the absolute priority of governments around the world. Affected countries are struggling to tackle the health risks while mitigating the socio-economic repercussions of confinement, production slowdown and job losses. COVID-19 has affected victims regardless of gender, geography, ethnicity, religion, wealth or any other status.
9. Where existing levels of inequality are high, the consequences of the current crisis impact the most vulnerable populations in a disproportionate and more severe manner. Women in particular have experienced multiple and compounded forms of discrimination while on the front lines of responses, at home, in the health workforce and in various sectors of production.
10. Uneven governance arrangements reveal other disconnects, including between national and sub-national levels, in how the Sustainable Development Goals are being embraced and prioritized. Many countries still lack adequate social protection measures for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, women and children. The capacity of the public sector to deal with crises is also uneven, and the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed stark discrepancies with regard to unequal health care systems, varying capacities to rally different arms and institutions, and efforts to implement virtual learning and educational support while addressing digital divides.
11. Many government institutions are not able to implement the Sustainable Development Goals at the desired scale and speed because of a general undervaluing of the public sector in economic theories of the past decades, which has resulted in smaller but less effective public administration and a disregard of the public value that it may create. “Silo thinking” continues to hamper the holistic implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and hinder action to ensure that no one is left behind. Stronger political commitment is needed to connect the political and administrative silos within international policy action, development aid and peace building, as well as for the reinforcement of existing multilateral and regional political and economic mechanisms.
12. The constantly shifting nature of population distribution across aspects such as age, race, ethnicity, income and education levels cause the socioeconomic positions of countries and groups to be more difficult to track and measure. International migration and migration policymaking has become one of the most debated and crucial areas of public administration in almost every country. Migration directly affects both State welfare and individual wellbeing. The shifting dynamics of jobs and their geographical situation and the mass migration of workers to urban areas highlight problems such as overcrowding and exacerbation of social and economic inequalities.

Persistent poverty and inequality undermine progress

13. Inequalities continue to widen at local, national and global levels. Disparities across factors such as income, social class, geographic location, urban-rural divides, access to education, healthcare and basic necessities still act as pervasive and determining factors that uphold progress in achieving the 2030 Agenda.
14. The current global economic recession precipitates a rise in poverty, global economic inequality and the lack of equitable distribution of development gains within and among countries. Ever-increasing amounts of natural resources support economic activity, while the efficiency with which resources are used remains unchanged; therefore we have not yet seen a decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation. In addition, the use of natural resources and the related benefits and environmental impacts are unevenly distributed across countries and regions. Perpetuating current modes of production and consumption, and the current levels of inequality associated with them, is untenable.

15. Least developed countries continue to face low levels of per capita income, domestic savings and investments, and small tax bases; they remain heavily dependent on external finance, including official development assistance, foreign direct investment, remittances, and external debt. These resources are insufficient to meet the needs of this vulnerable group of countries and, as a result, development progress has been uneven.
16. Lack of structural transformation and diversification of economies to build sustained inclusive economic growth have also slowed progress in the least developed countries. Investment in developing productive capacities, especially at local levels beyond capital cities—including in entrepreneurship, climate resilient infrastructure, energy, agriculture, science and technology and digitalization—is insufficient, hindering attempts at transformation. Least developed countries continue to face challenges in mobilizing commercial and other capital for investments that can drive their economic transformation.

Human rights and justice are threatened in a time of crisis

17. Sustainable development depends on systemic, comprehensive, and integrated investments in populations to ensure that they can achieve their capabilities and contribute fully to development. These include, inter alia, the fulfillment of dignity, equality and human rights including sexual and reproductive health and rights; universal access to quality education, decent work, and lifelong good health; security of place; accountable systems of governance based on transparent national data; and resilience in the face of environmental and other humanitarian threats.
18. Despite the appeal of UN Secretary-General for a global ceasefire amid the COVID-19 pandemic, armed conflicts with their associated group-targeted violence and violations of basic human rights continue to present significant challenges to peaceful progress. Everywhere in the world, women are among the first victims of crisis, conflicts and rights violations. Setbacks are being seen in the achievement of progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Many women and girls experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, vulnerability, marginalization and violence throughout their lifetimes. This is now on the rise amid a climate of global uncertainty.
19. Within the context of crime prevention and criminal justice, the principle of leaving no one behind translates into addressing the nexus between social vulnerabilities and crime. These social vulnerabilities are defined by strong gender, age and income-specific patterns in certain types of crimes and offences.
20. While advances in information and communications technologies have provided significant economic and social advantages to countries, communities and children, fuelling economic development and encouraging interconnectedness through the sharing of ideas and experiences, such advances have also wrought an unprecedented explosion of cybercrime. Opportunities for human trafficking and the production and distribution of material that violates the integrity and rights of women and children, irrespective of their physical location or nationality, is an emerging threat. The complex nature of crimes committed in the borderless realm of cyberspace is also compounded by the increasing involvement of organized crime groups.
21. Furthermore, corruption and lack of access to independent and efficient judicial systems have a major negative impact on economic growth, as both are essential for the prevalence of the rule of law. Corruption is not only undermining democratic institutions, but is also slowing economic development and contributes to governmental instability.

