

SDG Summit: 18 September 2023

If not with a bang, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit, and with it the UN Summits Week, opened with a long line-up of Heads of State and Government. Delegates adopted a Political Declaration to be submitted for consideration by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and underscored continued commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda. Calls for reforming the international finance architecture received traction across the board.

Opening Segment

Dennis Francis, President of the UNGA, opened the meeting highlighting how a combination of factors, including the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and the war in Ukraine, have compromised the sustainable development trajectory. He emphasized the need for transformative action, inviting Member States to announce bold commitments at the Summit.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres asserted that the 2030 Agenda is a promise to all people to “build a world of health and progress, leave no one behind—and pay for it.” Emphasizing the need for an SDG rescue plan, he called for delivering USD 500 billion per year and an effective debt relief mechanism. He urged reforming the “outdated, dysfunctional, and unfair” international financial architecture.

Paula Narváez, President of the Economic and Social Council, said the Summit should serve as a turning point to rescue the SDGs and implore delegates not to let the opportunity slip away.

Delegates then adopted the Political Declaration, whose negotiation had been co-facilitated over the course of several months by Qatar and Ireland.

Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani, QATAR, welcomed the adoption of the Political Declaration, noting it highlights resolve in addressing the most urgent challenges facing the world today, including conflict, food security crises, and climate change. Prime Minister Leo Varadkar, IRELAND, recalled that progress on the SDGs had stalled well before the pandemic, but welcomed advancement on electricity access and reduced child mortality rates. He highlighted Ireland’s commitment to provide USD 149 million in climate finance and USD 300 million for food security in 2023.

Mayada Adil, Young Leader for the SDGs, reminded delegates that achieving only 15% of SDGs “is a failure” and called for genuine intergenerational partnership and solidarity, saying young people constitute half of the global population and are being left behind.

SDG implementation at the halftime – What will it take to keep the SDG promise?

Fireside chat: Moderator Gillian Tett, Financial Times, said the outcome of a match can always change in its second half. Prime Minister Mia Mottley, BARBADOS, called for “longer money and cheaper money” and said persistent hunger amid an abundance of food shows that “we choose not to act differently and share with one another.” Ajay Banga, President, WORLD BANK, described the Bank’s newly expanded vision and suggested redirecting fossil fuel subsidies and finding available capital to alleviate debt in emerging markets. Carolina Cosse, Mayor of MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay, said we need to work locally to achieve the SDGs, and this may require a cultural change in how decisions are made.

Statements by Groups: Cuba, for the GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, highlighted global demand for overhauling the international financial architecture, saying the high cost of loans prevents developing countries from investing in sustainable development.

Comoros, for the AFRICAN UNION (AU), noted countries’ efforts to reach the SDGs have been hampered by external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and climate change. He emphasized that success on the 2030 Agenda and the AU Agenda 2063 will depend on resource mobilization.

Dominica, for the CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY, said compounding crises call for greater leadership at the multilateral level. He urged more support for developing countries through ensuring long-term lending at lower interest rates, debt relief, and the creation of a robust and effective sovereign debt resolution mechanism. He said that despite challenges, the 2030 Agenda remains achievable.

Botswana, for the GROUP OF LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (LLDCs), pointed to the third UN Conference on LLDCs, to be held in Rwanda in 2024, and called for the widest possible coalition to support sustainable development transformations in LLDCs.

Palau, for the PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES, called for adopting the multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI) to account for more than just income-based criteria in assessing eligibility for concessional finance. He pointed to compounding vulnerabilities related to size, remoteness, climate impacts, and reliance on remittance.

Sierra Leone, for the GROUP OF SEVEN PLUS, underscored that sustainable peace, effective state institutions, and access to justice are key pillars of stability, development, and resilience. He urged addressing the root causes of conflict, ensuring debt relief, and providing technology transfer.

Czechia, for the PATHFINDERS FOR PEACEFUL, JUST, AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES, emphasized promoting people-centered justice, lamented inequality within and between countries, and opined that change is possible. In his national capacity, he underscored the widespread suffering resulting from the Russian aggression against Ukraine, not just in the region but also globally due to compromised food security.

Angola, for the SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY, called for ensuring the Summit is “a real turning point” that strengthens political commitment to achieve progress and fulfill climate finance promises.

