



Overcoming multiple crises: realising the SDGs through a human rights enhancing economy

The Human Rights Council held its [fifth intersessional meetings for dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) on 19 January 2023, pursuant to its resolution [43/19](#).¹



The theme of the fifth intersessional meeting was “Overcoming multiple crises: realising the SDGs through a human rights enhancing economy”.



The meeting focused on [SDG 6](#) on clean water and sanitation, [SDG 11](#) on sustainable cities and communities and [SDG 17](#) on strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development, and the overarching promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind and to reach those furthest behind first.



The meeting took place during a time of multiple crises, that are putting the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) in grave danger. The meeting underlined that human rights, *all human rights*, are the lever to rescue the 2030 Agenda. The United Nations Secretary-General's vision set out in [Our Common Agenda](#), his call for a 'renewed social contract anchored in human rights' and his [Call to Action for Human Rights](#) compels the international community to think and act differently and to seize the generational opportunity to build a more equal and sustainable world.

Delegations reiterated that the promotion and protection of all [human rights](#) and the implementation of the [2030 agenda](#) were [interrelated](#) and [mutually reinforcing](#).

While discussing a [human rights enhancing economy](#), many Member State delegations indeed, affirmed that it is necessary and urgent to transform the economy and orient economic policies towards reducing inequalities and advancing human rights and environmental sustainability. It is time to put pre-existing human rights obligations into economic policy planning, including inclusive budgeting and progressive domestic revenue generation. This is the road towards investing in health care, social protection, quality education, clean water, housing, and other fundamental rights, countering inequalities and correcting patterns of discrimination.

¹ The full report of the meeting constitutes an official input to the high-level political forum on sustainable development for its 2023 session.





Conclusions and key messages

1. Multiple and interlinked crises are putting the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) in grave danger. Climate change, the war in Ukraine, higher food and energy prices, COVID-19, rising inflation and the debt crisis are having devastating effects on the most vulnerable people and countries. The world is facing the reversal of years of progress in eradicating poverty and hunger, improving health and education and providing basic services.
2. Human rights, all human rights, are a crucial lever for responding to and rescuing the 2030 Agenda. Today's crises highlight the urgency of taking integrated approaches, in terms of realizing both human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals, as the world is reaching the halfway point for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Secretary-General's vision set out in [Our Common Agenda](#), his call for a renewed social contract anchored in human rights and his [Call to Action for Human Rights](#) compels the international community to think and act differently and to step up its ambition to put the Sustainable Development Goals back on track.
3. Unless the world can reverse the current global trajectory of climate change, the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals will be compromised, while the most marginalized and disadvantaged sections of society, including women and girls, will be disproportionately affected. Tackling the climate crisis and fulfilling the right to a healthy, clean, and sustainable environment must be a top priority.
4. Adopting economic policies grounded in human rights is paramount for developing stronger economies, countering inequalities and resuming progress on the 2030 Agenda. It is time to put pre-existing human rights obligations into economic policymaking and align budgets and public revenue generation strategies with the human rights obligations of States. A human rights-enhancing economy is the path towards
7. More needs to be done to empower people as active agents of sustainable development, reinforce public participation and protect individuals, social movements and grass-roots organizations from pushback and oppression. Inclusive societies deepen trust - and trust is essential for sustaining peace and preventing instability and conflict.
8. The reform of the global financial and economic architecture must create a system that enables States to expand the fiscal space for human rights and sustainable development rather than limiting their ability to do so. International debt and tax reform, including the curbing of illicit financial flows, must be guided by international human rights and the 2030 Agenda.
9. The [Guiding Principles on foreign debt and human rights](#) and the [Guiding Principles on Human Rights Impact Assessment of Economic Reforms](#) should be more systematically operationalized.
10. To build back better, the international community should strengthen international development cooperation and the delivery of technical assistance and capacity-building. It should further strengthen the multilateral system, particularly the funds and programmes of the United Nations that are involved in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
11. The United Nations Water Conference in March 2023 will be an opportunity to strengthen cooperation on the human rights to safe drinking water and anchor human rights firmly in the efforts of the international community that are needed to accelerate progress towards ensuring safe drinking water and sanitation for all.
12. In cities around the world, real estate and housing have become unaffordable for



investing in health care, social protection, quality education, clean water, housing and other fundamental rights, and correcting patterns of discrimination, as well as putting the world back on track to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. Projections of fiscal austerity measures affecting 85 per cent of the world population are of grave concern. Different policy choices should be pursued. Resuming progress on the Sustainable Development Goals requires:

- (a) Reinforcement of the progressive nature of taxation systems and strengthening the institutional capacity to collect taxes;
- (b) Combating tax avoidance and evasion and illicit financial flows;
- (b) fighting tax avoidance and evasion and illicit financial flows;
- (c) Tackling corruption;
- (d) Repositioning public expenditure;
- (e) Enhanced international cooperation and increased ODA;
- (f) Fiscal transparency, a strong civic space, freedom of expression and scrutiny of public spending;
- (g) Better anchoring of development financing in the human rights obligations of States to maximize available resources for economic, social and cultural rights.

6. Leaving no one behind is a central promise of the 2030 Agenda. That commitment of all Member States to eradicate poverty, end discrimination and reduce inequalities is at the heart of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. More than ever, policymaking should be intent on focusing on the most marginalized and disadvantaged.

many, with the cost of housing outstripping incomes. The financialization of housing is undermining the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11, while producing negative human rights outcomes, including forced evictions, the displacement of families from their homes and the growth of informal settlements across the world. Homelessness, a *prima facie* violation of the right to housing, is on the rise. To transform economies so that they are human rights-enhancing, will require a new emphasis and a fundamental paradigm shift with respect to residential real estate. States and their economies will have to stop promoting and relying on real estate for wealth creation that only benefits a few.

13. The post-crises recovery and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda must be guided by accurate and disaggregated data, with a renewed commitment to adopting a human rights-based approach to data collection. There must be greater investment in data for the design of evidence-based policies that prioritize marginalized and disadvantaged populations.

14. The cooperation between the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Human Rights Council must be enhanced. The high-level political forum and regional, national and local mechanisms monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals should make use of recommendations emanating from the United Nations human rights system. States should reinforce the integration of the analysis and recommendations of the United Nations human rights mechanisms into their voluntary national reviews and national development strategies and plans. The United Nations human rights mechanisms should continue to provide guidance and recommendations as to how to identify those left behind and design policies to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.