Hunger and malnutrition are on the rise

22. The absolute number of people in the world affected by undernourishment, or chronic food deprivation, is estimated to have increased for the fourth consecutive year to over 820 million in 2019. The World Food Programme announced this week that the COVID-19 pandemic could push another 130 million people into acute hunger. Hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition disproportionately affect the poor, particularly the extreme poor, largely concentrated in rural areas, who depend on agriculture for a living.

23. Small-scale food producers, family farmers and indigenous peoples, particularly women and youth, remain vulnerable, and the current measures and policy decisions are not robust enough to unlock the potential of these players to be critical agents of change.
24. The impact of economic slowdowns and downturns on food security and nutrition cannot be separated from the root causes of hunger and malnutrition: poverty, inequality and marginalization, with national efforts insufficiently coordinated. Lack of knowledge and capacity to enforce food safety standards emerges as a critical gap, particularly in developing countries.
25. In addition to the persistence of hunger and malnutrition in many areas, the epidemic of overweight and obesity is also rising in every region, with undernutrition, overweight and obesity often coexisting in the same household. Results of the first analysis of country-level indicators show that obesity rates are higher in countries where moderate food insecurity is also high.

Unsustainable management of natural resources threaten biodiversity

26. There is not yet a full recognition by all countries and stakeholders that poverty and hunger are closely interlinked with sustainable food systems, forests, oceans and freshwater ecosystems, and biodiversity. A lack of progress in sustainably managing the natural resource base presents a serious challenge to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Changes in land and water use and management, pollution and overuse of external inputs, overexploitation and overharvesting, and the proliferation of invasive alien species all negatively impact biodiversity for food and agriculture. Loss and degradation of ecosystems and transitions to more intensive production relying on a limited range of species, varieties and breeds remain major drivers of loss of biodiversity for food and agriculture and ecosystem services.
27. Despite the crucial contribution of forests and sustainable forest management to sustainable development, deforestation and forest degradation continue in many regions, often in response to the demand for wood, food, fuel and fibre. Global demand for and consumption of forest products and services is projected to accelerate and put further pressure on forests. Currently, over seven million hectares of natural forests continue to be converted annually to other land uses owing chiefly to large-scale commercial agriculture and other economic activities. While the rate of deforestation has slowed down in many regions over the past decade, estimates indicate that tree cover loss has steadily been rising in the tropics since 2000 due to human and natural causes, including fires and storms, posing imminent challenges that require urgent cross-sectoral action at all levels to sustainably manage forests, including through their conservation, restoration and expansion. There is a particular urgency of taking decisive action to halt deforestation, restore degraded forests, and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally.
28. The management of genetic resources used in aquaculture also has major implications for food security and nutrition, as production from aquaculture now surpasses production from capture fisheries. The expansion of protected areas for marine biodiversity and existing policies and treaties that encourage responsible use of ocean resources are still insufficient to combat the adverse effects of overfishing, growing ocean acidification due to climate change and worsening coastal eutrophication. As billions of people depend on oceans for their livelihood and food source and on the transboundary nature of oceans, increased efforts and interventions are needed to conserve and sustainably use ocean resources at all levels.

Climate crisis continues

29. Many developing countries, especially least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, continue to be extremely vulnerable to climate change, due to their characteristics or as their economic growth is dependent on climate-sensitive sectors and they lack resilient infrastructure. As climate change accelerates, there is growing recognition that local governments must play a key role in adaptation and building resilience, but progress is insufficient to reduce greenhouse gas emissions below the targets set out in the Paris Agreement. Access to climate finance to fund infrastructure for climate resilience and adaptation and strengthened capacities for governments in general, and sub-national governments in particular, must be scaled up significantly and at a faster rate.

30. Given the strong synergies between the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, it is worth noting that countries are meant to progressively increase the ambitions of their Nationally Determined Contributions in 2020 and every five years thereafter. This is part of the “ratchet mechanism” of the Paris Agreement, which also includes expanding the ambitions on renewable energy deployment. However, current electricity targets of the Nationally Determined Contributions overlook an estimated 59 per cent of the potential for renewable electricity deployment in line with the Paris Agreement, and do not reflect the actual growth of renewable power.
31. With 840 million people still living without electricity access, and 2.9 billion people lacking access to clean cooking, a “business as usual” pathway will not meet the universal access goal by 2030. Despite remarkable progress over the past decade, renewables still face persistent financial, regulatory, and sometimes technological barriers. Policies have focused on renewable electricity so far, and fewer countries have implemented policies for renewables use for heating and transport.