The EUROPEAN UNION welcomed the UN Secretary-General’s plan for an SDG stimulus. She said the EU’s development aid increased by 30% in 2022. Noting public funding is not enough, however, she called for: reforming multilateral development banks; unlocking private capital by de-risking private investments; supporting developing countries and emerging economies in creating their own green bonds; and promoting carbon pricing. She called upon leaders to restore the promise that “tomorrow will be better for all than today.”

Nepal, for the LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES (LDCs), said the SDGs are in “dire need of rescue.” She lamented that investments in LDCs saw a sharp decline in 2022 with severe repercussions on water and sanitation, food security, health, and education, and she called for a massive scaling-up of affordable finance.

Samoa, for the ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES, highlighted the need to leave nationalism behind and “put action

to the rhetoric we have been propagating for years.” She called for urgent action on climate change, including more climate finance and drastic emission cuts; and reforming the international finance architecture, building on an MVI and inclusive decision making.

The Russian Federation, for the EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION (EAEU), pointed to the EAEU’s work on freedom of movement of goods and citizens and gradual harmonization of financial market regulation. In his national capacity, he condemned unilateral measures by the US and EU. He argued that the Russian Federation remains a responsible provider of energy and fertilizers.

Indonesia, for the ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS, pointed to regional engagement to narrow the development gap and localize the SDGs. She emphasized building resilient supply chains, accelerating just energy transitions, investing in human resource development, and enhancing disaster risk reduction.

Mexico, for MEXICO, INDONESIA, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, TÜRKIYE, AND AUSTRALIA, said only coordinated action will propel sustainable development forward. She called for recognizing the contribution of all stakeholders and emphasized the importance of gender equality.

Leaders’ Dialogue 1 “Scaling up actions on key transitions to accelerate SDG progress”

Co-moderator Katalin Novák, President, HUNGARY, opened the session by welcoming the adoption of the Political Declaration and emphasizing peace as a crucial precondition for sustainable development.

Co-moderator Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, President, KAZAKHSTAN, called for modernizing the international financial architecture and for technical support to tackle the climate, food, and energy crises.

President Zoran Milanović, CROATIA, announced plans to protect 30% of Croatia’s sea, in line with the Global Biodiversity Framework.

President Sadyr Zhaparov, KYRGYZSTAN, lamented that poverty levels have risen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and pointed to social protection mechanisms for reversing that trend.

President Cyril Ramaphosa, SOUTH AFRICA, said the most vulnerable are “carrying the costs of our inability to succeed.” He also called for the international financial architecture to be overhauled and for developing countries to gain equal access to global markets.

President Alexander van der Bellen, AUSTRIA, announced a commitment of USD 60 million to the World Food Program for the period 2023-2025, and argued that 5% of global GDP—the amount being lost to corruption—could close the SDG finance gap.

President Dina Boluarte, PERU, pointed to national progress in: expanding health insurance coverage; increasing the share of women in the workforce; and promoting biodiversity protection and a circular economy.

President Mohamed Irfaan Ali, GUYANA, highlighted the lack of progress on global partnerships (SDG 17), calling for reforming international finance institutions.

President Wesley Simina, FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA, announced the establishment of the seventh-largest marine protected area in the world as a buffer from climate change impacts and protection for “blue carbon” ecosystems.

President Stevo Pendarovski, NORTH MACEDONIA, foregrounded investing in young peoples’ skills and education to prevent emigration, enhancing climate action, and mainstreaming the SDGs across society.

President Sauli Niinistö, FINLAND, expressed concern that “we are facing a perfect storm of interlinking challenges.” He called for engaging finance ministers in climate action and ensuring the right to education globally.

John Rosso, Deputy Prime Minister, PAPUA NEW GUINEA, highlighted the need for: greater ownership, leadership, and resource mobilization for the SDGs; and reforming the global economy and international financial architecture.

Khurelbaatar Chimed, Deputy Prime Minister, MONGOLIA, highlighted Mongolia’s commitment to equal access to basic social services for the entire population.

Zambry Abdul Kadir, Minister of Foreign Affairs, MALAYSIA, noted the need to enhance social protection networks, enable cross-border trade of renewable energy, and overcome economic disparity.

Seve Paeniu, Minister of Finance, TUVALU, highlighted the government’s long-term adaptation plan to address sea-level rise, which is projected to leave most of his country untenable for human habitation by 2100. He urged grant-based funding to provide safe land territory for Tuvalu’s population.

Amin Liew Abdullah, Minister of Finance and Economy, BRUNEI, emphasized protecting the most vulnerable; implementing climate change commitments; strengthening institutions for SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production); and pushing for actionable energy transition solutions.

Catherine Collona, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, FRANCE, remarked that “no way out of poverty is sustainable without protecting the planet” and invited additional countries to join the Paris Pact for People and Planet.

Abdoulaye Bio Tchane, Minister of State for Development and Government Action Coordination, BENIN, drew attention to national advancements in: increasing access to electricity; expanding fiber networks; and rolling out universal healthcare.

Seedy Keita, Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, THE GAMBIA, explained how his country has mainstreamed the SDGs through a national development plan, and stressed the importance of rethinking food production strategies along the entire value chain to achieve zero hunger.

Márcio Costa Macêdo, President of the National Commission for the SDGs, BRAZIL, announced that Brazil has “once again joined the effort to build a fairer and more sustainable planet” after six years of setbacks, noting that deforestation in the Amazon decreased by 48% during the first eight months of 2023.

Sameh Hassan Shoukry Selim, Minister for Foreign Affairs, EGYPT, lamented that food and energy insecurity are ravaging developing countries and warning that those states’ indebtedness jeopardizes the SDGs.

Valeri Belski, Vice-speaker of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly, BELARUS, stressed the country’s role as donor of fertilizer and dairy products to achieve food security.

Summarizing the discussion, Achim Steiner, Administrator, UN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP), noted agreement that “change is difficult but remains possible.” He highlighted progress through the “connectivity revolution” underway across the globe, and the global proliferation of renewable energy. He pointed out that merely 1% of the global market in equity and bonds could fund the SDGs.

Andrew Morley, President, WORLD VISION, emphasized the plight of many children in crisis-stricken areas, calling for children to be placed at the heart of SDG implementation efforts and ensuring that no child has to suffer from hunger.

Leaders’ Dialogue 2 “Building resilience and leaving no one behind”

Co-moderator Andrzej Duda, President, POLAND, highlighted that social safety nets are key to building resilience. Co-moderator Philip J. Pierre, Prime Minister, SAINT LUCIA, called for a people-centered and human rights-based approach to the SDGs.

President Gustavo Petro, COLOMBIA, proposed holding two peace conferences to deal with the Palestinian and Ukrainian conflicts, and urged restructuring of the international financial system.

President Chandrikapersad Santokhi, SURINAME, outlined his country’s support for vulnerable groups in remote areas, focusing on gender equality and equity.

President Maia Sandu, MOLDOVA, highlighted how her country has improved its SDG ranking despite challenges resulting from Russia’s aggression against Ukraine.

President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, PORTUGAL, called for increased global finance for SDG implementation and pointed to debt swap pilot schemes.

President Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, MALAWI, said the war in Eastern Europe is one in a series of shocks that have devastated Malawi’s economy and increased poverty. He stressed that digital innovations are key for fostering inclusive development.

Rashad Mohammed al-Alimi, Chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council, YEMEN, said “war has changed our priorities” and marginalized development efforts in favor of securing medicine, food, and oil exports.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz, GERMANY, emphasized that a reform of the international financial architecture, especially the World Bank, is underway, and said Germany will provide over EUR 300 million in hybrid capital for the World Bank to leverage

investments. He pointed to targeted cooperation agreements to ensure renewable energy production.

Prime Minister Juan Antonio Briceño, BELIZE, said the SDGs remain the only ambitious, universally agreed blueprint for an equitable and sustainable future for all. He noted Belize's commitment towards poverty reduction and marine protection, and called for international financial reform and the adoption of the MVI.

President Pedro Sánchez, SPAIN, announced a new law to contribute 0.7% of its GNI to official development assistance (ODA) by 2030, as well as support for the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to ensure food security.

Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre, SOMALIA, presented advances in poverty alleviation, reduced maternal mortality, and increased literacy for young women. He pointed to sustainable agricultural practices, improved water resource management, and food security as priorities.