Digital divides disrupt education

32. Information and communications technologies are rapidly transforming societies and economies, with potential to address complex and interconnected development challenges; however, their potential must be strategically leveraged to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The rapid advancement of technology tends to benefit those with the resources to access, implement and take on board the innovations, while further widening the gap between those with less access.
33. Access to information and communications technologies has continued to grow, with mobile cellular signals now reaching more than 95 per cent of the global population, and more than 50 per cent have access to the Internet. However, there remain large discrepancies between regions and countries. The proportion of people using the Internet in developed countries is more than four times that in the least developed countries. Affordability is a barrier to access for many people, reducing opportunities to take advantage of new technology and potentially exacerbating other inequalities. In addition, lack of relevant skills continues to be an impediment for the deployment and use of information and communications technologies, as well as the lack of “soft” skills beyond technical and navigational skills. Scarce data suggest developing countries are particularly disadvantaged when it comes to digital skills.
34. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the education of millions of youth, and raises the immediate challenge of ensuring continuity and equity of education through alternative means. Even when temporary, school closures carry high social and economic costs. This situation puts immense pressure on governments to provide open, distance and online learning responses, unevenly developed within and across countries, which tends to disadvantage vulnerable and marginalized children and youth. The context calls for resolute international cooperation to share tools and experiences, build capacity to respond to the crisis, and prevent the education gaps from widening further.
35. More and better data on how information and communications technologies can accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, including by facilitating the implementation and delivery of measures in all domains, is needed. Countries should step up the production of national level data on access and use of information and communications technologies and their enabling environment that are relevant to their policies, goals and targets, but that are also internationally comparable.

Gaps persist in research and development

36. There is also a wide gap in technological capabilities between developed and developing countries. Research and development expenditures in most developing countries remain much smaller, both in absolute terms and relative to gross domestic product than the world average. This reflects low business research and development expenditures: 32 to 38 per cent of research and development in developing countries, around half the world average of 68 per cent. In 2014, there were 1,098 researchers per million people globally, but only 87.9 per million in sub-Saharan Africa, and 63.4 per million in the least developed countries. The proportion of women researchers in engineering and technology in most developing countries is 10 to 40 per cent. Women are also a minority among graduates in computer science and are underrepresented among decision-makers in many sectors of science, technology and innovation.

Data gaps prevent accurate assessment of progress

37. Insufficient statistical capacity for monitoring implementation of the 2030 Agenda is a gap that must be urgently filled if progress is to be measured effectively. Efforts to address data gaps by supporting the development of statistical standards and methodologies remains ongoing, but must be widely supported.
38. Gaps in data, information and analysis to support informed and evidence-based decision-making reveal the need for better sectoral data and analysis of critical interlinkages, both synergies and trade-offs, between forests, fishery, aquaculture, oceans management, and food security and nutrition, biodiversity, the water cycle, soil conservation, carbon sequestration, habitat protection, poverty and livelihoods, and the interrelation between sustainable management and use of resources and economic growth, trade and market related data. Data, evidence, and policy analysis on pathways to address issues related to sustainability and trade-offs remain scattered and are often not available when and where needed.
39. In developing countries and countries with transitional economies, elements that have an impact on the corporate reporting environment also include weaknesses in legal and regulatory frameworks, lack of human capacity and relevant supporting institutions, or obstacles to the adequate monitoring and enforcement of international standards and codes. In particular, developing countries require tools that enable the identification of gaps through international benchmarking, the elaboration of action plans for accounting reforms, and the measurement of progress in priority areas.
40. Additionally, a number of Sustainable Development Goal targets are tied to indicators that are still classified as Tier III, meaning that either the indicators' methodology is still under development or that they are yet to be consistently tracked by countries. This highlights a clear information gap in assessing the challenges, measuring the progress, and identifying the most appropriate solutions to achieve the Goals.

B. Priority measures to accelerate action and ensure transformative pathways

41. Increasingly frequent and intense natural disasters jeopardize the overall achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The economic, social and environmental effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are just beginning to unfold, and will require a long-term global effort toward joint action to prevent further catastrophic consequences. Disaster risks often converge with critical socioeconomic vulnerabilities, perpetuating intergenerational poverty and marginalization. A unified, global health and infectious disease response framework is needed to help prepare for future health-related disasters.
42. The world health crisis is also a test for governance, leadership and democratic institutions everywhere, for keeping national and international commitments, and adhering to the principles of gender equality, non-discrimination, and solidarity, both nationally and internationally. No country and no leader can do it alone. The current situation calls for the conceptualization of support models for stimulating local action in a bottom-up mode based on the strategic premise that in such a global crisis, every local group and individual action counts.
43. Accelerated action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals also requires guidance in policy and governance innovation, including "fast-track" reform initiatives based on innovative breakthroughs and incremental reforms that target long-term, cumulative results. These all come with embedded and corollary risks, and may produce both success and failure. Accepting the need to innovate means having the willingness to take those risks. At the same time, governance failures are not contingent upon unpredictable events alone. They often result from a mismatch between the design of a governance mechanism, the problem it is intended to address and the underlying social and political context. Other forms of governance failure emerge because of lack of governance capacity (competences, skills, capabilities) or ineffective management of governance frameworks.
44. In a general sense, innovation can be achieved through mechanisms such as legislative reform and collaborative models of governance; access to quality public services with focus on education; promotion of transparency and accountability; balancing of long-term needs with short-term urgencies; resource mobilization for the achievement of strategic, institutional and policy goals; and collaboration between national, subnational, local and community levels to address issues and take action in real-time.
45. Whole-of-government approaches require reform of existing perceptions and approaches to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals as individual and separate policy silos. More coordination, better cooperation and

increased capacity building are required in the planning and decision-making processes of governments, agencies and intergovernmental bodies. Collaboration to establish effective mechanisms for vertical and horizontal integration and to facilitate dialogue between national and local governments can strengthen governance across the board to support progress toward the 2030 Agenda.