Antonio Tajani, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, ITALY, observed that "the situation in Africa is not about to explode, it has already exploded." He stressed that migration is "beyond control" and vowed to step up the fight against human traffickers, the "merchants of death."

Enrique Manalo, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, the PHILIPPINES, outlined his country's commitment to ensure resilience by establishing robust disaster risk reduction and rehabilitation programmes.

Ararat Mirzoyan, Minister for Foreign Affairs, ARMENIA, noted that good governance and transparency are key to SDG implementation.

Muawieh Radaideh, Minister of Environment, JORDAN, showcased how Jordan has created the largest cash transfer programme in the region, amounting to 0.7% of the country's GDP, in an effort to tackle poverty.

Mamadou Samake, Minister of Environment and Sanitation, MALI, pointed to tackling the roots and consequences of terrorism and internal conflict as national priorities, and called on developed countries to step up funding efforts.

Franz Tattenbach Capra, Minister of Environment and Energy, COSTA RICA, urged delegates to focus development efforts not only on urban areas, but on all regions.

Ian Borg, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade, MALTA, highlighted the coordination challenges arising from the SDGs' cross-cutting nature.

Pennelope Beckles-Robinson, Minister of Planning and Development, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, expressed concern over the "bleak prospects" of fulfilling the SDGs in the face of rampant climate change and global instability, lamenting small island developing states remain "trapped in a maze of exogenous shocks."

Abdelhak Saihi, Minister of Health, ALGERIA, reported that his country has invested more than USD 2.5 million to address the needs of priority regions in the 2015-2022 period.

Park Jin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, showcased the government's efforts across three areas: unprecedented increases in funding; leveraging quality education; and narrowing the digital divide.

Filippo Grandi, UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, said millions of people are on the move, emphasizing that refugees and hosts need assistance after the initial humanitarian response.

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Executive Director, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR POLICY RESEARCH AND EDUCATION, said a human rights-based approach is key to going beyond the "pathetic 15%" of SDG achievement. She also observed that hunger and poverty in Indigenous territories can be overcome if Indigenous peoples' rights and control are protected.

Martin Chungong, Secretary-General, INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION (IPU), identified the deterioration of politics both nationally and globally as a key reason the SDGs are off-track. He said the IPU is helping parliaments become more open, transparent, and reflective of their societies, especially for women, youth, and other marginalized groups.

Leaders' Dialogue 3 "Applying science, technology, innovation, and data for transformative action"

Co-moderator William Samoei Ruto, President of KENYA, said technology and science are vastly underused resources, and emphasized building on science, technology, innovation (STI), and

data to foster climate-inclusive, efficient, and effective citizen-centric public delivery systems.

Co-moderator Nataša Pirc Musar, President of SLOVENIA, noted challenges posed by artificial intelligence (AI), which replicates sexist and racist contents, and called for a global fight against misinformation and disinformation to protect democracy.

Opening the speakers list, President Alain Berset, SWITZERLAND, emphasized that science can provide solutions to fulfill the 2030 Agenda. He noted three central accelerating factors: a strong multilateral system based on solidarity; efficient international financial architecture; and better use of STI.

Prince Alois of LIECHTENSTEIN underscored the immense potential of STI and delineated challenges to be overcome, including unequal access, gender digital gaps, and cyber warfare.

President Rumen Radev, BULGARIA, noted the need for a free, open, and secure digital world and highlighted efforts to make Bulgaria "smart, green, digital, and connected."

President Alar Karis, ESTONIA, underscored his country's commitment to sharing its "e-experience" with least developed countries and other partners so as to make a human-rights-centered digital approach accessible to all.

President Gitanas Nausėda, LITHUANIA, called for more advances in e-mobility and smart transport to support the eventual end of fossil fuel subsidies in every country.

President Edgars Rinkēvičs, REPUBLIC OF LATVIA, emphasized engaging more women and girls in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), as well as his country's commitment to increase investment in research and development to 1.5% of GDP per year by 2027.

Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja, UGANDA, pointed to her government's focus on: e-mobility; air quality monitoring; productivity for rural households; and agricultural industrialization.

Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka, FIJI, stressed the importance of harnessing data and statistics for measuring and monitoring purposes, including through the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey and the SDG Tracker.

Prime Minister Siaosi 'Ofakivahafolau Sovaleni, TONGA, urged improving infrastructure in an inclusive and careful manner so as to leave no one behind and mitigate environmental risks.

President Alberto Fernández, ARGENTINA, noted the technology gap between developing and developed nations, bolstered by technological monopolies and unilateral coercive measures. He reiterated Argentina's intention to join global markets while protecting its workers from a race to the bottom in terms of salaries and labor conditions.

François Fayot, Minister for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs, LUXEMBOURG, stressed that GDP growth alone is a poor indicator of prosperity. He announced his country's support for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to develop a new international standardized wellbeing index that takes social and environmental factors into account next to economic ones.

Sayyid Badr Albusaidi, Foreign Minister, OMAN, called for complementarity and collaboration among sectors to harness the power of technology, science, and innovation.

Prime Minister Ntsokoane Samuel Matekane, LESOTHO, lamented that efforts to fight poverty have stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He announced prioritizing SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) and empowering women to participate in digital innovation.

Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, DJIBOUTI, recognized that several countries lack access to emergent technologies and called for developing countries to obtain a significant share of the growing markets for electric vehicles and green hydrogen.

Ricardo Salgado, Minister of Planning, HONDURAS, said his country is the second poorest and has the most pronounced inequality in Latin America, noting that gaps in education and technology are widening and urging for equal opportunities for all.

Osman Saleh Mohammed, Minister of Foreign Affairs, ERITREA, highlighted STI as a driver for sustainable development, noting the challenge of discerning truly transformative change amid incremental evolution and hype.

Prime Minister Mohammad Ibrahim Shtayyeh, PALESTINE, called for collaboration and practical measures to overcome multiple crises, foster an environment conducive to regional peace, and urged not to leave Palestine behind.

Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Secretary-General, INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION (ITU), pointed to the SDG Digital Acceleration Agenda launched during the SDG Action Weekend.

Barbara Del Castello, UN MAJOR GROUP FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH, underscored the role of youth as entry points to the future and game changers in the field of STI, especially in the Global South.

Imme Scholz, Co-chair of the Independent Group of Scientists writing the [2023 Global Sustainable Development Report](#) (GSDR), said the GSDR outlines the need for course correction and acceleration and identifies key systemic interventions to ensure a successful transformation.

In closing, Co-Moderator Musar underscored the importance of building trust among countries and peoples and fighting disinformation and misinformation.

Leaders' Dialogue 4 "Strengthening integrated policies and public institutions for achieving the SDGs"

Co-Moderator Mette Frederiksen, Prime Minister, DENMARK, called for political will to address the inequalities of the international financial system, noting developing countries need a bigger voice and enhanced investments.

Co-Moderator Mark Brown, Prime Minister, COOK ISLANDS, called for more robust follow-up and review of the SDGs to ensure constant progress.

Alessandro Scarano and Adele Tonnini, Captains Regent, SAN MARINO, said climate change should be addressed with the same urgency and determination that governments brought to the COVID-19 crisis, including by accelerating science and technology.

President Zuzana Čaputová, SLOVAKIA, said that while the COVID-19 pandemic slowed SDG progress, it cannot be an excuse for having so few of the targets on track. She showcased an effort to address interlinkages between goals, by offering new jobs in coal-producing regions while ending coal production to improve environmental and health outcomes.

President Bajram Begaj, ALBANIA, said Russia's military aggression in Ukraine disrupts food stability for the most vulnerable and jeopardizes SDG attainment, noting his Parliament adopted a resolution on SDG commitment as part of the EU integration process.

President José Ramos-Horta, TIMOR LESTE, reported on the substantial advancements achieved by his country in the 21 years since its independence, reminding delegates of the vulnerability of small countries to global crises, as experienced during the 2007 financial crisis' "obliteration" of ODA.

President Jakov Milatović, MONTENEGRO, presented various national policies furthering the SDGs, including labor market reforms and free school books for primary students. He underlined that the SDGs are "a promise to every region, every community, and every citizen."

Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, GEORGIA, underscored mainstreaming SDGs into national policies and collaborating with municipalities.

Prime Minister José Ulisses Correia e Silva, CABO VERDE, stressed his country's determination to eradicate extreme poverty by 2026 and outlined various programmes in the educational realm to ensure that no one is left behind.