46. To bridge the gaps previously identified, this section outlines a number of priority measures and specific areas where progress can be transformative.

Include everyone

47. A coherent whole-of-government approach and the collaborative engagement of all relevant institutions and stakeholders throughout the policy cycle are crucial for achieving the 2030 Agenda. Aligning policies in a coherent way calls for the availability of auditable data on outcomes—for statistical offices, audit offices and civil society organizations, among others—and access to technology platforms and knowledge hubs that can promote sharing, mutual learning and local ownership. Widespread communication, in particular with youth, is important to build awareness and support action.
48. Leaving no one behind will often require avoiding top-down approaches to local development. The establishment of focal points within communities to assess the extent of possible decentralization and value the impact of national-local transfers can be important. Empowering and supporting cities, local authorities and communities is also vital for effective crime prevention and criminal justice policy responses.
49. Inclusion of subnational actors in voluntary national review processes should be encouraged to strengthen local ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals, along with the development of local strategies by large cities or by groups of smaller cities. Children and youth can be empowered as active agents of change.
50. Acceleration of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals will benefit from a balance of public strategy as planning and design, and hands-on learning through experience. At the same time, a significant portion of basic government action is about stability and reliability, ensuring the delivery of protection and services to citizens.
51. The facilitation of greater coordination, negotiation and more meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement is more important than ever, in light of the global health and economic crisis, to ensure progress through the means of multilateral, coordinated and evidence-based policy responses.
52. Investing in small but transformational infrastructure projects at the local level, including feeder roads, bridges, micro hydro, and climate adaptation, will be key to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. Those create substantial development dividends for food security, women’s economic empowerment, clean energy access, climate resilience, local economic development, and domestic resource mobilization.
53. Blended finance can be made to work better for small and medium enterprises in the least developed countries. Scalable blended finance approaches that address currency exchange risk, ticket size, and risk tolerance, among others, will be critical. These solutions are possible within the existing development finance architecture but require innovations to increase ticket size and diversify risk, amplification of technical assistance facilities to identify and support pipeline and credit scoring processes on the ground, and the creation of integrated guarantee facilities in domestic finance institutions to help drive more domestic capital into local development. This could also include greater use of grants and concessional capital for early stage growth SMEs (the “missing middle”) in least developed countries, to enable them to demonstrate credit worthiness, which will allow for greater access to blended finance and commercial capital.
54. Wider adoption of financial technology solutions will help further deepen financial inclusion and help build broader inclusive digital markets and economies, including in areas such as clean energy access, agriculture productivity, and transport.
55. A whole-of-government framework is also the most likely to succeed in achieving both migration and development objectives. Different departments of government can avoid working at cross purposes and instead reinforce each

other's efforts by, for example, implementing migration policies that support—or at least do not undermine—development fundamentals, or by pursuing trade agreements that also facilitate labor mobility.

56. National governments make the laws and regulations that govern migration, but they do not control the positive and negative driving forces behind migration—such as demographic trends, the impacts of climate change, and the powerful drive of families to reunify. Effective policies and programs are much more likely to emerge from whole-of-society processes that involve other elements of society not only in consultations but also in active partnership.
57. Countering harmful and inaccurate portrayals of how migrants and migration affect host and home communities requires a sustained effort from governments at all levels, in partnership with other key actors including the private sector, migrant organizations and civil society institutions.
58. Mainstreaming migration into policy planning should be a cross-sectoral effort, involving health, education, employment, justice, urban planning and national security as well as development planning as such. Remittances may be the most visible contribution migrants make to their countries of origin—and it is vital to reduce the stubbornly high costs of remittances—but their non-monetary contributions may be equally, or more, important in opening transformative pathways to development.

Combat corruption

59. The rule of law and development are strongly interrelated and mutually reinforcing. The advancement of the rule of law at the national and international levels, including through crime prevention and criminal justice mechanisms, is essential for sustained and inclusive economic growth and sustainable development. Where to focus the development of capacity for change depends on the existing quality and performance of public administration and governance in a given institutional setting.
60. Every administration must be vigilant towards the risk and reality of corruption and conflicts of interest in public life, given the corrosive effect on public trust in governance and the detrimental economic impact. Corruption raises costs, distorts decisions, misallocates resources and discourages enterprise and investment through its unpredictability; it is linked to overspending, fiscal deficits, under-collection of taxes, under-absorption of funds, gender inequality and discrimination against minorities and other vulnerable groups in access to positions of power and a brain drain from the economy.
61. However, combatting corruption should not lead to rigid administrations where innovation and risk-taking are no longer possible. Accountability with flexibility within an innovative and learning public service is essential. Responses from public services must be swift when necessary and take into account changing circumstances while ensuring that adequate checks and balances are in place.

Empower women

62. Countries should regularly assess and monitor the gendered consequences and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, collect and analyze data, and plan to sustain and further promote gender equality for the period after the health crisis. This requires a fit for purpose national apparatus and robust gender infrastructure. National machineries for the advancement of women and related gender equality mechanisms and national human rights institutions are often fragile, under-skilled, under-funded, lacking appropriate architecture, authority or regulatory powers for effective oversight, surveillance or impact monitoring. They are further hampered in their mandates during crises. Countries have to engage and sustain these mechanisms and develop them further during and after the COVID-19 crisis. They should not undermine, sideline or reduce financial resources for gender equality; instead they should use the opportunity to overhaul their operations, plan and effect further investments in this area. These steps will be essential for ensuring women's leadership and integral participation in decision-making in the period of "convalescence" of societies.
63. There is a need to increase support to civil society actors in order to reach all segments of the population and address aspects of the daily lives of women and girls to ensure they receive adequate support. Everywhere in the world, women are among the first victims of crisis, conflicts and rights violations. However, at the same time, they are leading forces of sustainable development and transformative change.

64. Economic recovery strategies should focus on gender equality as a driving force of sustainable development. Women's engagement in the political and public sphere and economic responsibilities in all areas, including climate change and digital fields, must be considered as a top priority in recovery strategies, with the ultimate aim of building a development model that is more respectful of people and their fundamental rights. Governments are called upon to grasp this moment in human history as an opportunity to adopt transformative strategies that are centered on women's empowerment and leadership.
65. Progress in this area demands the elimination of discriminatory laws and social norms, structural barriers and gender stereotypes, and promotion of social norms and practices that empower all women and girls. Action must be taken to strengthen the effectiveness and accountability of institutions at all levels to promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, as well as ensure equal access to justice and public services.

Integrate and link nexus issues

66. Accelerating progress during the decade of action requires ensuring that policies build on the synergies among the SDGs. National governments can do more to ensure policy coherence across ministries, and integrate strategies that deal with forests, agriculture, food, land use, and rural and national development while promoting sustainable consumption and production, in close partnership with the private sector, industries and civil society, among other stakeholders. A shift to addressing sustainable production and consumption in national economic plans, financial policy instruments and national budgets—rather than in environment portfolios—is crucial. It would enable the integration of natural resources and the full costs of their related impacts and negative externalities in these economic policies and instruments.
67. Food systems must broaden boundaries beyond primary production and include efficiencies along the entire food chain, along with promotion of sustainable practices and diets. This includes reducing food loss and waste, which will require new technologies in harvesting, transportation and storage, as well as enhanced trade patterns and changes in consumer behavior.
68. Forests, agriculture, water, energy, tourism and health, among others, are interlinked with each other and with other wide-ranging sectors and issues. Agricultural expansion is often the main driver of deforestation in many regions, while at the same time forests are important for food security and nutrition, especially for people living in remote areas. Forests also regulate the provision of water and water-related ecosystem services within a larger climate-forest-water-people system, offering sustainable solutions to address pressure from increasing and changing demands from growing population and economic development. Approximately 75 per cent of the world's accessible freshwater derive from forested watersheds, hence forest-based solutions offer a great potential for the sustainable management of water resources.
69. Integrated approaches such as forest landscape management and sustainable value chains of forest products can facilitate collaboration across sectors and stakeholders, and enhance human and social capital to realize transformative changes. The effective implementation of such cross-sectoral measures requires innovative, inclusive and collaborative governance systems across sectors, science-based decision-making and political leadership. Provisions must also be made to support the livelihoods of vulnerable segments of the population, particularly small-scale producers, family farmers, rural women and youth.
70. Improving integration across sectors can create transformative systemic approaches. From a food and agriculture perspective, sustainable food systems are an ideal approach to allow for institutional and policy integration, addressing all dimensions of sustainability. An integrated approach to food systems means ensuring poverty and hunger eradication measures take into account impacts on climate, as well as natural resources, biodiversity sustainable management and use, while sustaining economies and inclusive growth. Data and analysis for mapping interconnections and trade-offs are also made available for informed policy decisions.
71. Small-scale food producers, including small-scale farmers, artisanal fisher-folks, and pastoralists, as well as other key actors across agri-food systems, play a critical role in catalysing rural transformations that ensure sustainable livelihoods and human dignity, particularly in countries where smallholder agriculture is the main provider of food and employment. They should be supported by enabling policies and targeted investments. Evidence shows that higher incomes among smallholders can result in more diversified production and healthy diets, leading to

improved nutrition and health. Moreover, closing the gender gap in agriculture can significantly reduce the number of hungry people in the world. Improved livelihoods of small-scale food producers and rural actors can also generate demand for local agricultural inputs, assets and services, commercial distribution and processing infrastructure and services, and non-food consumable goods. This demand creates more entrepreneurship opportunities, particularly for large youth populations and, if met, can help to achieve growth and development in previously “left behind” areas.

72. Market transparency and access to market information is crucial for global food security and nutrition, especially towards informed and evidence-based policy decisions. There is a need to increase efforts to improve the monitoring and assessment of supply, demand, trade and prices of food and agricultural commodities and make the information publicly available in a timely manner to enhance transparency and promote coordination of action. It is key to strengthen a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory, equitable and predictable bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral trading system that is conducive to world food security, improved nutrition and sustainable agricultural development.
73. Agricultural trade can play an important role as an enabler to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in ending poverty and hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture. It can also play a role in climate change adaptation and mitigation and potentially reducing global greenhouse gas emissions. It is crucial to enhance and facilitate policy dialogue at global, regional and national levels at the juncture of trade and climate change.