Silveria Jacobs, Prime Minister of Sint Maarten, for the NETHERLANDS, highlighted that the Netherlands has raised over USD 1 billion from public and private investors for development purposes, showing that developing countries can be an economically attractive target for investment.

Noor bint Ali Al Khulaif, Minister of Sustainable Development, BAHRAIN, reported on progress across three key areas: climate action, including through mangrove planting and solar power; financial services for green transformations; and access to quality, disaggregated data on the SDGs.

Joyelle Clarke, Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment, Climate Action, and Constituency Empowerment, SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS, pointed to investments and targets for: renewable and geothermal energy; food security; and improving digital infrastructures.

Sylvia Masebo, Minister of Health, ZAMBIA, lamented that progress on the SDGs has derailed, pushing millions into poverty and hunger and widening gender disparities. She called for a substantial change in the scale of financing.

Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, SINGAPORE, underscored the benefits of a "whole of government approach" to the SDGs to manage policy trade-offs and address critical issues such as aging and climate change.

Pável Isa Contreras, Minister of Economy, Planning, and Development, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, delineated the country's integrated approach to long-term development where the SDGs are integrated in a holistic manner into national planning processes, making public policy and public investments more effective.

Yvan Gil, Minister of Foreign Affairs, VENEZUELA, said a global development strategy must build on ethical considerations and solidarity, as well as new objectives for resource efficiency and innovative and inclusive solutions to leave no one behind.

Mahamat A. Hanno, Minister of Environment, CHAD, noted that the drop in prices of raw materials, the pandemic, climate change, and other tensions and conflicts affected national SDG achievement. He highlighted a plan to be launched in 2024 to reduce poverty and set out a path for a prosperous and resilient transition.

Borith Ouch, Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, CAMBODIA, underscored his country's commitment to further increase trust and confidence in public institutions to deliver SDG outcomes.

Gilbert Houngbo, Director-General, INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION, reflected on the triple crises pushing the SDGs off course and encouraged the development of transformative integrated responses, such as through the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transition. He also pointed to collaborations with the International Monetary Fund to open fiscal space for social protection in vulnerable countries.

Abdul Momen, Minister of Foreign Affairs, BANGLADESH, called on international partners to support developing countries in addressing climate change and implementing the SDGs.

Inaya Ezzeddine, Minister of Administrative Planning and Social Development, LEBANON, noted that "education poverty" has become a great danger to Lebanon's human capital.

Rose Pola Pricemou, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, GUINEA, said implementing and monitoring integrated public policies requires sound, reliable institutions and protecting freedom of expression.

Suman Bery, Vice Chair of NITI Aayog, INDIA, highlighted the New Delhi G20 Leaders' Declaration, noting that it provides a road map covering hunger, malnutrition, health, finance, education, and culture.

Francisco Bustillo, Minister for Foreign Affairs, URUGUAY, appealed to delegates to put SDG financing at the center of multilateralism.

Steve Letsike, Executive Director, ACCESS CHAPTER 2, denounced the pernicious impacts of racism, sexism, and homophobia, and called upon states to abolish criminal laws that drive stigma and restrict the work of civil society actors. He urged everyone to accept "nothing about people without people."

Jan Beagle, Director-General, INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION, urged strengthening the rule of law and building trust in public institutions.

In the Corridors

The tensions were palpable on the first day of the SDG Summit that marks the halfway point to 2030. As almost every speaker earnestly acknowledged: SDG progress is off track. There was a notable sigh of relief when the Political Declaration—which signifies continued resolve to reach the Sustainable Development Goals—was adopted without objections during the opening segment. "This goes to show how low the bar is in terms of expectations," noted a delegate "but in times of growing polarization I guess we take what we can get." Notable was also the absence of the Heads of State of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, added an astute observer.

During the Leaders' Dialogue, strict timekeeping, with microphones being effectively cut off after three minutes, gave some of the more communicative leaders a taste of what it feels like to be silenced. "Seeing how the statements are not exactly overflowing with ambition and new commitments, we are not missing out on much," chipped a delegate.

Yet, as a seasoned observer remarked, for all the homework that remains to be done, countries remain committed to trudging down the arduous road they paved for themselves in 2015, and there is growing consensus on the need to overhaul the international financial architecture to realize the SDGs.