Scale-up energy access

74. Renewable energy has become the fastest-growing energy source and the cheapest one in most parts of the world, as a result of cost reductions, innovation and enabling frameworks. Renewable energy is also now a key solution to address climate change and a practical climate action tool for reaching zero net emissions by 2050.
75. Governments can raise the level of ambition to scale-up renewable energy deployment through long term plans that align climate and energy objectives, and through strengthened targets for renewables in revised and enhanced NDCs. Scaling-up decentralized off-grid renewable energy solutions can close the energy access gap by promoting adequate delivery models, catalyzing financing through innovative instruments, adopting enabling policies and regulations, building capacity across the value chain and fostering entrepreneurship.
76. Adopting proactive policies and measures to ensure a just transition and maximize the socio-economic benefits of renewables can also strengthen interlinkages between sustainable energy and other Sustainable Development Goals, through a more holistic approach to energy policy and greater collaboration across sectors like employment, health, agriculture, and water, and enhance cooperation at the regional and sub-regional levels to promote innovation, investment, and capacity building.
77. Mainstreaming gender in energy sector frameworks at all levels—including policymaking, programme design and project implementation—can harness the opportunities of greater gender equality that come with the transition to a renewables-based energy system.

Bridge digital divides

78. The potential of information and communications technologies and various digital technologies as key enablers of development, and as critical components of innovative development solutions, is fully recognized in the 2030 Agenda. More needs to be done to strategically leverage these technologies to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals during the decade of action. Taking into account the importance of relevant content, skills and an enabling environment, information and communications technologies, including broadband Internet, mobile technologies and relevant applications and services, are recognized for their potential to help empower people, enable wider exercise of human rights including freedom of expression, foster access to information and knowledge, open up employment and decent work opportunities, promote cultural diversity, expand access to learning, scientific knowledge and basic services.
79. Recent years have seen a rapid acceleration in the application of digital technology for providing financial and other services in least developed countries. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 45 per cent of adults reported having a mobile

money account in 2018, the highest rate of any region in the world. These advances have the potential to benefit women, youth, refugees and migrants as well as small and medium-sized enterprises and show promise for the development of wider inclusive digital economies and financial inclusion. However, least developed countries especially face difficulties in ensuring that the digital infrastructure, regulatory environment and viable business models that can drive financial inclusion and development of digital economies, as well as provide opportunities to increase domestic resource mobilization, are in place.

80. The benefits of information and communications technologies are not automatic; to accelerate progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals, more action is required to ensure links of digital investments to acceleration priorities and provide greater support to those at risk of lagging behind. Many developing countries, especially the least developed countries, are inadequately prepared to capture the opportunities emerging as a result of digitalization. Moreover, there is a risk that digitalization will widen income inequalities, as productivity gains may accrue mainly to a few, already wealthy and skilled enterprises and individuals. The net impact will depend on the level of development and digital readiness of countries and their stakeholders, as well as on the policies adopted and implemented at national, regional and international levels. The speed at which digital economies and societies are unfolding, and the significant gaps that remain between and across countries, underline the urgency of scaling-up global support for capacity building and technical assistance, as well as for digital governance that ensures the benefits of digital development are evenly shared.

Close data gaps

81. Priority measures must be taken to strengthen the capacity of national statistical systems, especially in the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, and other countries in vulnerable situations, to meet the data demands for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and for monitoring and reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals and targets. More and better financing is crucial to support the national statistical systems in meeting these data demands.

Harness innovation

82. Rapid technological change could be transformative in implementing the 2030 Agenda, and several frontier technologies have already shown great potential to help to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, big data can address critical global issues, create scientific breakthroughs, advance human health and improve decision-making and the effectiveness of development interventions.
83. The Internet of Things monitors and manages connected objects and machines and has applications in healthcare, agriculture, energy and water management and quality. Artificial intelligence combined with robotics could transform production and business, especially in manufacturing. Similarly, 3D printing allows faster and cheaper low-volume production and rapid iterative prototyping of new products. Biotechnology makes possible personalized treatments and genetic modification of plants and animals. Nanotechnology is used in water purification, battery storage, precise management of agrochemicals, and in the delivery of medication. Renewable energy technologies provide electricity in rural areas far from the grid systems, while drones are used in precision farming and could revolutionize the delivery of supplies and replace humans in dangerous tasks. Small-scale satellites are used in communication networks and in applications that use high-resolution imagery such as for monitoring land use and for urban planning. These satellites will soon be affordable for more developing countries, businesses and universities. Blockchain technology can be used in applications in which ensuring the integrity and traceability of the information about transactions is important, such as for identity management and land registration.
84. Intellectual property is a critical component for innovation, as it helps set the incentives structure for the world's innovators who create the new technologies and processes that improve lives. In this way, innovation is key to the success of the Sustainable Development Goals. Only through human ingenuity and innovation will it be possible to develop new solutions that eradicate poverty, boost agricultural productivity, ensure food security and good nutrition, increase access to energy and improve energy efficiency, fight disease, improve education, protect the environment, accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy, increase productivity, and boost business competitiveness.

Ensure equity in education

85. In a complex and rapidly changing world, education is central to bridging the gaps among all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Education is a driver of both inclusion and empowerment, as well as a generator of knowledge that can enable people to properly understand and effectively address global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the impacts of climate change in an informed, scientific manner.
86. The COVID-19 pandemic is testing national capacities to shift to large-scale distance learning to ensure continuity of schooling. It has revealed gaps in knowledge about available tools, lack of teacher preparation, connectivity issues and disparities in access, with students from more disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds most at risk of missing out, notably due to uneven access to information and communications technologies, infrastructures and tools.
87. Given teachers' critical role in improving education quality and learning outcomes, countries need to invest more in increasing the supply of qualified teachers, strengthening support for teacher training and professional development, as well as ensuring decent working conditions. Public financing is critical for education, and international financing must prioritize investing in education to ensure predictable, sustainable, efficient, and coherent funding sources.

III. Selected recommendations for accelerating progress

88. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of sustainable development and the need for disaster preparedness in the face of unexpected shocks to environmental, economic and social systems. In the decade of action, transformative pathways must be underpinned by policy responses that are sustained, sustainable and equitable.
89. In response to the pandemic, the world must be guided by the principle of leaving no one behind. In order to emerge from global crisis with increased solidarity, it will be important to adhere to human rights norms and promote inclusive governance, social and economic justice, environmental sustainability and peace. The 2030 Agenda is more relevant than ever, and can serve to strengthen multilateralism at a time when it is most needed.

The following are selected actions recommended by the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums in their contributions. These actions are considered to be the most relevant and impactful ways to accelerate progress and forge transformative pathways for realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.

90. Increase political commitment and support the implementation of existing international agreements. Enable integrative governance to ensure policy coherence and effectiveness. Promote a more holistic approach and strengthen policies that build on the many interlinkages among relevant Goals and targets to ensure multi-scaled progress toward all Sustainable Development Goals.
91. Strengthen social protection floors, including through sustainable food and nutrition systems, access to education and universal health care. Provide demand-led recovery measures such as universal social protection systems to act as social and economic stabilizers in time of economic downturns.
92. Protect workers and families hit hard by the economic implications of the COVID-19 pandemic through rapid and decisive national and international coordinated policy responses, which are needed to mitigate the worst effects on society and the economy.
93. Maintain human rights standards and principles as cornerstones for developing actions in relation to all science and health related targets, including advocating for vaccines and medicines to be made accessible to all as a fundamental component of a right to health, and to fight global pandemics such as COVID-19.

94. Increase access to information and knowledge about global health issues such as COVID-19 through open access to science and research, and support a free flow of quality and reliable information as a means of combatting false information, further ensuring that those without digital access can be provided with the information through radio or other means of communication.
95. Prioritize assistance for countries experiencing protracted crises, which are often the result of the combination of multiple drivers including conflict, natural disasters and climate change, through immediate actions to alleviate hunger, malnutrition and suffering, and medium to long-term actions to build resilience, avoid impoverishment, and address the underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition.
96. Foster communication and cooperation among actors along the food distribution chain to improve logistics, handling and planning, both inside countries and across borders.
97. Engage migrant and diaspora communities in the planning of policies and programs that link migration and development.
98. Promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a critical accelerator for all Sustainable Development Goals. Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres. Strengthen accountability for the implementation of commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Match commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls with adequate financing through the mobilization of financial resources.
99. Invest in children, including early childhood development, health, child protection systems and tools. Provide children, adolescents and youth with a nurturing environment for the full realization of their rights and capabilities, supporting countries to reap the demographic dividend.
100. Promote and support integrated management and sustainable use of natural resources such as terrestrial landscapes, forests, watersheds, seascapes, oceans and marine systems, and improve freshwater management, protection and connectivity.
101. Accelerate investments in ocean science, increasing scientific and technical capacity globally for observing, assessing and delivering solutions for decision makers to reverse the decline in ocean health and catalyze new opportunities for sustainable ocean uses.
102. Emphasize the critical role of forests, trees and sustainable forest management in achieving Sustainable Development Goals and in solutions to global challenges, including poverty eradication, climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity loss, water scarcity and pollution, lack of food security and nutrition, land degradation and drought, dust and sandstorms and the increased risk of natural disasters.
103. Reiterate the essential role of biodiversity in achieving the 2030 Agenda, and support the development of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework.
104. Decouple economic activity from unsustainable resource use and negative environmental impacts, and develop enabling economic policies and incentives to accelerate the transition to economies that protect biodiversity and ecosystem services, are low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive.
105. Accelerate long-term investment in resilient infrastructure for sustainable development, including through public investment and incentives for the private sector, increased investment in risk management and preparedness, enhanced regulatory frameworks, and a strengthened international financial safety net and framework for debt sustainability.
106. Build sustainable cities that address critical needs while conserving nature, restoring biodiversity, maintaining and enhancing ecosystem services.

107. Scale up finance solutions for climate-resilient infrastructure and economic development at local levels. Increase renewable energy investments through support to sound enabling policy frameworks, development of bankable projects, risk mitigation instruments and match making.
108. Provide increased, wide scale and collaborative assistance to least developed countries, small island developing States, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition.
109. Capitalize on technological innovations in the reduction of, response to and recovery from disasters. Build on regional actions and systems to address the transboundary nature of disasters.
110. Develop a shared vision and framework for inclusive digital economies that leave no one behind and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, mobilize investment capital and technical support, and create tools to measure inclusiveness.
111. Prioritize and increase public investments, e.g. technical, human and financial resources, in population data systems, including the 2020 round of census, which will provide the most robust basis for data disaggregation. High quality geospatial data and new estimation methods offer new tools for identifying inequalities and better distributing national services to improve access to basic services.
112. Promote inclusive debate on frontier technologies, and improve foresight and technological assessment. The international community needs to advance its understanding of risks and benefits and policy options to steer innovation in ways that leave no one behind. Countries are encouraged to undertake strategic foresight and technological assessment initiatives to better the socio-economic and environmental implications of new and innovative technologies.
113. Strengthen normative frameworks related to frontier technologies. Alongside major opportunities for sustainable and inclusive development, frontier technologies also give rise to issues of citizen's rights, privacy, data ownership and online security.
114. Promote new financial instruments that harness the potential of digital innovations for the financing of the Sustainable Development Goals including digital financing platforms; innovative digital services; digitization of micro, small and medium enterprises; and domestic resource mobilization.
115. Ensure more inclusive development programmes that provide accessibility and opportunities to all relevant stakeholders in a whole-of-society framework, including academia, non-governmental organizations, civil society, and youth, while enabling women and their inclusion in all levels of decision making.
116. Harness the potential of technology and innovation to improve the lives of women and girls and to close the development divide and the digital divide.
117. Close data and evidence gaps through improved regular collection, analysis and use of gender statistics, to strengthen the implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes.
118. Strengthen international cooperation, including North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, as well as public-private partnerships, to implement commitments to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.
119. Increase efforts to engage the private sector in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with enhanced partnerships to reinforce policy and technical coherence between the public and private sectors.
120. Invest in effective responses to prevent and counter crime in all its forms and manifestations, to ensure an inclusive dialogue on all aspects of crime prevention and criminal justice and to provide technical assistance and capacity building.
121. Foster a culture of inclusion in and throughout education systems, to reach all learners, from the early years and prioritizing the most disadvantaged and vulnerable. Improve legal, policy and planning frameworks to advance

- rights, and tackle harmful social norms and attitudes that underlie exclusion in education. Include vulnerable migrants, refugees and internally displaced people in national education systems and ensure continuity of education in conflict and crisis-affected situations.
122. Increase adaptability of education and training systems to improve youth employability and equip young people and adults with 21st century skills, which have to be transferable, and in a lifelong perspective.
 123. Ensure that all learners have access to relevant and responsive digital learning environments, regardless of learners' disabilities, social or economic status, or geographic location.
 124. Increase domestic financing for public expenditure to education, notably through the broadening of the tax base, tax reform, anti-corruption measures, as well as by tackling illicit financial flows.
 125. Increase international financing to meet the benchmark of 0.7 per cent of GNP and allocate at least 10 per cent of that to education, matching development assistance with countries farthest behind, and strengthening coordination among actors.
 126. Strengthen the capacities of governments and national institutions to accommodate technological advancement.
 127. Further national digital agendas that support closing the digital divide in access and skills through appropriate information and communications technologies, infrastructure, and improving users' capabilities, especially among vulnerable groups, youths, and women and girls.
 128. Promote policies for skills development relevant to rapid technological change in terms of life-long learning, entrepreneurship training, upgrading of skills for innovators and capacity building for researchers.
 129. Support innovation by creating financing mechanisms and other programmes to support business adoption of new technologies, disseminate their application and share examples of successful business models.
 130. Support capacity building efforts to assist governments and support companies in their efforts to provide and collect data on performance and impacts by companies that are related to the Sustainable Development Goals.
 131. Promote the appreciation of culture as a positive resource and a means for strengthening inclusion, participation and human resilience, especially in times of great inequality, uncertainty and fear.
 132. Build capacities to facilitate the use, dissemination, adoption, adaptation and development of technologies and innovative solutions for the Sustainable Development Goals and for achieving national development goals.
 133. Invest in data and statistics for the Sustainable Development Goals and strengthen statistical capacities to address gaps in data in order to allow countries to provide high-quality, timely, reliable, disaggregated data and statistics and to fully integrate the Sustainable Development Goals in monitoring and reporting systems.
 134. Provide reliable data infrastructure related to migration and sustainable development for future policy implementations.
 135. Support the establishment of an innovative financing mechanism to mobilize both domestic and international funds to help governments strengthen data capacity and build sustainable statistical systems.
 136. Foster open-source data analytics platforms to easily access, process and analyze large datasets, so that country capacities to integrate into national monitoring frameworks can be strengthened.
 137. Strengthen the importance of sustainable investment in data collection, exchange and use to underpin science, technology and innovation-based services.

138. As the UN approaches its 75th anniversary, renew commitment to multilateral rules and institutions, and engage in reforming them to advance the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure a global transition towards equitable and sustainable development.
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